

Mayoral Scalar Strategies and the Role of the Central State after the Financial Crisis

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Much has been written about state rescaling, politics of scale and the rise of cities and regions in Europe. Little is known, however, about the impact of the financial crisis on these processes. By taking the view of city mayors, this paper presents a comprehensive and timely re-evaluation of central tenets of this literature in the turbulent aftermath of the financial crisis. The analysis shows the variegated pathways of state rescaling before and after the financial crisis, the multi-faceted scalar strategies with which mayors have responded in different countries and cities, and the impact of such strategies on their perception of a centralisation towards the national state. The paper concludes by emphasising the continued dominance of the central state, whereas potentials for the rise of cities are rather to be sought at subnational than at European or global scales.

Keywords: mayors; state rescaling; decentralisation; Euro-regionalism; financial crisis

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Introduction

State rescaling theory departs from the observation of a fundamental transformation of the state taking place since the 1970s. After the erosion of the Fordist production system and the related national Keynesian welfare state, globalization and neo-liberal policies have been portrayed as ‘hollowing out’ the nation state (Jessop 1994). The term of ‘glocalisation’ has been introduced for denoting a twin-process by which state regulatory arrangements and economic networks are rescaled from the national scale upwards to supra-national scales, but also downwards towards more localised scales such as cities and regions (Swyngedouw 1997). Throughout Europe, decentralisation reforms have purportedly aimed at forcing cities and regions to compete at the international scale through locational policies and through the re-constitution of policy-making authority at the city-regional scale (Brenner 2004). Therefore, rather than a retreat of the state, what is found is a ‘relativisation of scale’: “[I]n contrast to the privileging of the national economy and the national state in the period of Atlantic Fordism, no spatial scale is currently privileged” (Jessop 1998, 90; cited in Brenner 1999, 436).

Along similar lines, a growing literature has seen European cities and regions as being on the rise, taking advantage of the opportunities offered by both European integration and processes of globalization (Le Galès 1995, 2002; Hamedinger and Wolffhardt 2010a; Keating 2013; Hooghe and Marks 2016). After autonomous city states had been absorbed by nation states, a loosening of the grip of the state and the redistribution of authority through the European integration process have supposedly led to a ‘historical interlude’, with “multiple competing centres and interdependent forms of authority that favour the autonomy of cities” (Le Galès 2002, 7).

However, as will be discussed in this paper, theories of glocalisation and state rescaling have been seriously questioned (Cox 2004, 2009; Tsukamoto and Vogel 2007). Also, the tenets of European regionalism and the Europeanisation of cities have become increasingly difficult to conciliate with general perceptions of a European Union in crisis and an apparent trend of recentralization after the global financial crisis of 2007 (cp. Bolgherini 2014; Göymen and Sazak 2014; Ruano and Profiroiu 2017).

Here I take a bottom-up perspective, exploring the views of European city mayors¹ for addressing central claims of the Europeanisation and state rescaling literature. I follow Neil Brenner's (2009, 134) call for re-evaluating its core theoretical generalizations by comparatively investigating concrete pathways of state rescaling, possible "ruptures, breaks, or crises" punctuating path-dependent developments, and context-specific urban rescaling strategies:

- (1) Are city mayors across Europe actually experiencing a general shift of power from the national to lower levels of the state? Can we discern different pathways of state rescaling? Is there a trend towards recentralisation after the financial crisis?
- (2) Which scalar strategies do European city mayors pursue for addressing their most important local issues in fiscally difficult times? Can we identify patterns

¹ The analyses presented in this paper draw from the two rounds of the POLLEADER survey, conducted in 2003/2004 and in 2015/2016 (see Heinelt et al. forthcoming), addressing all mayors of municipalities above 10'000 inhabitants (average response rate of 36.7% and 39%, respectively). The question wording and coding of the used items is presented in the appendix (table 4).

of Euro-regionalism, with local-regional partnerships bypassing the national state by recurring to EU Structural Funds?

- (3) Are European cities and regions devising such strategies actually regaining political strength vis-à-vis the nation state?

Path dependencies, urban rescaling strategies and the ‘relativisation’ of the central state

European decentralisation, as a central tenet of state rescaling theory, has been seriously questioned by Kevin Cox, noting that “whatever decentralization might have been achieved [in Europe] pales in comparison with that which has been characteristic of the USA for a very long time” (2009, 118). Moreover, in his view, the centralisation of the UK under Thatcher demonstrates the strongly embedded nature of institutions, inhibiting the expected European convergence towards a decentralised state (Cox 2004). More generally, rescaling and globalisation theory has been criticised for the neglect of centralisation as an option for ongoing rescaling processes as evidenced in about half of all world cities (Tsukamoto and Vogel 2007; for mega-cities see Kübler and Lefèvre 2017).

Comparative research on local government systems and centre-local relations has highlighted the large variation of vertical relations across Europe. Departing from a simple distinction of centralised countries of a Southern type and more local autonomy in countries of a Northern type (Page and Goldsmith 1987), refinements have related to the moderate local autonomy in Anglo-Saxon countries (Hesse and Sharpe 1991), central supervision in the Nordic welfare states and cooperative relations in Germanic federalist countries (Loughlin and Peters 1997). Even so, as argued by Goldsmith and Page (2010), the picture has become increasingly blurred due to regionalisation trends

in the Southern group, democratic transformation of countries in Eastern Europe, and centralisation trends apparent in the unitary countries of the Northern type.

Building on a recent analysis (Dlabac, Lackowska, and Kübler forthcoming), I wish to confront mayoral perceptions of vertical power relations with the general assumption of decentralisation implied in rescaling theory. I revert to the argument of path dependent regionalisation reforms employed by Loughlin and Peters (1997). To start with, the authors distinguish between genuine efforts for political regionalisation and administrative regionalisation resulting from the requirements of EU funding schemes (e.g., Portugal, Greece). Beyond that, they emphasise the role of ‘state traditions’ for comprehending the motives and the success of state reforms. State traditions are understood as encapsulating national experiences and values with regard to the state, which can be generalised for four country groups: Anglo-Saxon, Germanic, French (or Napoleonic), and Scandinavian (for an extended typology see Kuhlmann and Wollmann 2014). By considering a possible reversal of decentralisation after the financial crisis, I thus propose the following first hypothesis (H1): *Decentralisation across Europe follows patterns of national traditions of the state. State traditions and motives of reform condition the success of decentralisation reforms, but also the degree of recentralisation after the financial crisis of 2007.*

Against this background, I would like to test the assumptions on urban rescaling strategies, particularly the ones coupled with ideas of European regionalism and the Europeanisation of cities. Whereas Neil Brenner has always insisted that the central state continues to play a central role in the rescaling of the state, in his seminal work he also identifies various alternative rescaling strategies emerging in the 1990s as a bottom-up response to the regulatory deficits of the rescaled state (Brenner 2004, chap. 6). Firstly, the neighbourhood scale has increasingly been mobilised for making use of

national and EU programmes against social exclusion. Secondly, the 1990s have also seen the creation of ‘new state spaces’ at the metropolitan scale, although not in the hierarchic, top-down manner as during the Keynesian-Fordist area. Lastly, the European Union has also greatly facilitated the spread of interurban networking initiatives, being viewed “both by municipalities and by the European Commission as a means to circumvent national governments in pursuit of their own regulatory agendas” (Brenner 2004, 288).

