Proposal For Measuring Territorial Political Capacity in European Regions

Alistair Cole, Jean-Baptiste Harguindéguy and Romain Pasquier

Introduction

Since the 1990s, different theoretical grids have been proposed to analyse the dynamics of territorial governance (see Pasquier, Simoulin and Weisbein, 2013). Those analytical frameworks usually aim to evaluate the power of regions in terms of legal decentralisation, fiscal issues and else in order to understand and compare the extent of ‘regions’ muscles’ and their ability to cope with their respective central states. This scoping paper discusses the need for the creation of a new framework based on the concept of ‘territorial political capacity’ (henceforth TPC) of regional governments and authorities in Europe. The TPC framework aims to formalise the power of sub-state territories through a series of indicators. As such, the TPC can be defined as the set of formal and informal structures and processes that contribute to the governing of a given territory (Simoulin, 2013, 3-25).

Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks and Arjan Schackel (2010) recently developed a new indicator of decentralisation: the so-called Regional Authority Index (henceforth RAI). Since 2010, the RAI has converted into a reference for evaluating the formal power of European regions. As such, the RAI draws on a recent tradition of measurement of sub-state territorial power in political science and economics (Blume and Voigt, 2008; Schakel, 2008, 143-166).

The constellation of studies focusing on the degrees of federalism in comparative politics (Riker, 1975, 127-145; Watts, 1999; Derbyshire and Derbyshire, 1999) demonstrates that this is a consolidated strand of regional and federal studies. Non-federal states have also caught the attention of scholars for assessing their levels of decentralisation (Arzaghi and Henderson, 2005, 1157-1189; Stegarescu, 2005, 301-333; Beck et al., 2000; Brancati, 2006, 651-685; Lane and Erson, 1999; Lijphart, 1999; Woldendorp et al., 2000; Kearney, 1999; Rodden, 2004, 481-499; Treisman, 2002).

Despite those indexes have considerably advanced our comparative institutional understanding, those theoretical frameworks face three four limits. Firstly, they uniquely focus on three series of formal data: the legal, fiscal and electoral issues and allow little room for agency, viz. for understanding territorial action repertoires. Secondly, they may not be the best fitted approaches for capturing variations in territorial political capacity. Lastly, those approached tend to reify regions as corporate actors evolving as a whole in a context dominated by other regions; this vision is interesting but regions must also be taken into account as networks of actors in constant evolution. Fourthly, each region must be understood in the framework of its own country, and discourse analysis can help to re-contextualise it.

Those criticisms are not only directed towards the RAI, but more generally towards instruments of observation relying solely on quantitative data. As demonstrated by the growing number of publications based on mixed methods approaches (Creswell, 2003; Brannen, 2005; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010; Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011), the difference between quantitative and qualitative studies is progressively softening. This is especially true in political science where a new generation of inquiries started to be led in the late-1990s with a great range of different methodologies mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches...
(Tarrow, 1995, 471-474; Topper, 2005; Lieberman, 2010, 37-59). In sum, the ‘separate tables’ between schools (and sects) of political science observed by Almond (1988, 828-842) have started a process of rapprochement.

One of the decisive factor of success of multimethodology was the rise of computer assisted mixed methods research analysis softwares (e.g. NVivo, MAXQDA, QDA Miner, Ethnonotes or Atlas TI). Since the 1980s, those softwares can help researchers to assess qualitative data in the same conditions of ‘scientificity’ than quantitative data. These softwares are not statistical one, but they are able to draw graphs based on the frequency of use of certain keywords. Those graphs cannot substitute fieldwork knowledge, but they can provide a reasonably good representation of a given political configuration. As a result, they considerably helped to break up the traditional division formulated by Windelband (and Oakes, 1980, 165-168) between nomothetic explanations (based on experiments aiming to demonstrate an objective relationship of causality between two phenomena) and idiographic descriptions (focusing on the subjective understanding of social actors vis-à-vis a given phenomenon). Of course, the opposition between the naturalistic and the historicist paradigms – and to a certain extent between macro and micro events – is still alive, but the instruments for going beyond that division are already available.

Following this debate (Caterino and Schram, 2006, 1-16), the approach proposed in the present study – the Territorial Political Capacity – aims to create a new analytical framework. Such a framework re-integrates ‘soft’ evidences to the analysis of territorial models of governance proposed by the RAI. The objective consists in providing an instrument of observation for assessing and comparing the dynamics of regional governance in order to identify potential convergences and divergences. Such an instrument uses three different techniques, namely checklists, rating scales and written analyses. It is based on case studies, namely Brittany (France), Andalusia (Spain), Wallonia (Belgium) and Wales (United Kingdom). From that perspective, this paper must be considered as a first step towards the creation of an instrument using mixed methods for objectivising, classifying and comparing regional governance cases. We are conscious of the need to validate this instrument in the future in order to increase its robustness.

This paper includes three sections. Firstly, the TPC proposes a framework that acknowledges the significance of existing conceptual maps, but integrates an agency dimension that is sometimes lacking (section 1). It provides an operational protocol for studying regions (section 2) that is illustrated in relation to empirical research in four second-order, strong identity regions (section 3). The framework proposes a mixed qualitative/quantitative research design for understanding regional governments and authorities in Europe.

**Theoretical Framework: from the Regional Authority Index to the Territorial Political Capacity Framework**

*The Regional Authority Index and its Limits*

How useful are established comparative frameworks for understanding our territorial states of convergence? The most influential instrument in the past decade is that of the Regional Authority Index, which provides a framework for situating models of decentralisation within wider models of sub-national, intermediate or regional tiers of governance. Hooghe et al.’s (2010, 115) starting point is the question ‘how might one disaggregate the abstract quality, regional authority, so that one might measure it against observable variation among regions in a wide range of developed societies?’ The Regional Authority Index draws on the work of
Elazar (1991) and disaggregates regional authority into a set of dimensions for self-rule – ‘the capacity of a regional government to exercise authority autonomously over those who live in its territory’– and shared rule – ‘the capacity to co-determine the exercise of authority for the country as a whole’ (Hooghe et al., 2010, 6).

Self-rule is operationalised as ‘the extent to which a regional government has an independent executive, the scope of its policy competencies, its capacity to tax and the extent to which it has an independent legislature’. Shared rule, the ‘capacity of a regional government to shape central decision making’ is disaggregated across four dimensions: law-making, executive control, fiscal control and constitutional reform. Hooghe et al. (2010, 6) argue that disaggregating regional authority strengthens comparative analysis as the ‘concepts of self-rule and shared rule travel well: they can be applied across a wide range of countries and historical periods without loss of connotative precision.’ The main indicators of the Regional Authority Index are presented in Table 1 and Figure 1 outline the findings of the RAI for our four regions.

