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Citation for published version:

Hepburn, E 2010, 'Small Worlds in Canada and Europe: A Comparison of Regional Party Systems in Québec, Bavaria and Scotland' *Regional & Federal Studies*, vol. 20, no. 4-5, pp. 527-544. DOI: 10.1080/13597566.2010.523637

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/13597566.2010.523637](https://doi.org/10.1080/13597566.2010.523637)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Regional & Federal Studies

Publisher Rights Statement:

© Hepburn, E. (2010). Small Worlds in Canada and Europe: A Comparison of Regional Party Systems in Québec, Bavaria and Scotland. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 20(4-5), 527-544doi: 10.1080/13597566.2010.523637

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Small Worlds in Canada and Europe: A Comparison of Regional Party Systems in Québec, Bavaria and Scotlandⁱ

Eve Hepburn

Introduction

This contribution explores the dynamics of regional party systems in a comparative analysis of three ‘small worlds’ in Canada and Europe. The analysis is inspired by David Elkins and Richard Simeon’s (1980) book *Small Worlds: Provinces and Parties in Canadian Political Life*. This was a pioneering study of regional differences in political culture and party systems in Canada. In particular, Elkins’ chapter on the ‘The Structure of Provincial Party Systems’ opened up several new lines of enquiry about the relationship between regionalism and party systems. His research revealed that there were significant patterns of regional differentiation in attitudes towards parties and party systems. These findings were indicative of a pronounced regional dimension to party competition, whereby ‘parties were themselves divided along provincial lines as much as party lines’ (Elkins 1980: xx). Using several national-level data sources to ‘unfold’ voters’ perceptions of party systems, Elkins concluded his analysis by recommending two paths of further research: greater in-depth analysis of regional party systems, and a broader comparison across countries. This contribution aims to meet both these requests, by exploring the regionalisation of substate party systems in a cross-national comparative context.

Québec, Bavaria and Scotland are three regions nested within multi-level states. Each regional government has primary legislative powers over a range of policy areas, and regional electoral arenas have become important spaces for party competition. In particular, each region has a pronounced territorial identity and a strong stateless nationalist and regionalist party (SNRP), factors that have contributed to an important territorial cleavage in political life. These cases have also been described as ‘stateless nations’ embedded in the larger structure of the state, presenting alternate worlds for political socialisation (Keating 1996; Hepburn 2008). As individual ‘containers’ of social attitudes and behaviour (Henderson, this volume), these small worlds have distinctive party systems reflecting the efforts of regional parties to reflect the values of the electorate. There are also differences, however, resulting from the structure of the states in which the ‘small worlds’ are embedded, the capacity of the region to legislate, and the dominance of political ideologies. These factors permit us to tease out differences when the relationship between regionalism and party politics in Québec, Bavaria and Scotland.

The discussion begins by introducing some of the main findings of Elkins and Simeon’s book, and sets out a number of reasons why it is important to revisit these issues. Three lines of questioning about regional party systems, which were originally posed by the authors in 1980, are then discussed in the context of present-day developments in Canadian and European territorial politics. Specifically, these questions deal with: (1) the (in)congruence of party systems and competition at the regional and state levels; (2) the adaptation of statewide parties to the regional level; and (3) the conduct of party competition on regional issues. These three indicators of distinctive political ‘small worlds’ are then explored in each of the case studies. The concluding section then compares party competition in multi-level political settings, and considers the continuing relevance of the Small Worlds thesis for the analysis of regional party politics in newly decentralising as well as established federal states in Canada, Europe and beyond.