With regard to the role of regional government in urban rescaling strategies, we can refer to the idea of Euro-regionalism as investigated by Gordon MacLeod (1999). Looking at the particular instance of the Strathclyde European partnership, he describes how local and regional political coalitions have actually articulated with the European Commission in order to bypass the national state. Citing Lloyd and Meegan (1996, 78), MacLeod (1999, 238) asserts that “in certain local contexts, European funding has become conceived of as something of ‘a treasure chest of funds for development at a time of sharp [national] fiscal stringency’”. Even though MacLeod regarded a general trend of Euro-regionalism as unlikely, particularly in those unitary countries where the national government has abused its role as a gatekeeper to EU funds, we might still investigate patterns of mayoral scalar strategies and the underlying motivations in the context of the enlarged European Union and acute fiscal pressures. I thus propose as the second hypothesis (H2): *After the financial crisis, cities in cohesion countries have clung to the European Union, bypassing the national state by forming local-regional partnerships for extracting funds from the European Union.*

Related to the above-cited literatures on the hollowing out of the state and urban politics of scale, I would further like to address the bold thesis by Patrick Le Galès (1995, 2002) regarding the rise of cities as collective actors regaining political strength

in relation to the national state. Research on the Europeanisation of cities has built upon his conceptions, stating that “cities and regions have regained the position they formerly occupied prior to the emergence of modern nation states”, comparing today’s cities with the Italian city states and the cities of the Hanseatic league (Atkinson and Rossignolo 2008a, 8). However, Le Galès (2002, 110) was cautious of predicting a general trend of decentralisation:

there is no such thing as a Europe of regions or cities in the making; instead we have a ‘variable-geometry’ Europe within which cities and regions sometimes becomes actors or systems of action. The EU is also being built from below, by social and political actors in regions and cities: constructing, resisting, fighting, and adapting to new rules, opportunities, and constraints.

In his view, it is in some medium-sized and large cities, where elected representatives and dynamic mayors are actually seizing the opportunities for mobilizing local identities and developing links towards the EU, the state, the region, or other cities (Le Galès 2002, 259). Explanations for the variable engagement with the EU have been sought in city-specific attitudes towards the EU (Goldsmith and Klausen 1997), but also in the role of cities within the national institutional context, the time of EU accession, and in local administrative capacities and political cultures (Hamedinger and Wolffhardt 2010b). Whereas intergovernmental relations in Federal countries remained largely unaffected (Wolffhardt et al. 2005), in centralised countries, local actors have seized the opportunity for institutional reform and modernisation, namely also in the new member states in Central Eastern Europe (Hamedinger and Wolffhardt 2010b). In consideration of the very different national state structures, but also the expected conditioning role of national traditions of the state, I formulate a third hypothesis (H3) as follows: *Within single countries, larger cities pursuing a Euro-regionalist strategy are actually able to*

'relativise' the role of the national state. This is most clearly observable in traditionally centralised countries and in the new cohesion countries in Central Eastern Europe.

European pathways of state rescaling

A look at institutional measures of local autonomy (Ladner, Keuffer, and Baldersheim 2015) and regional authority (Hooghe et al. 2016) reveals that the sizeable decentralisation under way in various countries around the 2000's (Italy, Spain, Czech Republic, Poland, England), has ceased to continue after the financial crisis of 2007 (Dlabac, Lackowska, and Kübler forthcoming). Instead, recentralisation has become apparent in Hungary, Spain, England, Ireland and Denmark, but arguably also in Greece and Portugal after their territorial and administrative reforms.

This picture is to large extent also confirmed by the city mayors' views across Europe (figure 1). In the early 2000's (upper panel), a shift of power from the national to the regional level was appreciated by mayors in the South and East of Europe, whereas a decentralisation towards both the regional and local level was the common perception in Central Eastern European countries.² In contrast, Swedish and English

² The analysis is based on two survey items, asking for the perceived shifts of influence over the last decade, distinguishing two axes: a) "regional" and "national" and b) "local" and "regional" (see table 4 in the appendix). Unfortunately, neither of the two surveys included an item on perceived power shifts on a direct axis between 'local' and 'national'. Particularly for countries where regional authorities have no supervision over local governments, we must be aware that centralisation needs not to involve regions as intermediaries (e.g., Denmark, Greece, Hungary, Poland, Sweden; see Table 16.4 in Bertrana and Heinelt 2011). Nonetheless, even in these countries the regional level can serve as a benchmark against which the influence of local and national level is being assessed.

mayors clearly perceived centralisation at that time (the latter possibly under the impression of the UK asymmetric devolution) while in Denmark mayors seem to have anticipated the redistribution of previous regional authority towards both the local and national level.

[Figure 1 near here]

After the financial crisis, however, the picture changes considerably (lower panel). In Hungary, and less markedly in Portugal, the general view has now shifted towards outright recentralisation, which can be linked to recent administrative reforms in these countries (OECD 2015; Teles 2016). Yet in general, for most countries, most mayors are indecisive regarding the recent path of vertical power relations, clustering around the centre of the figure. What remains are sustained regionalisation in the cases of France and federal Belgium, polarising tendencies in Denmark (now joined by England and Hungary), and continued perceptions of lingering subnational centralisation within the federal countries of Germany and Switzerland.

The absence of a general decentralisation trend is further emphasised when comparing institutional levels of local and regional authority in absolute terms (appendix, figure 4). Considerable levels of regional authority were achieved by Belgium, Spain, Italy and – to lesser extent – France, but not in the remaining countries of Southern or Eastern Europe. Similarly, local autonomy was consolidated in Poland and the Czech Republic, but dismantled in Hungary and Greece (cp. OECD 2015; Hlepas and Getimis 2011).