Table 1. Dimensions of Regional Authority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Self-rule</th>
<th>The authority exercised by a regional government over those who live in its territory</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional depth</td>
<td>The extent to which a regional government is autonomous rather than deconcentrated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy scope</td>
<td>The range of policies for which a regional government is responsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal autonomy</td>
<td>The extent to which a regional government can independently tax its population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Representation</td>
<td>The extent to which a regional government is endowed with an independent legislature and executive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared rule</th>
<th>The authority exercised by a regional government or its representatives in the country as a whole</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law making</td>
<td>The extent to which regional representatives co-determine national legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive control</td>
<td>The extent to which regional representatives co-determine national policy in intergovernmental meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiscal control</td>
<td>The extent to which regional representatives co-determine the distribution of national tax revenues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constitutional reform</td>
<td>The extent to which regional representatives co-determine constitutional change</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Hooghe, L. (et al., 2010).

Figure 1. The Regional Authority Index: Case Studies in 2006

Source: Hooghe (et al., 2010).
It is unclear that the RAI proposes a useful operational frame in investigating this particular research question. Though the RAI has heuristic comparative merit, it does not explain any one of our regions very convincingly. The index shows the United Kingdom’s devolved governments at a comparative disadvantage in relation to regions in federal or regional states. Modes of inter-governmental relations in Wales are informal, especially in a context of governmental incongruence between Cardiff and London, but they can be strong through party political channels. Likewise, in Brittany, an informal mode of influence exists that is not well captured by the shared rule axis, in terms of formal interactions at least. The Breton model relies as much on informal influence in central government by political and party networks, as it does on any formal channel of communication. In Andalusia, inter-governmental relations were described in terms of tense bilateral relations, especially between the People’s Party government in Madrid and the Socialist Party-led regional government in Seville. The RAI arguably provides for a more accurate representation of regional authority in federal polities (whereby territorial influence is derived as much from the shared rule as from the self-rule dimensions). In the case of Belgium, however, formal shared rule was meaningless in the context of structural decentralisation and confederalisation of the regime. In each of these cases, the shared rule dimension, to the extent that it is performed, is more accurately a function of the party system than formal institutional representation.

**Bringing Soft Variables Back in: the Territorial Political Capacity Framework**

Can we improve our understanding of comparative regional dynamics in most different state contexts? Existing indexes such as the RAI have advanced our comparative institutional understanding, but allow little room for agency, for understanding territorial action repertoires or for capturing variations in territorial political capacity. The concept of resource profile provided a useful early entry point for understanding the mix of material and constructed dimensions of territorial governance (Jeffery, 2000). The resource profile of a regional government draws upon many different sources, including constitutional (or legal) empowerment; financial resources; administrative capacity; (political) leadership; alliance-building opportunities; and ‘legitimacy’. In his study of German federalism, Jeffery (2000) observes that the informal resource profiles of German Länder differ significantly, despite the similarity in their formal resources. Bavaria, strong in informal resources and with a powerful sense of regional identity, developed a preference for a ‘go-it-alone’ strategy during the 1990s. Saxony-Anhalt, on the other hand, with neither the regional identity nor civic tradition of Bavaria, employed a core strategy of ‘alliance-building’ (with other Länder, through the Committee of the Regions, through trans-national associations of regions and with the Commission).

The framework is briefly presented in Table 2. It combines two pillars of regional governance: the hard and soft indicators of regional capacity. Hard variables are identified as: economic dynamism, stand-alone fiscal capacity, the degree of legal autonomy vis-à-vis the centre; and the extent of regionalisation of the party system and interest structures. Softer processes are those of: permeability vis-à-vis external pressure; leadership capacity; the centrality or otherwise of regional networks, and the existence of a regional discursive “common good”. Each of those hard and soft indicators are based on evidences. While the hard evidences were raised from statistical series, the soft evidences were produced using in-depth interviews with regional actors (politicians, bureaucrats and practitioners). The logic of the TPC is simple: the capacity of regions for leading their own destiny depends on their political capacity. Such a capacity can be higher or lower according to the series of items. In
sum, the TPC is a composite index that draws on a mixed methods approach. It allows regions to be compared in terms of their absolute material indicators, as well as their longer term evolution, style and capacity to cope with change. At the end of the day, the objective of those indicators consists in creating an alternative ranking respect with single-method’s approaches.

Table 2. The Territorial capacity framework

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Evidence base</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic dynamism</td>
<td>Use of regional statistics from Eurostat</td>
<td>GDP/capita:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ More than EU average: 2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Equal (+ or – 10%) to the EU average: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ Less than EU average: 0 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of legal autonomy vis-à-vis the centre</td>
<td>Legal status of the region</td>
<td>Membership of the European regions with legislative powers:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If member: 2 points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If not: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stand-alone fiscal capacity</td>
<td>Proportion of budget raised by regional taxes</td>
<td>Percentages of regional incomes relying on regional taxes:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If more than 50%: 2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If equal (+ or – 10%) to 50%: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If less than 50%: 0 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regionalised party system</td>
<td>Scores of regionalist parties at the elections</td>
<td>Average of electoral scores of regionalist parties at national and regional elections:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If more than 50%: 2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If equal (+ or – 10%) to 50%: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If less than 50%: 0 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared belief in a territorial model</td>
<td>Answer of interviewees to the set of questions about the existence of a regional specific praxis of politics.</td>
<td>Discursive coalitions through the NVivo analysis of interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If one big coalition: 2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If two coalitions: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If more coalitions: 0 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership capacity</td>
<td>Answers of interviewees to the set of questions about the capacity of leadership of the regional government.</td>
<td>Discursive coalitions through the NVivo analysis of interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If one big coalition: 2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If two coalitions: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If more coalitions: 0 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Territorial networks</td>
<td>Answers of interviewees to the set of questions about the integration of territorial networks.</td>
<td>Discursive coalitions through the NVivo analysis of interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If one big coalition: 2 points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If two coalitions: 1 point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>➔ If more coalitions: 0 point</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Existence of a regional identity | Answers of interviewees to the set of questions about the existence of a regional identity. | Discursive coalitions through the NVivo analysis of interviews

- If one big coalition: 2 points
- If two coalitions: 1 point
- If more coalitions: 0 point

Source: authors’ elaboration

Methodology: the Roots of the Territorial Political Capacity Framework

Data Collection Procedure

The research is part of a broader project called funded by the Leverhulme Trust. The research took place started in November 2012 and ended in May 2014. It involved a first period of data collection through the review of scientific literature on regional governance, mixed methods approach and the different cases studies of the sample. Then, the fieldwork was led in those four regions over 18 month. The fieldwork consisted in collecting evidences from local and regional newspapers, organising interviews with territorial actors (about 25 interviews by regions) and gathering statistics about economics and politics. The main instrument for gathering and analysing interviews was NVivo10. NVivo 10 is a software created by QCR for qualitative research.