Small worlds and multi-level politics

David Elkins and Richard Simeon's 1980 book on *Small Worlds* in Canada marked a seismic shift in social scientific thinking on politics and territory. Their study provided a wealth of data that demonstrated the various ways in which politics has been informed by territorial factors. Hitherto, political behaviour was believed to be determined by social class interests, whereby functional diffusion across the state would lead to the ironing-out of territorial differences. Elkins, Simeon and their colleagues put to rest these long-dominant myths by providing a nuanced and complex picture of the Canadian political system that acknowledged the ethnic, linguistic, religious and regional diversity of the territory. In particular, they highlighted the fact that 'regionalism is a profound and fundamental feature of Canada' (ibid: vii). Their study explored cleavage patterns, policy outputs, voting behaviour, political cultures and party systems at the provincial level. The latter issue was dealt with in a chapter by David Elkins, which challenged the dominant perception of a homogenous pan-Canadian party system.

Elkins explored the structure of the Canadian party systems through the lens of public attitudes. This approach is important to understand given that 'actual party positions are less relevant to voting than the electorate's perceptions of the relative location of parties' (Elkins 1980: 211). One of his key arguments was that left-right competition was insufficient to explain or describe structural relations among Canadian political parties. Other important factors determine party competition. Based on the opinions of respondents in three national election surveys from 1965-74, Elkins demonstrates the importance of provincial and language differences in structuring public perceptions of Canada's ten provincial party systems. Elkins found that there were strong regional differences in these perceptions (Elkins 1980: 237). In particular, there was evidence of east-west divergence in voter perceptions, although each province was also found to be unique. He concluded that 'There is no *national* party system even at the federal level. Each party and each region is a small world' (Elkins 1980: 238, his italics).

There are a number of reasons why it is important to revisit the *Small Worlds* framework for analysing parties and party systems. In the three decades that have passed since the publication of Elkins and Simeon's work, the politics of modern democracies, and especially multi-national or multi-level states, has changed dramatically. In the realm of Canadian politics, the last 30 years has witnessed two unsuccessful referendums on the independence of Quebec, whilst the Canadian party system 'imploded' in the 1993 federal election with the meteoric rise of two regionally-based parties (Carty et al 2000). According to some authors, this marked the end of pan-Canadian politics and the resurgence of regionalism (Young and Archer 2002). In an international context, advanced democracies have witnessed the consolidation of regional levels of authority, a growing trend towards decentralisation, and the 'mainstreaming' of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties (Marks et al 2008; Hepburn 2009). Finally, at a general level, political parties now face serious threats to their very existence, due to an increase in electoral volatility, declining membership rates, low levels of voter trust and competition from regionalist and niche parties (Mair and van Biezen 2001; Daalder 2002). All of these factors pose serious problems for parties, which face a reinvigorated territorial cleavage.

This contribution marks a first attempt to re-examine Elkins and Simeon's arguments regarding the structure of regional party systems, and to compare them across countries within the *Small Worlds* framework. Yet it diverges from Elkins' approach in two ways. First, the focus is not on within-Canada comparison, but on comparing regional party systems in Canada with other European countries. This was an approach that was actively encouraged by Elkins and Simeon. For although comparisons across provinces in Canada is an important field of study, we

also know that ‘small worlds’ are not unique to Canada as the structural basis of political behaviour. Instead, regions also exist as spaces for collective action and identities in countries throughout the globe. Nowhere is this truer than in Europe, historically understood to be the haphazard amalgamation of city states, localities and villages rolled into the most victorious, expansionist nation-state of the day (Tilly 1975). In light of recent structural transformations resulting from European integration and decentralisation, regions have re-emerged as important political actors in Europe (Keating 1998). However, very little has been written about regional party systems and competition in a *cross-national* comparative framework. This may be explained by a methodological nationalism in political science, which tends to focus on statewide party systems (Wimmer and Glick-Schiller 2002). As a result, cross-national comparisons tend to be predominantly based on *states*, not regions. This contribution seeks to address this gap by comparing the small worlds nested within states, across Canada and Europe.