This short analysis illustrates the absence of any convergence towards a decentralised state in post-Fordist Europe. Even though we find common rescaling dynamics clustered around country groups of various state traditions, the assumption of

a recentralisation after the financial crisis is substantiated only in the case of few countries. Rather, the findings lend support to the concept of the diffusion of ideas and the possible ‘fad and fashion’ of state reforms (cp. Loughlin and Peters 1997, 42). In this interpretation, genuine political regionalisation reforms in Spain and France may, encouraged by the European Commission, have diffused along countries of the Southern or Eastern European – whereas such reforms found no fertile grounds in countries with Anglo-Saxon or Scandinavian state tradition. Different to France and Spain, the regionalisation achieved in most other countries has remained limited or even regressive, indicating the relevance of a genuine motivation for political reform.

Scalar strategies and motives of European mayors

In order to assess a mayor’s scalar strategies, I rely on a survey item referring to the most important challenge on the mayor’s policy agenda for his or her city. We would expect a mayor pursuing a Euro-regionalist strategy to indicate a heavy reliance on the cooperation and support by the regional government, to search horizontal cooperation with other cities in the region, while at the same time assigning an important role to the EU. The national government, in contrast, should play a clearly less important role as compared to the regional level.

As shown in figure 2, a cluster analysis performed upon the scalar strategies of mayors across Europe does not reveal any substantial share of mayors combining their scalar strategies in the ways predicted by Euro-regionalism. Instead, we find four clusters of mayoral strategies, spread very unequally across the surveyed countries (see table 1).

[Figure 2 near here]

[Table 1 near here]

Mayors in non-EU countries and federalist countries give little importance to supranational institutions, pursuing either a passive strategy with inclinations to a regional recourse (dotted polygon in figure 2), or a combined strategy of regional and national and possibly horizontal linkages (light grey polygon). The same pattern extends to Netherlands, France and, somewhat unexpectedly, the Czech Republic. In contrast, mayors in Sweden, Hungary, Slovenia and Portugal, apparently lacking suitable cooperation partners at the regional level, rely very strongly on horizontal cooperation, national support and the EU (black polygon). Mayors in the other countries move somewhere in between these extremes, with a tiny share of mayors pursuing all strategies at once (dark grey polygon labelled as ‘holistic’ strategy).

Rather than Euro-regionalism postulated in hypothesis 2, we find that active mayors across Europe pursue multi-level strategies, usually including the national government as important cooperation partner. Against claims of its ‘relativisation’ and ‘hollowing out’, the unchallenged dominance of the national state has once again come to the fore after the financial crisis. On the other hand, the results also demonstrate how regional governments have become relevant partners of cities in most countries of the Southern type, and in many countries in Central Eastern Europe. Moreover, the European Union has remained an important reference to mayors after the financial crisis, particularly in cohesion and pre-accession countries, but also in countries phased out from the European Structural Funds, notably Sweden and England. It is just that the recourse to the EU does not occur in any form of demarcation from the national state.

Clearly, the importance of the national state revealed in this analysis must not necessarily be related to EU funding and the national government’s role in negotiating and managing national and regional operational programmes (for a description of the procedures see Stephenson 2016). Nonetheless, the central role of the national state

might be partially enhanced by a shift in the strategy of the European Commission. As clarified by Michael Keating, the idea of a Europe of the Regions peaking in the Maastricht Treaty of 1992 was only of minor relevance in the Lisbon Treaty of 2007, then returning to an intergovernmental, rather than supranational, path (Keating 2013, 193). Correspondingly, in the field of urban policies, the EU still seems to recognize a dominant role for national governments (Atkinson and Rossignolo 2008b, 264).

Besides the role of the national state, we must also scrutinise the assumed partnership of cities and regions with regard to EU funding. At his time, Andy Smith (1998) indicated that the battle for EU funding has actually been fought at the sub-regional scale, with the outcome depending on national power configurations and political mobilisation at various levels of the state. In fact, within the URBAN community initiative for the years 2000-2006, cities were the direct receivers of urban programmes. With their integration into the Structural Funds in 2007, however, these programmes have moved into the sole responsibility of regional authorities, now making the involvement of cities dependent on the regional capacity for effective partnerships (Dossi 2017, 127).

Independently from the issue of Euro-regionalism, the regression models presented in table 2 give further insights into mayoral motives and attitudes related to the single components of mayoral scalar strategies. Whereas mayors declaring the search of external resources as their important task are significantly more likely to pursue regional, national and EU strategies, mayors highlighting the representative task of mayors tend to be more engaged in efforts to cooperate horizontally with other cities in the region. Irrespective of the particular rescaling strategy, active mayors tend to emphasise their role of defending the influence of local authorities in the political system. Interestingly, mayors perceiving the financial situation of their city as poor are

more likely to pursue both a national and an EU strategy. Their city's position in the urban hierarchy, however, does not seem to matter for their scalar engagements (coefficients reported in the appendix, table 5).

[Table 2 near here]

The regression further complements the observations made above with regard to the varying cross-national patterns of rescaling strategies. Regional strategies are more likely in more regionalised countries, whereas national strategies are less common in federal countries and in countries with higher levels of local autonomy. European strategies, lastly, are dominant in both cohesion and pre-accession countries.

Mayoral strategies and the 'relativisation' of the national scale

Let us turn to the third hypothesis, assuming an impact of urban scalar strategies on the 'relativisation' of the national scale after the financial crisis. Given the different national pathways of state rescaling, we focus on within-country variation, trying to explain a mayor's relative assessment of power shift towards the central state as compared to the general perception within his or her country. This is achieved through regression models with country fixed effects, separately for different groups of countries with common characteristics (table 3).

Even though we have found little support for a strategy of Euro-regionalism intended to bypass the national state, we should not hastily preclude the possibility of a combined effect of a regional and an EU strategy, irrespective of the involvement of the national state. The first model therefore includes an interaction term for these two strategies and tests it for the particular set of countries being entitled to the EU cohesion fund – the context disposing the strongest links towards the EU. As illustrated in figure 3, the more a city engages in a regional strategy, the less it tends to experience a shift of

influence towards the national level. While a regional strategy appears to support a differential ‘relativisation’ of the national scale, there is no indication of an added effect when combining this strategy with an EU strategy (the regression line actually becoming flatter for the combined strategy).