Sample

This paper aims to create an instrument of analysis of regional governance. However, it provides an application to a sample of four cases. This sample is made of second order strong identity regions in four EU states, namely Andalusia, Brittany, Wales and Wallonia. These regions share many characteristics and constitute a ‘family’ of territories that attracted little attention in scientific literature in comparison with Catalonia, Flanders or Scotland. Nevertheless, those regions play an important role in their respective countries since they are representative of the rest of the regions.

These hybrid regions are economically challenged yet have a distinctive and developed territorial capacity. They each have ingrained traditions of social-democratic party control. These regions face stark economic challenges and problems of economic adaptation. They are traditionally pro-European regions, or at least regions benefiting from substantial EU investment. They are regions with a strong sense of territorial identity. They have variable degrees of decentralised authority: as a minimum, each has a directly elected regional Assembly with powers ranging from a general competency to partial legislative authority.

The four regions exist in states that cover the range of logical possibilities for comparison: a loose federal state (Belgium), a hybrid state with some federal characteristics (Spain), a predominantly unitary state modified by forms of asymmetrical devolution (United Kingdom) and a decentralised but still unitary state (France). The EU context provides the core similarity between these states, with three of the four participating in the euro and signed up to the Treaty on European Stability and Governance (TSGG). These regions had more limited control over core macro-economic levers, and a fragile basis for enhanced material capacity. But they each sustained a coherent territorial narrative that mixed signifiers from the centre-periphery and the left-right axes. In each case, we identified a mode of territorial
action that was based on influencing central government and the EU, in a pattern of multi-level governance.

Research Design

The TPC is made of two strands: ‘hard’ items (dealing with material capacity) and ‘soft’ items (relying on the discourse of political actors). Those items were identified after a profound review of scientific literature. They are based on several evidences. Each of them is evaluated according generates a certain number of points that produce the score of each region. Those items are:

1. Economic Dynamism: economic dynamism, and more generally economic well-being, are fundamental concerns for understanding the political capacity of a region. Economy says a lot about the capacity of regional governments to deal with globalisation by using their own resources. Of course, this is right to assume that economic capacity is different from political power. Charles Tilly (1992) shown that Western States in Europe had been built by regional empires whose power relied more on coercion than on capital. In contemporary Europe, some poor regions can also use their veto right in federal polities in order to block the decisions of the majority. Nevertheless, this power only relies on blackmailing and the stronger regions of the continent are also those that enjoy a significant level of economic growth (Bade-Württemberg, Bayern, Basque Country, Flanders, etc.). The basic hypothesis lying behind this evidence is wealthy regions have more arguments for imposing their interests than poor regions.

   There are different ways to calculate economic dynamism. One of the easiest ways to assess it consists in comparing the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per inhabitant of a given region with the European Union’s average. This information can be found on the databases of Eurostat, the European agency of statistics. Of course, GDP is not a gauge of happiness or psychological well-being, but this is one of the most common indicators for assessing the level of economic development of a territory.

2. Stand-alone Fiscal Capacity: material capacity also relates to a territory’s economic capacity to generate its own tax revenues, influence fiscal decisions by the national government, shape the terms of fiscal equalisation between territories and access ample, low-cost market credit. ‘Stand-alone’ fiscal capacity is associated with buoyant and predictable ‘own-tax’ revenues, along with efficient tax collection and reflects a high ratio of investment to revenue, strengthening sub-national balance sheets through better-quality asset building and improving future tax capacity (Dyson, 2014). It is linked to high sub-national administrative capacity in managing infrastructure and social investment and underpinned by political and administrative skills in networking alongside inclusive political processes that sustain solidarity and identity building.

   This evidence is evaluated through a simple calculus of the proportion of regional resources produced by regional taxes. In some countries like France, the level of regional taxes is not sufficient to fund the public services provided by regional authorities and strong financial transferences from the centre to the periphery are necessary. On the contrary, in other cases like the Spanish Basque Country, the quasi totality of regional resources is raised through regional taxes. The more proportion of regional incomes come from regional taxes, the higher is the capacity of a region. This evidence can be found easily on the websites of the regional ministries of economy.
3. Degree of Legal Autonomy vis-à-vis the Centre: much of the debate about regional authority has centred around formal competencies; as illustrated in the Regional Authority Index. Across all state types – federal, union, unitary, regional – in practice, public services can rarely be attributed to only one level of public administration. The neat division into competencies (the ‘layer cake’ model) might make good legal or political sense. But policy responsibilities are usually overlapping by their very nature (the ‘marble cake’ model). Public policies do not respect being neatly confined to particular levels. Once policies are spread across levels of government (and even more so when they include private actors) inter-organisational dynamics become important. Hence the need to combine the formal-legal and relational dimensions of sub-national governance. Once the foundations of ‘fuzzy governance’ have been acknowledged, however, it is possible to distinguish between types of territorial hierarchy (though these do not necessarily fit the federal/non-federal model).

The evidence from European countries in relation to strategic steering is mixed. There are, in general, either constitutional guarantees for lower echelons of local authority, or normative guarantees, along the lines of the European Council’s Charter of Local Self-Government. But there is also a distinction to be drawn between those countries that explicitly recognise leadership of the regional (in EU terms) level – Germany, Spain, Italy – and those which do not establish a hierarchy between types of local authority (notably France), or, indeed, between the federal and ‘federated’ units (Belgium). The German Länder, for example, are primarily involved in the regulation of local authorities or public agencies, rather than in direct making service delivery. The federal reform of 2006 aimed to disentangle the levels of government in Germany by reducing the influence of the Länder governments in Federal policy – whilst strengthening their legislative competences (Benz 2008, 440-456).

From that perspective, the membership of the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (RegLeg) is a good proxy for avoiding this ambiguity. The legal framework of each country and the sharing of competencies between the central and regional scales of governance can say little about the internal praxis of decentralisation. Despite the RegLeg association includes several regions with different levels of competencies, all of them have sufficient powers for negotiating certain issues with their respective central states. This is why the RegLeg regions are expected to have a higher political capacity than the rest of their counterparts.