Second, this analysis diverges methodologically from Elkins’ essay on provincial party systems. Elkins explored the structure of *citizens’ perceptions* of the Canadian party systems based on quantitative data. His analysis was guided by scaling and measurement theory, using interview responses and merged data sets to explore the judgement ratings of respondents with regard to political party positioning on the left-right scale, the identification of respondents with political parties, and their perceived voting preferences. These data enabled Elkins to make some convincing arguments about the regionalisation of citizen perceptions of party systems. Where this analysis differs is that it explores the structure of competition itself, and the extent to which it has become regionalised in three different countries. The analysis is based on a qualitative comparative case study approach, which explores three dimensions of party system ‘regionalisation’: (1) the extent to which there is incongruence of party systems and competition at the regional and state levels; (2) the adaptation and internal differentiation of statewide parties to the regional level; and (3) the increasing salience of the territorial, or centre-periphery cleavage in structuring party competition in the regional arena. The analysis draws on empirical data gathered by the author over several years, including an extensive analysis of campaign manifestos and other party literature, government documents, media reports, analytical studies and interviews with senior party and government officials carried out during various field trips to Scotland (2005-6), Bavaria and Berlin (2005 and 2009) and Québec (2008).

Regional party systems

One of the key questions that Elkins and Simeon (1980: xv) asked with regard to the political composition of small worlds was: ‘how do provincial party systems – as defined by such factors as numbers, competitiveness, ideology – differ among themselves or from the national party system?’. This section examines the degree of symmetry between the regional and state levels to understand the dynamics of multi-level party competition.

Québec in Canada

The Canadian party system has undergone a series of major re-alignments throughout the postwar period, the last of which unequivocally demonstrated the regional nature of Canadian politics. From the late 1950s onwards, scholars have described Canada as two-plus party system, with the Liberals and Conservatives competing for the majority of votes. Some scholars were even tempted to call Canada a one-party system because of the predominance of the Liberal Party, which held office near-continuously throughout this period, earning it the title of ‘natural governing party’ (Epstein 1964; Carty 2006: 826). In addition, the NDP represented an important ‘third party’, with particular strength in Western Canada. During this period, the Canadian party

system was ‘driven by parties promoting their own national agendas’ (Carty et al 2000: 5). This system imploded in 1993 when the three main parties saw their vote collapse. From this point onward, Canada became a multi-party system at the federal level, which had ultimately ‘lost its pan-Canadian veneer’ (Young et al 2000: 1). New parties emerged, including the Bloc Québécois and Reform/Canadian Alliance, which drew support from voters opposed to pan-Canadian politics in Quebec and Alberta, respectively. The significant reach of one of these new parties was cemented in 2006 when the Progressive Conservatives amalgamated with the Alliance, forming the Conservative Party of Canada and winning the federal election that year.

Since 2006, there has been a four-party system in Canada – Liberals, Conservatives, NDP and Bloc Québécois (Eagles and Carty 2003). Yet aside from the Liberals, all other parties are strongly regionally based (Gidengil et al 1999; Carty 2001). For instance, the NDP appeal was first confined to the Western provinces, but is now strongest in urban centres of Ontario; the Reform/Alliance party was very much a Western party with a solid base in Alberta; whilst the Bloc Québécois was formed to represent Québec interests in the federation. Some commentators have even argued that the Liberals have even become more regionally based, through their over-reliance on electoral support in Ontario (Carty 2006: 826). As such, there is no one single party system in Canada, but rather ‘shifting, but distinct, regional party systems’ that give primacy to regional interests (Carty 2001). Each province has a different and highly regionalised choice of parties in federal elections (Gidengil et al 1999), and in provincial elections, there is an even greater choice of parties. Yet ‘no other provincial party system in Canada is as distinct from the federal system as Québec’s’ (Rayside 1978: 500).