If we discard Euro-regionalism as a local strategy for ‘relativising’ the role of the national scale, we might take a closer look at the single components of mayoral scalar strategies across different state traditions. As found by Wolffhardt et al. (2005), federal countries seem not to leave much room for urban activities to effectively challenge established cooperative relations. For Nordic countries, characterised by strong local autonomy but weak regionalisation, we find some evidence for horizontal relations contributing to a relativisation of the central state. The two models calculated for Napoleonic and Central Eastern European (CEE) countries confirm the emancipating effect of the regional strategy illustrated for the group of cohesion countries in figure 3. Lastly, no systematic scalar effects are found for Southern Eastern European (SEE) countries.

[Table 3 near here]

[Figure 3 near here]

Although we can confirm scalar mayoral strategies to be relevant in cohesion countries of Southern and Eastern Europe, as expected in the third hypothesis, the link to Europeanisation in these countries remains underspecified, both in the regression models as well as in the theory on the Europeanisation of cities. Not only is there no combined effect by a Euro-regionalist strategy, also the independent effect of an EU strategy turns out as insignificant in all models. Moreover, the expectation of an effect of city size or a city’s position in the urban hierarchy is definitely less clear than

expected by Le Galès (2002) and much of the ensuing Europeanisation literature. As suggested by the regression models for Nordic and Southern Eastern European countries, central cities of capital or secondary regions (see interaction term in models) might either be more successful in resisting centralisation (Nordic countries), or they might inversely be the selected target of central state intervention (SEE countries).

Conclusion

This paper has sought to re-evaluate core propositions of the literature on state rescaling, politics of scale, and the resurgence of cities and regions as political actors – yet in a time of strong fiscal pressures throughout the state structures of Europe. While the global financial crisis has clearly demonstrated the interdependency of national economies and the constrained room for independent domestic action, it is also true that the emerging multilevel governance system with strongly enmeshed responsibilities has allowed the nation state “to shape and very much remain at the heart of this new governance structure” (Lobao, Martin, and Rodríguez-Pose 2009, 5). Under the impression of the financial crisis and revived state interventions, Bob Jessop (2013) has equally shifted the focus from ‘hollowing out’ of the state to approaches of multi-level governance, arguing that the “national state is being reinvented rather than superseded but needs new ways of operating to meet new challenges” (Jessop 2013, 23).

The findings in this paper amply support the notion of a multi-levelled state structure in Europe as well as the central role of national governments within that structure. However, the comparative analysis of institutional measures and mayoral perceptions give a more detailed and comprehensive view on the actual decentralisation achieved as well as the resulting re-orientations at subnational levels in different countries and contexts.

Rather than a general ‘hollowing out’ (Jessop 1994) of the European national state, we have found diverging pathways in different parts of Europe, with regionalisation reforms spreading along shared state trajectories in the South and East of Europe. Even though the differences towards truly regionalised and federalised countries remain, some countries even regressing in subnational autonomy after the financial crisis, in most countries regional governments have become important partners of cities for addressing their most pressing local challenges.

In a time of heightened fiscal pressures and a reinvigorated emphasis of the intergovernmental approach within the European Union, we find little evidence of mayors employing a Euro-regionalist strategy for bypassing their national state. Cities do best when establishing strong links towards all levels of government potentially responding to their financial needs, including the European Union. Given the strong financial motives of mayors, we might agree with Kevin Cox who questioned the assumption of cities and regions trying to build up large-scale infrastructure through metropolitan rescaling (cp. Brenner 2004). Instead, what stands to the fore is “a generalized struggle for central state spending” around claims of either territorial exploitation or territorial neglect by particular localities and regions (Cox 2009, 119).

Notwithstanding the centrality of national governments, the analysis of mayoral scalar strategies has shown that cities with strong horizontal and vertical links within their region have actually been able to regain their political strength with regard to the national state (Le Galès 2002). Although this applies most clearly for cities in cohesion countries to the South and East of Europe, the impact of Europeanisation and globalisation remains rather diffuse, since strategies towards the European Union and a city’s position in the urban hierarchy show no clear effects. While some European cities

might be ‘on the rise’, gaining confidence in subnational autonomy, European cities have remained more nationally ‘grounded’ than the term might suggest.

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Appendix

[Figure 4 near here]

[Table 4 near here]

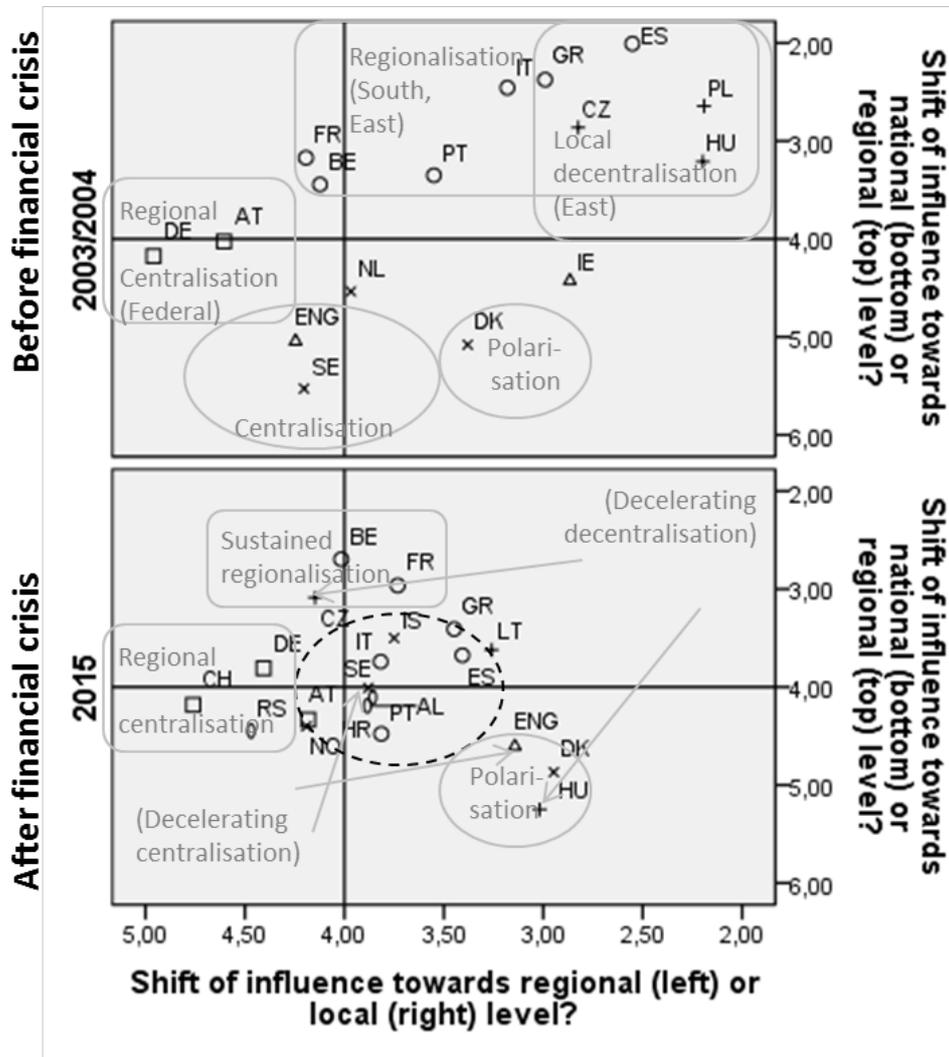
Online appendix

[Table 5 near here]