4. Regionalisation of the Party System: the last ‘hard’ evidence presented focuses on the existence of regionalised party systems. The basic assumption is that regional party systems are a good indicator of the regional electors’ political culture (more or less opened to state issues). Following this logic, the more a party system centres on regional issues, the higher its political capacity should be. But this evidence is not necessary so simple in reality. Of course, the emergence of territory-specific parties as the key parties in regional elections shows that electors prefer regional parties than state-wide parties to manage regional affairs. There is a substantial identity-based literature linking the politicisation of territorial identities with ethno-territorial mobilisation (de Winter and Tursan, 1998). For Moreno (2007, 497-513) ethno-territorial identities have developed as a result of the decline of the Nation-State, hollowed to dispute the core by economic globalisation and political integration. The new politics of ethno-territorial mobilisation reflects itself in sub-state political institutions, distinctive party systems, language rights movements and cultural traditions and specific forms of elite accommodation.

But, sometimes, those arrangements are more complex. For example, there is a growing literature on the impact of split voting in ‘post-sovereign’ states. Scully and Wyn Jones (2006, 115-134) demonstrate the differential between voting for minority nationalist parties
Plaid Cymru, SNP) in devolved and United Kingdom (UK)-wide elections, the regionalists performing much better in the territory specific elections than at the UK-level where the traditionally unionist Labour Party continues to dominate. This is why the average of electoral scores of regionalist parties at the regional and state-wide elections should be taken into account for assessing the preferences of regional electors.

5. Territorial models: whether or not a coherent territorial model can be identified is the first core constructed variable. In his excellent study of regions in France and Spain, Pasquier (2004) identifies a territorial model in Brittany whereby the regional space is a legitimate one, not an artificial construct; actors share the common referents of Brittany as a backward region that needs to be modernised and seek to build regional consensus. Identity markers are very present in dealings with Paris, in claims made upon public resources, in the demand for differential treatment and resentment of ‘Jacobin’ logic of centralisation. The prism is that of the French State, and then Brussels, rather than a clearly identified adversary. In Wales, the first decade of devolution was characterised by a powerful discourse, whereby the merits of small country governance and collaborative public service provision were contrasted with neo-liberal economics and the principle of competition in England (Cole and Stafford, 2014).

In order to objectivise the existence of a shared regional model, the NVivo10 software was used for analysing the answers given by the territorial actors during the interviews. Interviewees were supposed to answer a set of questions dealing with the ways of practicing politics in their own regions, and if this praxis was different from other places. Those answers were then analysed according to the frequency of common keywords. In some cases, a unique coalition appeared, while in other cases the actors remained divided into different factions. The hypothesis here consisted in considering that the belief in a common territorial model facilitated the integration of regional actors and their political capacity vis-à-vis the centre.

6. Leadership capacity: leadership studies are a growth area of political science, attracting work in the fields of psychology, management studies, organisational theory and history, as well as from political scientists. Leadership studies are generally national in focus, though sometimes supranational (the case of Drake’s study of Jacques Delors). But the questions raised by leadership are equally valid at a sub-national level, whether regional, or metropolitan (John and Cole, 1998, 132-146). Most frameworks for studying political leadership involve some combination of the personal qualities of politicians/leaders, their institutional (‘positional’) strengths and weaknesses, and the wider environmental and cultural constraints and opportunities that help shape their political leadership.

Studying territorial political leadership also involves three main levels of analysis: the individual, the positional and the environmental. The individual level can refer to the mobilising qualities of particular individuals. Media attention usually focuses on Livingstone or Johnson as successive mayors of London or powerful mayors of French cities such as Collomb in Lyons, or Delanoe in France. The individual level allows leader-follower relations and styles of leadership to be observed most efficiently. The positional level refers rather to the capacity of particular institutional offices and party configurations to sustain clearly identifiable forms (urban or regional) and styles (executive-centred or collective) of leadership. Formal institutional incentives and rules play an important role (the de facto direct election of mayors in French and Spanish cities), but so can structuring traditions, such as that of cumul des mandats in France or, on the contrary, the strict separation of the local and national levels in the UK. Party configurations are also important: especially whether a single party, dependent on a directly elected mayor, is able to control local power. Environmental constraints and opportunities present a third level of analysis. The key variable here relates to
the hierarchy and importance of the entity embodied (the mayor of London or Paris, or the minister-President of a powerful German Land is usually a significant national player as well). In the case of Spanish autonomous communities or devolved governments in the UK (Salmond in Scotland, Mas in Catalonia in particular), this level also involves consideration of the sometimes highly politicized and conflictive forms of inter-governmental relationships.

In our framework, leadership is thus understood as a collective leadership – represented by the regional government – and as a mix of formal and informal qualities. It is a major contributory dimension to overall political capacity. The strongest evidence for the importance of territorial forms of leadership might be counterfactual; where no visible forms of political leadership exist – as in the case of most English cities – there is a manifest lack of capacity. Once again, this evidence was assessed through the NVivo10 software. Questions about legitimacy, positional resources and hierarchy between levels were asked to interviewees in the five regions. The answers of interviewees were analysed through a coalition graph. According to the level of fragmentation of the answers, the territorial political capacity is high (a single coalition), medium (two coalitions) or low (three or more coalitions).

7. Centrality of Territorial Networks: capacity does not limit itself to institutional resources or leadership potentialities; it also involves styles of co-operation between actors in well-defined policy universes. As practices and norms are produced by interaction, networks are key to understanding territorial dynamics. But which levels of sub-national authority are at the centre of territorial interactions? Are local and regional authorities able to federate interactions within territorial policy communities? Or do powerful professional interests (business and trade unions in particular) look beyond the sub-national level? Classic studies of urban regimes – first in the US (Stone, 1989), later in Europe (Stoker and Mossberger, 1994, 195-212; John and Cole, 1998, 132-146) – emphasised long-term coalitions between political and economic decision-makers as being a fundamental part of urban governance. More formal network analysis (John and Cole, 1995, 1-10; John and Cole 1998) has been used to demonstrate variation between cities; while narrative accounts have reached similar conclusions in relation to strong regions (Barone, 2011).

One indicator of the capacity of the devolved institutions in Wales to establish their legitimacy, for example, lay in their gradual ability to serve as arenas for the expression of local and regional networks. At a rather different level of abstraction, territorial networks evoke the relationship between social capital and trust. Some studies postulate a correlation between high trust societies and economic growth of effective political action (Coleman, 198, 95-120). The analysis of social networks is usually realised through specific softwares like Ucinet or Pajek that help to connect graphically the actors of a given territory or policy in order to identify their degree of assertiveness and confrontation, the density of cliques, the direction of relationships and so on and so forth. The objective of the present study was more limited (so many specific details were not necessary) and broader (this study focused on the whole territory at once and not on a specific policy sector) at the same time. NVivo10 allowed identifying the different groups of opinions about the configuration social and institutional interests in order to draw representations of the different coalitions ruling the analysed territories.