From the late 1960s until the 1990s Québec has had a two-plus system, whereby the Quebec Liberal Party (PLQ) and the *Parti Québécois* together won at least 85% of the vote in every provincial election since 1973 (Gagnon 2003; Tanguay 2004: 223). As a result, the PLQ has alternated in power with the PQ, commanding an average of 45% of the vote in provincial elections from 1960-2007. In its early years, the independence-seeking PQ won impressive electoral support (Petry 2000). It held office from 1976-85, and 1994-2003, implementing a series of reforms designed to preserve Québec’s unique cultural identity and status, including two unsuccessful referendums on sovereignty-association in 1980 and 1995. Meanwhile, Conservatism had not been well represented in Québec since the 1960s, with the decline of the *Union Nationale*. However, this changed with the rise of the right-wing nationalist *Action démocratique du Québec* (Boily 2008). In the 2007 provincial elections, the ADQ became the official opposition, relegating the PQ to third-party status. However, this was a short-lived victory, as the ADQ lost half of its electoral support (down from 30% to 16%) in the 2008 provincial election. The ADQ’s steep decline was due to the party’s ineffectiveness as official opposition, its appearance of being out of touch with the voters, and the declining salience of the issue of reasonable accommodation of immigrants, which the ADQ had emphasised as its primary concern and exploited to win votes (Bélanger 2009). Finally, the NDP in Québec has historically been weak in provincial elections, and after separating from the federal NDP, it merged into the *Union des forces progressistes* (UFP), and thereafter *Québec solidaire*, which garnered only 3.8% of the vote in the 2008 election.

Scotland in the UK

Party competition in the UK has been influenced by the historical impact of a two-party system, with each party representing opposing ideological poles – Conservatives vs. Liberals during the nineteenth century, and Conservatives vs. Labour in the twentieth century. In the 1970s and 1980s this system came under pressure by the rise of smaller parties, including the newly merged

Liberal Democrats, the Green Party and SNRPs in Scotland (Scottish National Party) and Wales (Plaid Cymru). The LibDems became 'third' party in UK elections, though the single plurality electoral system used for statewide elections favours the two bigger parties. However, the alleged 'two-party' system in the UK was challenged with the introduction of constitutional reforms in the late 1990s.

In 1997-99, the UK was transformed from being a centralised unitary (or union) state to a devolved state. In a referendum in 1997, the Scottish electorate voted overwhelmingly (74.3%) for a Scottish Parliament, which was granted extensive legislative powers. Devolution accentuated the distinctiveness of party system in Scotland. Although class is a relevant feature of voting in Scotland, there is a strong territorial dimension, and when parties in Scotland did not fully represent the Scottish interests this resulted in electoral deviations on either side of the border. Since 1959, Scottish voting preferences diverged from the rest of the UK, heralding the decline of Scottish Unionism, which came to a head during the 'Thatcher years' of 1979-1990, Labour's consolidation of being Scotland's favourite party, and the rise of the SNP. Since the 1970s, the SNP has successfully competed in a four-party system with Labour, the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives, taking between 15-25% of the vote until the 1990s. From this time, the party system in Scotland differed from the rest of the UK (Brown *et al* 1998).

Since devolution, which introduced an additional member system (AMS) for electing the regional parliament, Scotland has had a multi-party system. Six parties compete on the Left of the political spectrum (the Scottish National Party, Scottish Socialist Party—SSP, Solidarity, Labour, the Scottish Green Party and the Liberal Democrats) whilst the Conservatives compete on the Right. On territorial matters, four parties support independence (SNP, SSP, Solidarity, Scottish Greens), two parties support devolution (Labour, Conservatives) and one party supports federalism (LibDems). In 1999, the SNP won 28.7% of the vote, and became official opposition in the Scottish Parliament. In 2007 it won 32.9% of the vote and formed a minority government. That year, SNRPs were also elected to devolved parliaments in Wales (Plaid Cymru) and Northern Ireland (Sinn Féin), heralding a new type of politics in the UK, and putting considerable strain on the devolution settlement.