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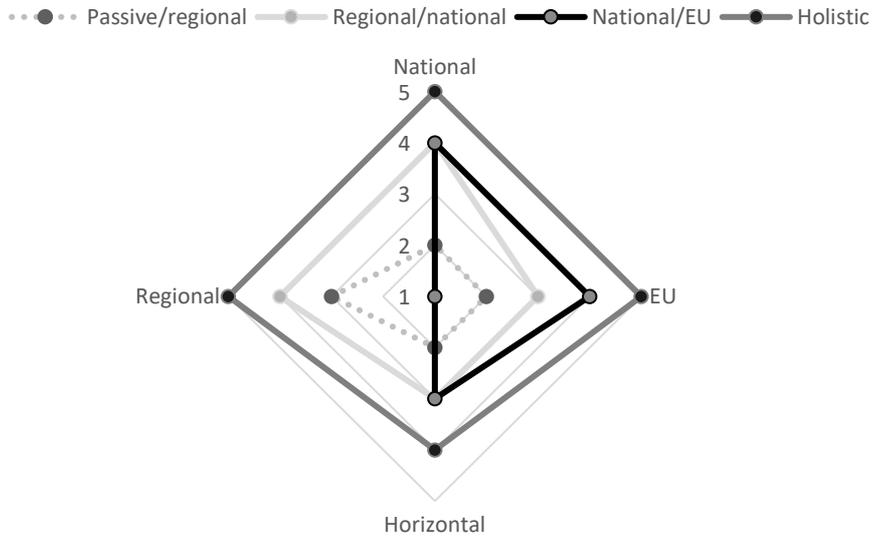
Figure 1. Mayors' perceptions of power shifts between state levels over decades preceding the two survey rounds, country averages



Source: Dlabac, Lackowska, and Kübler (forthcoming)

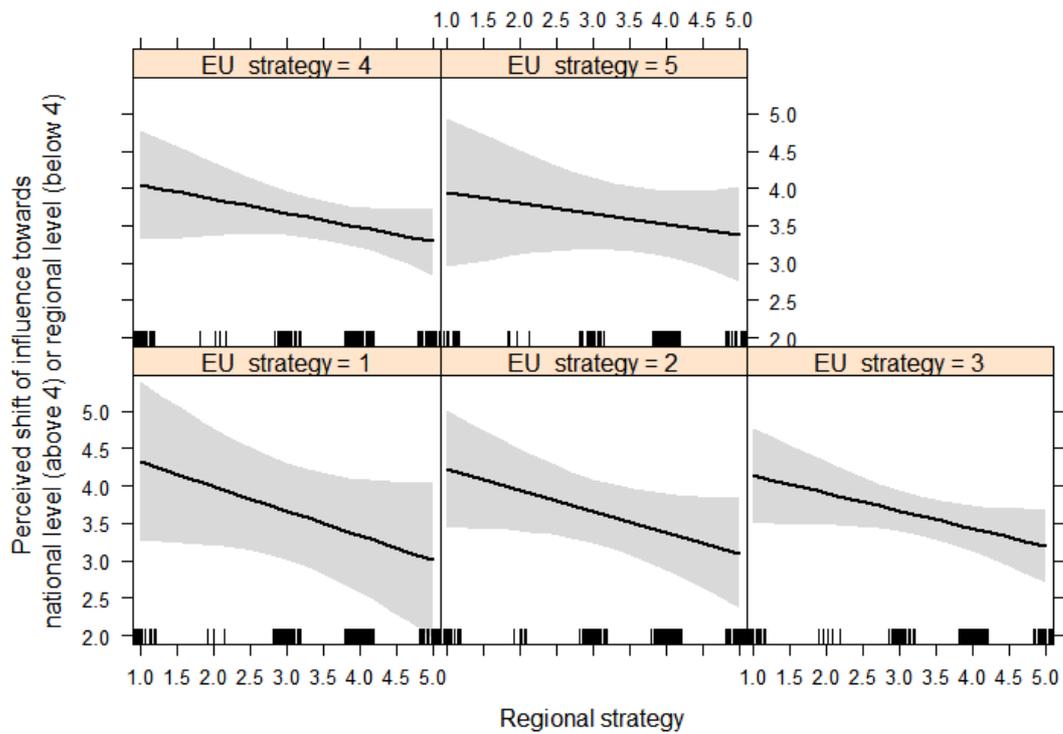
Notes: The reference lines at the value of four denote no change in the respective power relations. The axes were reverted for better comparability with the institutional map of decentralisation presented in the appendix (figure 4).