8. Existence of a Regional Identity: capacity is also rooted in identities, which we understand as a compound term for describing historical narratives, representations of community, beliefs and values. There are two main ways of measuring multiple identities. The first – now classic – uses the Moreno/Linz scale to capture the balance of multiple
identities (Moreno, 2007, 497-513). The second engages in qualitative analysis using NVivo (word tags, word frequency understood comparatively) and is probably more efficient to discern the intensity of second-rank identity in the regions not governed by ethno-nationalist parties. In our approach, understanding a discursive identity needs to be appreciated as a long-term, iterative process. Territorial political capacity, in Pasquier’s expression, ‘results from the complex interaction between practices and inherited beliefs and the dynamics of social change’ (Pasquier, 2004).

Political capacity is, at least in part, a process of mediation in which elites and social groups produce a vision of the world that allows them at once to structure relations among themselves and to define the ‘interests’ that they are pursuing collectively. Interpreting place assumes understanding territories as being more than individual units of analysis; rather as communities with shared memories, common inter-subjective meanings and a territorial action repertoire. Following the debate about how the capability of regional leaders to mobilise territorial actors through a common identity motivate the economic performances of European regions (Keating, 1998), the ‘identity’ item is understood as a positive element increasing the territorial political capacity of a given region. The stronger is the identity, the stronger should be the regional actors to work as one. This evidence was analysed with NVivo10 through the degree of division of interviewees respect with the questions dealing with their regional identity.

Results: An Application of the Territorial Political Capacity Framework

The ranking of regions established through the TPC is presented in table 3.

Table 3. Territorial capacity in second order strong identity regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Scores by regions</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic dynamism</td>
<td>Wales: 0 Wallonia: 2 Brittany: 2 Andalusia: 0</td>
<td>Except for Brittany, little evidence of economic convergence within respective states. Wales and Andalucía remain amongst the poorest regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Degree of legal autonomy vis-à-vis the centre</td>
<td>Wales: 2 Wallonia: 2 Brittany: 1 Andalusia: 2</td>
<td>Varying legal statutes. Ranging from confederal-style decentralisation for Belgium, a developing devolutionary dynamic in Wales, moves to more territorial autonomy in Brittany- but elements of recentralisation in devolved Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
<td>Stand-alone fiscal capacity</td>
<td>Wales: 0 Wallonia: 2 Brittany: 0 Andalusia: 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regionalised party system</td>
<td>Wales: 0 Wallonia: 2 Brittany: 0 Andalusia: 0</td>
<td>Regional narratives in each region. Regionalist parties limited: but territorial narratives and split voting demonstrate regional institutional influence (especially in Wales). Wallonia only a regional party system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soft</td>
<td>Wales: 2</td>
<td>Wallonia: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership capacity</td>
<td>Wales: 2</td>
<td>Wallonia: 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existence of a regional identity</td>
<td>Wales: 2</td>
<td>Wallonia: 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>Wales: 9</td>
<td>Wallonia: 16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: authors’ elaboration.

At first sight, the results of the RAI and the TPC globally converge with some slight differences (graph 2). Wallonia remains at the top of the ranking, followed by Brittany, Wales and Andalusia. While the top of the ranking is not considerably different, the position of Andalusia is a great surprise.

![Graph 2. Ranking of regions according to their territorial political capacity](image-url)

Source: authors’ elaboration
Discussion: Comparing Second Order Strong Identity Regions

Economic Dynamism?

Except, arguably, in the case of Brittany, there is little evidence of economic convergence, either between the four regions, or within their respective states. The ranking of Brittany, Wallonia, Wales and Andalusia deserves some more explanation. Brittany’s post-war economic success story was based on intensive agriculture and the agri-food business, but also on a vibrant cooperative sector and a dense tissue of SMEs (Philipponeau, 1993; Ollivro, 2005, Nicolas, 2012). The poorest French region in 1900, Brittany experienced rapid growth rates during the *trente glorieuses* (1945-1975), and had risen to the 7th or 8th most prosperous French region by the turn of the century. The Breton model was based on inward investment, mainly in the form of state-led investments in telecommunications, defence and the automobile industry. By the time of fieldwork in 2013, Brittany’s position in the informal hierarchy of French regions was declining and the level of unemployment was rising. In the opinion of one interlocutor, Brittany had failed to adapt its model when it could and remained tied to old technologies (e.g. producing telephone handsets) and a culture of subsidies from the European Union and the French central government.

Wallonia was traditionally considered as Belgium’s heavy industry region; for three decades it has been engaged in a painful process of economic and industrial restructuring, symbolised by the downsizing of the Steel industry (involving massive lay-offs by Arcelor-Mittal and the closure of one site) and by the downturn in the automobile sector. Flanders was hit even harder than Wallonia by the economic crisis, however, and there has been some narrowing of the GDP per head differentiation with Flanders.

Rather like in Brittany and Wallonia, post-war territorial planning policies located much heavy industry in Wales, along with important public services. More recently, Wales has benefited from massive investment through EU structural funds; the region has had the highest level of assistance for the past 3 rounds (2000-2006; 2007-2013 and 2014-2020). Wales also attracted a wave of foreign direct investment in the 1980s and 1990s, but the region has suffered from the exit of footloose capital (Sony, LG, Toshiba), as well as the painful closure of the coal mines and reduction of steel capacity. Unlike Brittany in particular, there is no dense tissue of SMEs and the agricultural sector involves mainly subsistence farming. Three rounds of EU funding notwithstanding, the relative position of Wales in relation to other regions in the UK and the EU has continued to decline: the region was granted convergence funding from 2014-2020 for the third time because the GDP per head was under 75% of the EU 28 average.

Finally, traditional Andalusia had been characterized by the lack of industrialization, endemic under-development and the unequal division of rural lands. Until the 19th Century, Andalusia remained a rural space dominated by landowners, with few urban centres, a very low population density and a high level of demographic dispersion. Economic planning, coupled with huge investments from the regional government, the central state and the European Union – especially in health, education and transport infrastructure – underpinned the rise of the Andalusian economy since the democratic transition. As a consequence, from 1982 to 2012 the cumulative growth rate reached 135%, one of the highest rates in Europe. The economic crisis since 2008 has hit particularly hard. Andalusia’s predicament has highlighted the hypertrophy of the public sector, the impoverishment of households with a GDP per inhabitant (17,544 euros) that only reaches 77% of the Spanish average and a very high level of unemployment – eight points superior to the Spanish rate (34.6%).
None of our regions score very highly in relation to economic dynamism, but a clear hierarchy can be established. The distinguishing factor lies in the informal capacity of a territorial model to anticipate change and adapt accordingly.