Figure 2. Clusters of mayoral scalar strategies, 2015



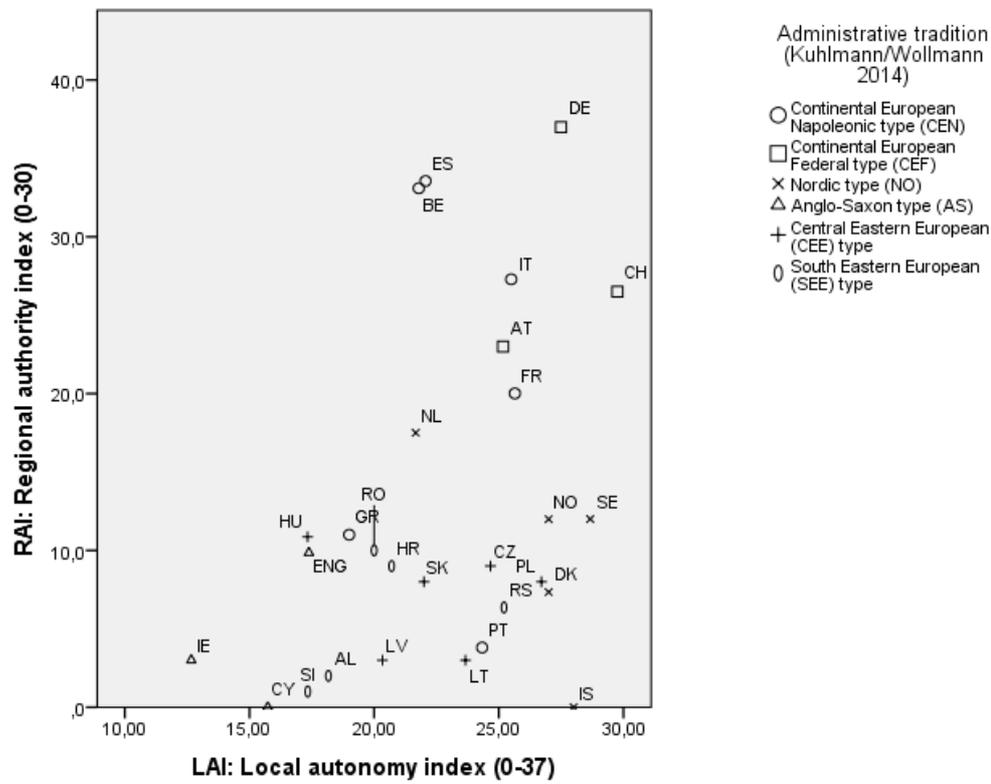
Notes: Polygons representing median values of hierarchical clusters (Ward method, Gower distances) at level of mayors throughout 28 countries (items missing for Denmark).

Figure 3. Conditional effects of a mayoral regional strategy on perceived power shifts, cohesion countries in 2015



Notes: Predicted values and 95% confidence intervals, conditional upon the intensity of the mayoral EU strategy, based on linear model presented in the online appendix (table 7).

Figure 4. Institutional map of regional authority (2010) and local autonomy (2014), countries participating at the POLLEADER survey



Source: Dlabac, Lackowska, and Kübler (forthcoming)

Notes: For the Regional Authority Index (Hooghe et al. 2016) the most recent available scores are for 2010, with values for England calculated based on the corresponding regional scores. Regarding the Local Autonomy Index (Ladner, Keuffer, and Baldersheim 2015), the values for England correspond to the UK, since subnational indices are not available.

Table 1. Country shares of mayors assigned to various clusters of scalar strategies, 2015

	Passive/ regional	Regional/ national	National/ EU	Holistic	Number of observations
Norway	62%	35%	0%	3%	37
Austria	50%	47%	0%	3%	34
Belgium	42%	54%	2%	2%	134
Iceland	40%	60%	0%	0%	5
Switzerland	40%	59%	0%	1%	96
Germany	38%	55%	1%	5%	577
Czech Republic	34%	59%	3%	3%	61
Netherlands	30%	67%	2%	1%	124
France	28%	64%	6%	3%	69
Poland	25%	54%	1%	20%	203
Sweden	18%	0%	82%	0%	117
Serbia	14%	36%	46%	4%	50
Croatia	12%	24%	65%	0%	34
England	12%	37%	42%	9%	43
Italy	11%	66%	1%	22%	246
Spain	11%	60%	0%	28%	303
Greece	10%	66%	8%	16%	99
Lithuania	10%	70%	7%	13%	30
Hungary	9%	0%	91%	0%	69
Slovenia	4%	0%	96%	0%	24
Albania	3%	70%	10%	17%	30
Portugal	3%	9%	86%	3%	80
TOTAL	25%	51%	14%	10%	2465

Notes: Countries sorted by share of mayors assigned to the passive scalar strategy. No shares reported for Cyprus, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia due to low number of responses. Items missing for Denmark.

Table 2. Logistic ordered two-level model for explaining single items of mayoral scalar strategy

	Horizontal strategy	Regional strategy	National strategy	EU strategy
LEVEL 1: MAYOR / CITY				
Importance assigned to mayoral tasks (0-4)				
- Represent the city to the outside world	0.17* (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.07)	0.02 (0.07)
- Attract external resources	0.03 (0.06)	0.26*** (0.07)	0.31*** (0.06)	0.40*** (0.07)
- Defend the influence of local authorities in the political system	0.23*** (0.06)	0.17** (0.06)	0.17** (0.06)	0.24*** (0.06)
Desirability of functional and territorial reforms (1-5)				
- Decentralisation of tasks to the municipalities	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
- Creating metropolitan government	0.13** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)
Financial situation of city perceived as (rather) poor	0.14 (0.11)	0.22 (0.12)	0.29** (0.11)	0.28* (0.11)
LEVEL 2: COUNTRY				
Local autonomy Index (Ladner et al., 2014)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.04 (0.09)	-0.10* (0.04)	
Regional authority Index (Hooghe et al., 2008)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.06* (0.03)		
Federalist country			-1.08** (0.41)	
Country status regarding EU (ref.: third country without Pre-Accession Assistance)				
- EU country entitled to Cohesion Fund				1.98*** (0.48)
- Other EU country				1.14* (0.47)
- Third country entitled to Pre-Accession Assistance				2.25*** (0.66)
Log Likelihood	-2218.46	-1820.58	-2180.03	-2285.94
Num. obs.	1605	1450	1626	1638
Groups (country)	23	21	24	25
Variance: country: (Intercept)	0.40	1.69	0.41	0.41

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Notes: Models additionally control for the size and hierarchic position of a city, left-right self-positioning of mayor, age, gender, and education (for complete model see appendix, table 5). Countries excluded due to missing data: Ireland, Poland, and the Netherlands, additionally Israel in the first three models, Slovenia in the first two models, and Hungary and Sweden in the second model.

Table 3. Logistic ordered model for explaining power shifts from regional to national level, by groups of countries

	Cohesion countries	Federalist	Nordic	Napoleonic	CEE	SEE
Horizontal strategy	-0.10 (0.15)	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.42* (0.20)	0.11 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.20)	0.16 (0.21)
Regional strategy	-0.49 (0.33)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.38 (0.58)	-0.22* (0.11)	-0.46* (0.23)	-0.11 (0.14)
National strategy	-0.21 (0.33)	0.02 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.18)	0.03 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.16)	0.20 (0.19)
EU strategy	-0.07 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.09)	0.22 (0.20)	0.06 (0.10)	0.18 (0.21)	0.09 (0.21)
- Regional x EU strategy	0.06 (0.09)					
Financial situation of city perceived as (rather) poor	0.79 (0.41)	0.15 (0.16)	0.48 (0.54)	0.37* (0.18)	0.41 (0.54)	-0.12 (0.39)
Population of municipality (log.)	-0.40 (0.28)	0.01 (0.15)	-0.42 (0.32)	0.10 (0.12)	-0.18 (0.34)	0.31 (0.26)
City type (ref.: city in smaller urban region)						
- Centre of a larger urban zone	-0.16 (0.58)	-0.01 (0.40)	2.21 (1.33)	-0.18 (0.31)	-0.64 (0.68)	-0.07 (0.80)
- Commuting city within a larger urban zone	-1.01 (0.71)	-0.10 (0.18)	-0.71 (0.57)	-0.04 (0.23)	-1.59 (0.96)	0.59 (0.62)
Capital or secondary functional urban area	0.56 (0.74)	-0.05 (0.20)	1.39* (0.71)	0.26 (0.27)	1.02 (1.02)	-0.91 (0.80)
- Centre x capital or secondary area	0.37 (1.31)	-0.02 (0.61)	-5.79* (2.33)	0.23 (0.47)	-0.58 (1.31)	4.78* (1.94)
Log Likelihood	-311.13	-1067.17	-205.77	-1070.57	-217.83	-210.96
Num. obs.	189	650	127	589	135	124

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Fixed country effects (not reported).

Notes: Fixed country effects (coefficients not reported). Models additionally control for left-right self-positioning of mayor, age, gender, and education (for complete model see appendix, table 6). Cohesion countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece,

Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia (excluding Hungary, Portugal and Slovenia due to limited adherence to regional level, see table 1). Federalist: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland. Nordic: Iceland, Norway, Sweden. Napoleonic: France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain. Central Eastern European (CEE): Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (item for national centralisation missing), Slovakia. Southern Eastern European (SEE): Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania. No model shown for Anglo-Saxon countries due to low response rates (Cyprus, England, Israel).

Table 4. Operationalization, question wording and measurement (POLLEADER II)

Concept	Question wording	Original scale and transformations
Mayoral perceptions of vertical power shifts	“Consequently, drawing on your experience of local political life, how would you characterize the changes in influence that have occurred in the last decade among the main actors in local affairs?”	
- regional vs. national level	- regional vs. national	1 (much more towards regional) – 4 (identical) – 7 (much more towards national)
- local vs. national level	- local vs. regional	1 (much more towards local) – 4 (identical) – 7 (much more towards regional)
Mayoral scalar strategies	“If you consider most important challenge [on your policy agenda for your city]: to what extent would you say that your administration depends on the cooperation and support of the different actors below in addressing this problem?”	1 (no dependency) to 5 (highly dependent)
- Horizontal strategy	- Other municipalities in the region	
- Regional strategy	- Regional government	
- National strategy	- National government	
- EU strategy	- The EU and other supranational organizations	
Importance assigned to mayoral tasks:	“Many different tasks are associated with the mayor’s position. How important do you think the following tasks are?”	0 (not a task of a mayor) to 4 (of utmost importance)
- Represent the city to the outside world	- To represent the city to the outside world	
- Attract external resources	- To attract resources from external sources (European/national/regional government, foundations, private investors and business)	
- Defend the influence of local authorities in the political system	- To defend and promote the influence of local authorities in the political system	
Desirability of functional and territorial reforms	“How desirable or undesirable do you consider the following reforms, irrespective of whether they have been introduced in your context?”	1 (highly undesirable) to 5 (highly desirable)
- Decentralization of tasks to the municipalities	- Decentralization of tasks to the municipalities	
- Creating metropolitan government	- Creating metropolitan government(s)	
Left-right self-positioning	“There is often talk about a left-right dimension in politics. Where would you place yourself on a left-right dimension?”	1 (left) to 10 (right)
(Rather) poor financial situation of municipality	“How would describe the financial situation of your municipality?”	1 (very poor) to 5 (very good) Dummy: 1/2 vs. 3/4/5

Online appendix

Table 5. Logistic ordered two-level model for explaining single items of mayoral scalar strategy (reporting all coefficients)

	Horizontal strategy	Regional strategy	National strategy	EU strategy
LEVEL 1: MAYOR / CITY				
Importance assigned to mayoral tasks (0-4)				
- Represent the city to the outside world	0.17* (0.07)	0.06 (0.07)	-0.10 (0.07)	0.02 (0.07)
- Attract external resources	0.03 (0.06)	0.26*** (0.07)	0.31*** (0.06)	0.40*** (0.07)
- Defend the influence of local authorities in the political system	0.23*** (0.06)	0.17** (0.06)	0.17** (0.06)	0.24*** (0.06)
Desirability of functional and territorial reforms (1-5)				
- Decentralisation of tasks to the municipalities	-0.03 (0.05)	-0.04 (0.05)	-0.07 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.05)
- Creating metropolitan government	0.13** (0.04)	-0.05 (0.05)	-0.03 (0.04)	0.13** (0.04)
Left-right self-positioning (0-10)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.05 (0.03)	-0.05* (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)
Age	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)	-0.01 (0.01)
Gender (male)	-0.15 (0.14)	-0.22 (0.16)	-0.28* (0.14)	-0.41** (0.14)
Highest completed education (ref.: elementary school)				
- Secondary school	0.31 (0.24)	-0.27 (0.25)	0.00 (0.24)	-0.20 (0.24)
- University	0.12 (0.22)	-0.12 (0.23)	-0.05 (0.22)	-0.28 (0.22)
Financial situation of city perceived as (rather) poor	0.14 (0.11)	0.22 (0.12)	0.29** (0.11)	0.28* (0.11)
Population of municipality (log.)	-0.14 (0.08)	-0.05 (0.09)	0.04 (0.08)	-0.04 (0.08)
City type (ref.: city in smaller urban region)				
- Centre of a larger urban zone	0.34 (0.21)	0.21 (0.23)	0.16 (0.21)	-0.07 (0.21)
- Commuting city within a larger urban zone	-0.06 (0.13)	0.06 (0.14)	-0.11 (0.13)	-0.25 (0.13)
	-0.04	-0.15	-0.10	-0.19

Capital or secondary functional urban area	(0.16)	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.15)
- Centre x capital or secondary functional urban area	-0.43 (0.32)	0.39 (0.36)	0.27 (0.33)	0.09 (0.32)
LEVEL 2: COUNTRY				
Local autonomy Index (Ladner et al., 2014)	-0.00 (0.04)	0.04 (0.09)	-0.10* (0.04)	
Regional authority Index (Hooghe et al., 2008)	-0.01 (0.01)	0.06* (0.03)		
Federalist country			-1.08** (0.41)	
Country status regarding EU (ref.: third country without Pre-Accession Assistance)				
- EU country entitled to Cohesion Fund				1.98*** (0.48)
- Other EU country				1.14* (0.47)
- Third country entitled to Pre-Accession Assistance				2.25*** (0.66)
Log Likelihood	-2218.46	-1820.58	-2180.03	-2285.94
AIC	4482.91	3687.16	4406.07	4619.87
BIC	4606.67	3808.59	4530.13	4749.50
Num. obs.	1605	1450	1626	1638
Groups (country)	23	21	24	25
Variance: country: (Intercept)	0.40	1.69	0.41	0.41

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Notes: Countries excluded due to missing data: Ireland, Poland, and the Netherlands, additionally Israel in the first three models, Slovenia in the first two models, and Hungary and Sweden in the second model.