Degree of Legal Autonomy vis-à-vis the Centre

The degree of legal autonomy vis-à-vis the centre is relatively straightforward to establish. Wallonia arrives clearly ahead, the logical result of over three decades of developing decentralisation and confederalisation. The sixth Reform of the State, negotiated under the Di Rupo government, devolves core state functions to the regions; the May 2014 election result (with the separatist NVA well ahead in Flanders) suggests that the process of state disaggregation is likely to continue. The Wallon case highlights the paradox of an uncontrollable decentralisation dynamic forcing regional elites to envisage what a future independent state might look like, in spite of their preference for maintaining the integrity of Belgium.

Neither Wales nor Andalusia have as far reaching autonomy as in Wallonia, but both have specific statutes. In the case of Andalusia, the first statute of autonomy was adopted by the parliament of the Second Republic in 1936, but this text was never approved in a referendum because of the Civil War. The progressive transfers of competencies allowed Spanish autonomous communities to manage strategic sectors like health and education. From that perspective, Andalusia enjoys a consistent set of self-rulled competencies. Nevertheless, the effects of the 2008 crisis have generated a de facto re-centralisation in Spain. In those conditions, the Andalusian government is embedded in a constant conflict with the current conservative central government related with the implementation of state policies at the regional level.

In Wales, the successive Government of Wales Acts (1998, 2006) and the successful 2011 referendum on law-making powers have gradually vested a form of legislative autonomy on the devolved Welsh authorities (completing the early model of executive devolution). But Wales remains somewhat removed from the model of ‘reserved competencies’ that characterises Scottish devolution. In the case of Brittany, finally, the regional Council has a general administrative competence, but no formal regulatory or legislative powers. But this situation is unstable; proposals circulating for a territorial Assembly would create a form of devolution along the lines of the Welsh model.

Fiscal Autonomy and Capacity?

A general trend in our survey of four European regions is towards diminished fiscal autonomy. That economic crisis strengthens central government control over regional and local government financial circuits is a plausible hypothesis. As central governments are now threatened with stiff fines if they do not control the revised budget and debt criteria, enshrined in the TSGG, they are less willing to tolerate ‘spendthrift’ local and regional authorities. What does the balance of evidence point to? In France and Spain, the proportion of local and regional government expenditure directly transferred by central government grants has been rising (usually with forms of hypothecation). Enhanced centralisation of local financial circuits could be observed in France, for example, mainly as the result of a major tax reform in 2010 that involved the abolition of the local collection and setting of business rates and its replacement by a more centralised formula-based method of tax collection (Le Lidec, 2011).

In Spain, though many competencies have been devolved or are shared with central government, 80% of the autonomous communities’ financial resources are transferred by
centre. Our investigation in Andalusia revealed a region under sustained financial pressure, suffering budgetary cuts from central government, a decreasing performance of regional taxes and a drying up of bank loans (Harguindéguy et al., 2015). To a certain extent, public finance also remains a highly centralised policy field within the UK (Trench, 2010, 571-582). The Welsh policy community has demanded enhanced fiscal autonomy, but politicians were careful not to call into question the core block grant mechanism of financing devolution, based on the Barnett formula.

The case of Belgium, finally, represents an opposing trend in terms of public financial management; once the sixth reform of the State has been fully implemented, the Federal government budget will be limited to servicing the national debt and funding part of social security, with many other functions having been regionalised (Deschamps, 2013, 135-140). But even in highly decentralised Belgium, the economic crisis has empowered the Belgian central bank in its dealing with the regions and communities.

The above survey also suggests that the economic crisis has reduced the space available for strategic Europeanisation and enhanced the constraints of normative Europeanisation, experienced by three of our four regions in terms of the constraints of the revised Stability pact, the new budgetary treaty, the new European fiscal architecture and the rules of competition policy. Along with fiscal autonomy, stand-alone fiscal capacity was weakened and traditions of public service delivery and public investment were threatened, even in traditionally unconditional Belgium. In these social-democratic regions, ‘neo-liberal’ hard convergence was experienced as a weakening of political capacity, even when (in the Belgian and Spanish regions) Brussels was not directly targeted.

A Differential Regionalisation of Party Systems

There were strong regional narratives in each region. Wallonia is placed in first position because there is only a regional party system, no Belgian-wide parties surviving the community based competition between Flanders and Wallonia. In practice, the party roles of the aggregation and articulation of interests are performed by negotiation across communities, but the system of separate party systems has created its own dynamic. The Wallon parties are forced to react to the changing balance of power in the politically and economically stronger Flemish region. The high score of the separatist NVA in May 2014 presages more instability to come.

In Wales, the nationalist Plaid Cymru party has systematically performed better in National Assembly than in Westminster elections. A rather similar effect can be observed in Brittany, but the nationalist/regionalist movement generally performs far more modestly in elections, able to mobilise around 10% in regional elections, but only if in alliance with the Greens (EELV). Finally, in Andalusia the mobilisation around Andalusian national symbols has been somewhat irregular. The Partido Andalucista, whose ideological references are clearly rooted in Andalusian political nationalism, has always defended a nationalist discourse centred on the existence of an Andalusian nation. In turn, the Andalusian Socialist Party’s Andalusism has drawn heavily on the common experience of economic under-development, work exploitation, a lack of industrialization, poverty, emigration and unemployment (Barzelay, 1987, 103-120).

A second understanding of regionalisation involves the impact of regional institutions on state-wide parties. In Wales, a more inclusive ‘new politics’, strengthened by an element of proportionality in elections for the National Assembly, and joined-up government were key slogans during the first decade of devolution in Wales. In his detailed research on the early phase of devolution in Scotland and Wales, Bradbury (2006, 2006, 559-582) concluded that political devolution had produced a more overt regionalisation of party structures and
processes such as candidate selection. The Liberal Democrats were the most federalised party before the creation of devolution and retain considerable autonomy. The Welsh Conservatives are notably more devolution friendly than the English-dominated party in Westminster. Plaid Cymru, predictably, places much more importance on performing well in National Assembly than in Westminster elections. But the key variable remains the Welsh Labour Party. Wyn Jones and Scully (2012, 162) argue that the tortuous progress of the first decade of devolution could chiefly be attributed to ‘one-partyism’ within Wales which dictated that ‘all the major decisions on the models of devolution to be pursued have been made within the Labour Party; the decisions made have reflected the internal politics and balance of forces within that party.’ The Welsh Labour party is divided; one interviewee identified competition between the ‘nationalist wing and the UK wing’ of the Labour Party and predicted the former would be strengthened in the event of either (or both) Scottish independence or the UK leaving the European Union.