Table 6. Logistic ordered model for explaining power shifts from regional to national level, by groups of countries (reporting all coefficients)

	Cohesion countries	Federalist	Nordic	Napoleonic	CEE	SEE
Horizontal strategy	-0.10 (0.15)	-0.07 (0.08)	-0.42* (0.20)	0.11 (0.08)	-0.06 (0.20)	0.16 (0.21)
Regional strategy	-0.49 (0.33)	-0.11 (0.09)	-0.38 (0.58)	-0.22* (0.11)	-0.46* (0.23)	-0.11 (0.14)
National strategy	-0.21 (0.33)	0.02 (0.09)	-0.03 (0.18)	0.03 (0.09)	-0.06 (0.16)	0.20 (0.19)
EU strategy	-0.07 (0.20)	-0.02 (0.09)	0.22 (0.20)	0.06 (0.10)	0.18 (0.21)	0.09 (0.21)
- Regional x EU strategy	0.06 (0.09)					
Left-right self-positioning (0-10)	0.04 (0.06)	0.01 (0.05)	0.00 (0.08)	-0.08* (0.04)	0.07 (0.07)	0.01 (0.07)
Age	0.00 (0.02)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.03 (0.02)	0.00 (0.01)	0.02 (0.02)	-0.05* (0.02)
Gender (1=male)	-0.26 (0.49)	-0.02 (0.26)	-0.29 (0.37)	0.12 (0.21)	0.79 (0.51)	-1.36* (0.69)
Highest completed education (ref.: elementary school)						
- Secondary school	-0.19 (1.64)	0.30 (0.27)	0.44 (1.16)	0.13 (0.72)	0.60 (1.82)	
- University	0.11 (1.55)	0.10 (0.22)	0.32 (1.16)	0.37 (0.70)	0.20 (1.60)	-0.31 (0.54)
Financial situation of city perceived as (rather) poor	0.79 (0.41)	0.15 (0.16)	0.48 (0.54)	0.37* (0.18)	0.41 (0.54)	-0.12 (0.39)
Population of municipality (log.)	-0.40 (0.28)	0.01 (0.15)	-0.42 (0.32)	0.10 (0.12)	-0.18 (0.34)	0.31 (0.26)
City type (ref.: city in smaller urban region)						
- Centre of a larger urban zone	-0.16 (0.58)	-0.01 (0.40)	2.21 (1.33)	-0.18 (0.31)	-0.64 (0.68)	-0.07 (0.80)
- Commuting city within a	-1.01 (0.71)	-0.10 (0.18)	-0.71 (0.57)	-0.04 (0.23)	-1.59 (0.96)	0.59 (0.62)

larger urban zone						
Capital or secondary functional urban area	0.56 (0.74)	-0.05 (0.20)	1.39* (0.71)	0.26 (0.27)	1.02 (1.02)	-0.91 (0.80)
- Centre x capital or secondary area	0.37 (1.31)	-0.02 (0.61)	-5.79* (2.33)	0.23 (0.47)	-0.58 (1.31)	4.78* (1.94)
AIC	680.26	2182.33	457.55	2191.14	485.66	469.91
BIC	774.27	2289.78	522.96	2300.60	558.29	537.60
Log Likelihood	-311.13	-1067.17	-205.77	-1070.57	-217.83	-210.96
Num. obs.	189	650	127	589	135	124

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05. Fixed country effects (not reported).

Notes: Cohesion countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia (excluding Hungary, Portugal and Slovenia due to limited adherence to regional level, see table 1). Federalist: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland. Nordic: Iceland, Norway, Sweden. Napoleonic: France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain. Central Eastern European (CEE): Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (item for national centralisation missing), Slovakia. Southern Eastern European (SEE): Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania. No model shown for Anglo-Saxon countries due to low response rates (Cyprus, England, Israel).

Table 7. Linear model for explaining power shifts from regional to national level

	Cohesion countries
(Intercept)	8.23*
	(3.25)
Horizontal strategy	-0.07
	(0.12)
Regional strategy	-0.38
	(0.27)
National strategy	-0.14
	(0.27)
EU strategy	-0.06
	(0.18)
- Regional x EU strategy	0.05
	(0.07)
Left-right self-positioning (0-10)	0.02
	(0.05)
Age	-0.00
	(0.01)
Gender (1=male)	-0.27
	(0.42)
Highest completed education (ref.: elementary school)	
- Secondary school	0.06
	(1.61)
- University	0.13
	(1.56)
Financial situation of city perceived as (rather) poor	0.61
	(0.33)
Population of municipality (log.)	-0.24
	(0.23)
City type (ref.: city in smaller urban region)	
- Centre of a larger urban zone	-0.21
	(0.48)
- Commuting city within a larger urban zone	-0.81
	(0.63)
Capital or secondary functional urban area	0.43
	(0.66)
- Centre x capital or secondary area	0.24
	(1.06)
Num. obs.	189
R ²	0.15
Adj. R ²	0.04
RMSE	1.50

*** p < 0.001, ** p < 0.01, * p < 0.05

Notes: Models additionally control for left-right self-positioning of mayor, age, gender, and education (for complete model see appendix, table 6). Cohesion countries: Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia (excluding Hungary, Portugal and Slovenia due to limited adherence to regional level, see table 1). Federalist: Austria, Belgium, Germany, Switzerland. Nordic: Iceland, Norway, Sweden. Napoleonic: France, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain. Central Eastern European (CEE): Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland (item for national centralisation missing), Slovakia. Southern Eastern European (SEE): Albania, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania. No model shown for Anglo-Saxon countries due to low response rates (Cyprus, England, Israel).