**Territorial Model and its Permeability vis-à-vis External Pressure**

In the above section, we identified coherent territorial models in Brittany, Wallonia, Wales and Andalusia. The analytical contribution of the TPC framework is to evaluate how well such models are able to cope with change. Two sets of questions were applied in the fieldwork. First, the impact of economic crisis on the cohesion of existing territorial coalitions; the second, more empirical, in terms of the process of calling into question existing practices as a result of international benchmarks. How well-equipped are territorial models to cope with change? How has the territorial model adapted to the crisis? How open are territorial elites vis-à-vis external pressures? These questions make full sense in the context of the impact of economic crisis on forms of political decentralisation, the main object of our comparative empirical investigation from 2012-2014.

There are two plausible hypotheses of the relationship between economic crisis and territorial political dynamics: first, that economic crisis reinforces existing beliefs and action repertoires (actors interpret crisis in terms of their existing mental maps or *habitus*); second that economic crisis loosens the ties and understandings that bind members of a territorial community together. Answering this question assumes the capacity to provide longitudinal responses, based on a diachronic mode of investigation: such evidence can be provided in the case of Brittany and Wales, the objects of qualitative investigation since 2001-2002, though only a snapshot is available from primary accounts in Andalusia or Wallonia. The central argument is that converging pressures, and in particular the requirements of normative Europeanisation, have been intensified by the context of the fiscal and sovereign debt crisis since 2008. In no case, however, did economic crisis alone undermine existing action repertoires, or empower alternative economic and territorial models. Economic crisis strengthens existing collective action registers, while undermining the territorial capacities of second order strong identity regions.

More striking than budgetary rigour (because less expected) was the movement to international standards in education, especially secondary education. The role performed by international benchmarks, and notably the PISA scores, assumed far more importance than initially predicted. The best exemplar to demonstrate these trends was that of Wales, where the devolved government has had relative policy autonomy in terms of secondary education. The devolved Welsh government proudly pursued a divergent policy agenda during its first decade of existence. The poor scores obtained by Wales in the 2009 PISA exercise served as a rude wake-up call and were the catalyst for a series of measures that were intended to address the weakness in basic skills revealed by PISA. The adoption of new policy instruments, such as banding in secondary education, the creation of regional consortia of
schools and the introduction of tougher performance management regimes were testament to the weight of exogenous shocks, which fed into internal interactions within the Welsh education policy community. Wales stood still in the 2012 PISA results, hence pressures were likely to continue. A similar process of readjusting the school system was described in relation to the francophone community in Belgium, whose poor results in the 1999/2000 PISA round had provoked the introduction of common forms of inspection and regulation across the communal, provincial, government and Catholic education networks. In this case, the key driver was not to allow the Flemish region to out-perform French-speaking students. If competition was the key, the result was a convergence around PISA style benchmarks. PISA performed a rather less central role in the Spanish and French regions.

Leadership Capacity

The most visible example of political leadership making a difference was provided by the Welsh case, where First Minister Rhodri Morgan (2000-2009) grasped the leadership opportunities to shape devolution in Wales over a decade-long period. The most significant development since 1999 has been the emergence of a recognisable Welsh political and partisan leadership, symbolised for most of the period by the figure of Labour First Minister Rhodri Morgan and the rhetoric of ‘clear red water’. Over the first decade, we observed a strengthening of bureaucratic and advisory resources at the disposal of the political leadership in general and the First Minister in particular.

As in Scotland, the First Minister has developed his own powerful group of advisors – in part civil servants, part political appointees – with particular expertise in the area of European Union policy (Lynch, 1996). The longevity of First Minister Morgan’s tenure (almost ten years) had as a by-product the soaking up of new responsibilities within what has become the Department of First Minister in Cabinet. Under First Minister Carwyn Jones, the Department of First Minister in Cabinet was described by insiders as part of the ‘strategic centre’, with responsibilities for the office of the First Minister, the Cabinet Secretariat (which plans and coordinates the cabinet's work programme), the ministerial support division, constitutional affairs and public administration, Europe and external affairs, communications and knowledge and analytical services. The management of EU affairs in particular has strengthened the role of the First Minister and his advisors, if more by entrepreneurship than by institutional design.

Elsewhere, forms of regional territorial leadership were more or less affirmed. In France, the presidency of the regional council has become a far more visible public office since the creation of the French regions in 1986 (Cole, 2006). In the case of Brittany, the former regional President Jean Yves Le Drian is Defence minister in the Ayrault and Valls governments and keeps a close eye on regional affairs. In Andalusia, regional leadership is powerful because the Andalusian region is the only one still led by the PSOE; its leader, Susanna Diaz, frequently featured in the media. PSOE regional leadership is deeply contested, however, by the PP mayors in Andalusia’s large cities. In Wallonia, the leadership function came closest to the transactional model, reflecting the practice of permanent coalition and bargaining between party leaders, none of whom could gain lasting ascendancy over the others.

Centrality of Regional Networks?

How central are regional political institutions for the function of territorial policy communities? I have argued elsewhere that Brittany traditionally scored highly in terms of
institutional inter-connectivity and social capital, embodied by traditions of inter-communal co-operation, close informal relationships between regional politicians and representatives of the state field services, a vibrant associative life, strong electoral participation and robust social networks (Cole, 2006). One indicator of the capacity of the devolved institutions in Wales to establish their legitimacy lay in their gradual ability to serve as institutional arenas for the expression of local and regional networks. All-Wales organisations gradually emerged within civil society as a response to the new devolved institutions; even professional organisations (the CBI and TUC notably) reluctantly recognised the need to take devolution into account in their own organisation. There remained some resistance to aspects of the devolved government by the leading business organisation, the CBI and a mainly UK-wide focus for the TUC. Key professional and business groups looked to a national or European-level of regulation. In Wallonia, there is a tradition of party clientelism and low trust (within, as well as between communities), but also a strongly refined art of compromise. In Andalusia, finally, there is a tradition of party division and low trust, exacerbated by the political incongruence between the region and its main cities, where the Popular Party scored victories in key municipal elections in 2011.

Is there evidence of tensions between cities and regions? One characteristic of our family of regions is the prevalence of a mode of regional territorial governance. In each case, however, there were elements of competition between the leading city and the regional authorities, somewhat variable on account of party political dynamics. In the case of Wales, the capital city, Cardiff, has not initially supported the creation of the National Assembly for Wales in 1998, but its competition between Cardiff and broader Welsh perspectives. In the Breton case, the regional capital Rennes looked to more integrated models of urban governance such as that of Lyons – and resented claims for equality of treatment from Brest, the second ‘metropole’. In Andalusia, there was a vigorous competition between the Socialist-led Junta and the leading local authorities, captured by the Popular Party in the 2011 municipal elections: the PP-A finally took control of the FAMP (the Local Government Federation of Andalusia) through the mayor of Marbella, María Ángeles Muñoz in 2012. The introduction by the Madrid government of a law strengthening the provincial governments (late 2013) aggravated tensions further.

Finally, in Wallonia, the regional capital, Namur, was chosen mainly to avoid arbitrating between the larger cities of Charleroi and Liege, the global city of Brussels providing a special case, formally outside of the region (but francophone community). In our four regions, a regional mode of regulation prevailed over and above the competition provided by alternative local arrangements or forms of city government. Such a conclusion would undoubtedly not be valid for modes of urban-centred governance, but it is valid for our family of regions.

Existence of a Regional Identity

Our survey in Brittany in 2013 (and work carried out in the region since the mid-1990s) uncovered a tried and tested territorial model that had repeatedly proved its worth in terms of obtaining scarce resources from central government. In regions such as Brittany, with a strong territorial political capacity, economic crisis strengthens (initially, at least) existing mental maps and collective action responses. The events of Autumn 2013 – the crisis, the direct action, and the temporary resolution by a promise of central state investment – recalled how effective the instrumental use of identity politics could be in the short term. Bretons revolted and Breton achieved short-term gains. The social movement of Autumn 2013 confirmed key features of the territorial action repertoire (not necessarily coherent in all of its
dimensions), most specifically the efficacy of direct relationships with Paris, the instrumental use of identity, the spectre of disorder, the mobilisation of past symbols of Brittany’s specificity, the united front of (some) Breton employers and employees in defence of their collective territorial goods.

On the basis of the 2013 fieldwork, Andalusia was less capable of sustaining a territory wide discourse, more tied into traditional partisan and centre-periphery cleavages and undermined by low trust. In Wales (2013) and Wallonia (2014), the saliency of the theme of economic crisis was weaker than in Brittany or Andalusia, suggesting that territorial policy communities were bound up (in spite of themselves) with institutional futures and political decentralisation. In no case, however, did economic crisis alone undermine existing action repertoires, or empower alternative economic and territorial models. Economic crisis strengthens existing collective action registers.

**Conclusion**

Any analytical grid will tend to orient the vision of the researchers towards certain features of territorial governance (Foster and Barnes, 2012, 272-283). Is the framework proposed appropriate for the question in hand? Understanding territorial governance in a period of economic crisis and political instability requires combining these material and constructed dimensions and making a judgement about how well they cope with exogenous change. The territorial political capacity framework allows the researchers to draw an empirical picture of the way the territorial models cope with change. It proposes a heuristically useful theoretical mix that facilitates the understanding of how actors construct their political actions over time, how accepted ways of operating influence forms of collective action, and how actors can continue to be mobilised by discourses and practices which might be unsuitable to changing circumstances.

The above discussion has demonstrated ‘within-case’ variation, but also allows us to identify general features of second-order strong identity regions. In contrast to the richer, more autonomous minded regions, these second order strong identity regions value territorial solidarity above everything else. Arguments of socio-economic justice are mobilised to justify continuing transfers: for example, the historical debt of Spain towards Andalusia; needs-based arguments in Wales, the region’s peripheral status in the case of Brittany; the severe challenges of industrial reconversion in Wallonia. In each case, playing on territorial identity was a useful lever to extract resources in a context of multi-level governance (from central government and the European Union). In each case, the pursuit of socio-economic interests and preservation of existing welfare traditions and financial transfers placed boundaries on using territorial identity to support more autonomous forms of governance. Ultimately, the social-democratic character of these regions (their preference for solidarity and cross-national transfers) was more important than their penchant for more autonomous forms of governance.

The general framework is used here to compare four second-order strong identity regions, but it ought to have a more general usage. Comparing city governments, for example, also involves combining material and constructed variables (economic dynamism, formal legal competencies, fiscal autonomy and capacity, the party system, city visions and traditions, forms of urban political leadership, urban coalitions and narratives of the city’s common good). In the case of city governments, or city regions, the balance between these variables is very likely to be different; stand-alone fiscal autonomy, for example, is much more likely to be a fundamental source of differentiation than in the case of our family of
regions. The framework makes good comparative sense, however, in that it is likely to allow for the differentiation between clusters of territorial authorities.

Anyhow, this framework must be considered as a first step towards the construction of a more solid analytical grid of regional capacity based on mixed-methods approach. Obviously, the TPC suffer from some limitations. Firstly, it is much more difficult and time-consuming to lead than the RAI. It requires a very good knowledge of the fieldworks, and as a consequence it does not allow comparing so many cases at once. Despite these limits, the use of mixed-methods can improve our knowledge of regional capacity. Time will tell if this is a promising way or an intellectual dead-end.

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In each region, the sample of interviewees included three groups: officials, politicians and practitioners (available upon request). All interviewees were selected according to a territorial criterion (to include people working at the local, provincial [where appropriate] and regional levels) and a political criterion (to represent the left-right and centre-periphery cleavages). Interviews generally lasted between 45 minutes and one hour and they were processed through the NVivo 10 software.

29 interviews were carried out in the French region of Brittany from July to September 2013.

To ensure the stability of the economic and monetary union of Belgium, the Federal Authority maintains its authority for matters of monetary policy, price policy, policy on competition, income policy and (part of) social security policy.

This conclusion was shared in interviews in the Wallon Regional Council and the Belgian central bank in January-February 2014, as part of the 24 interviews carried out in Belgium as part of the Leverhulme Trust project.

Interview, Welsh Government, 2013

Interviews with Welsh Liberal Democrat Assembly members, 2013

Interviews with Conservative Assembly members, 2013

Interviews with a former Plaid Cymru leader and other Assembly members, 2013

Banding refers to the post-2010 practice of grouping Schools into five ‘bands’ using performance data to highlight good and bad practice within the sector. The Welsh Government has stated that banding is not about ‘labelling schools, naming and shaming or creating a divisive league table’ but is designed to facilitate the identification of priorities for differentiated support, models of best practice and evidence bases discussion (Welsh Government 2013). Critics – most notably the teaching Unions - have argued that the school banding system is ‘fundamentally flawed’ and represents league tables by the backdoor (NASUWT 2012).

Regional consortia were established to add value to what local authorities could effectively achieve on their own, for example, facilitating the sharing of best practice, knowledge and skills, magnify local strengths and build capacity. In addition, collaboration between local authorities would reduce back office costs and provide a more effective use of human resources.

Targets were established to allow Welsh schools to perform better according to the PISA benchmarks.

Interviews in the Fédération Bruxelles-Wallonie, January 2014.

Interview with Le Drian’s cabinet, September 2013.

Evidence from interviews

A note of scepticism was sounded in some of the 2013 interviews, especially in relation to Doux, whose PDG had reputedly invested EU funds in new factories in Brazil that were now competing with Breton producers.