Bavaria in Germany

Before German unification in 1990, federal and regional (Land) party systems were largely symmetrical. Although the parties varied in regional strength – most particularly a conservative South and social-democratic North-West – the same pattern of party competition applied across the country. The Christian Democrats, Social Democrats and Free Democrats, which together held 97% of the vote in national elections from 1961-1980, were the only relevant players in the Länder and at the federal level. Smaller SNRPs had disappeared from the Land parliaments after the 1950s. This two-and-a-half system changed in the 1980s, when the Green Party entered the *Bundestag* and most regional parliaments. At the point, patterns of competition moved towards a two-bloc logic, with the CDU/CSU-FDP on one side, and the SPD-Greens on the other. However, regional party competition has become more distinct since German unification. There is now a clearer divide between East and West Germany with respect to the political relevance of specific parties. Whilst there is a five-party system at the federal level, at the regional level four parties compete in the West, and three parties compete in the west (CDU, SPD, PDS/Left Party).

The exception to these party system realignments occurred in Bavaria, which has been run by the autonomist Bavaria Christian Social Union (CSU) since 1946. According to James (1995: 1), 'the Free State of Bavaria has operated almost as a system within a system'. Although the traditional cleavages of German politics apply, there is an important territorial dimension to party

competition. Bavaria's political system, which is dominated by the CSU, has been able to maintain its distinct traditions and political culture that mark it out from the rest of Germany (Mintzel 1975). The CSU has governed Bavaria near continuously since 1946, and without coalition partners between 1966 and 2008, at which point it entered a coalition government with the FDP. The CSU also wins the largest share of the Bavarian vote at federal elections. But although the CSU is part of the national political camp of Christian Democracy in all-German terms, in Bavaria the CSU is a clearly regionalist party, mobilizing claims to special treatment and more autonomy around the concept of *Heimat* (nation) (see Hepburn 2008).

The nationalist and federalist stance of Bavaria's 'party of state' has had a significant impact on party competition in Bavaria. Regional branches of the Social Democratic Party, the Free Democrats and Greens have all acknowledged the need to take a more pro-Bavarian stance in order to succeed electorally, and have adopted more distinctly territorial identities and policies (Hepburn 2010). Yet these strategies have remained weak, and the position of the CSU's main opponent in Bavaria, the SPD, has been described as 'hopeless' (Mintzel 1999: 115). In the 2008 Landtag elections, the SPD received only 18.6% of the vote, while the FDP gained 8.0% and the Greens took 9.4% of the vote. The weakness of opposition regional branches of statewide parties in Bavaria may be partly explained by their lack of a strong Bavarian party identity or perceived ability to defend Bavarian interests.

Statewide party adaptation to regional contexts

One of the key questions posed by Elkins and Simeon concerned the changing role of parties in politically, socially and culturally diverse states. They enquired: 'Can the parties act as nationally integrative institutions? Can they win support nationally, or are they confined to some regions...?' The authors indicated that the integrative capacity of Canadian political parties has declined, as mainstream parties failed to win votes in every region across the state, and the federal and provincial parties were weakly linked. The next section will address the same questions that Elkins and Simeon posed by exploring how the main statewide parties in each case have responded to the challenges of operating within and across multiple territorial levels.

Québec

In Canada, the Liberals, Conservatives and NDP strive to be 'national' parties, but are increasingly challenged by regionally based parties, not least in Québec. In response to the increased regionalisation of the vote, Canadian statewide parties have adopted separate organisational structures at different territorial levels, leading to a 'disentangling' of the federal and provincial parties (Carty et al 2000: 23). But at the same time, there is still strong party cohesion in Canadian parties, and policy cooperation is facilitated through a strong parliamentary party caucus. This would indicate that the federal and provincial parties share the same outlook and priorities. Yet, there have been some exceptions, most notably in Québec, where 'relations between federal and provincial parties have been most consistently strained' (Rayside 1978: 500).

The Québec Liberal Party (PLQ) has always been relatively autonomous. Its roots can be traced back to the *Parti Rouges* representing 'Canada East' prior to confederation in 1867, and despite the formal amalgamation of the party with the pan-Canadian Liberal Federation, the PLQ has always had a separate voice, greater autonomy and special treatment within the Liberal party (Rayside 1978: 505; Lemieux 1993). In 1964, following decades of deteriorating federal-provincial relations, the PLQ formally 'disaffiliated' itself from the Liberal Federation under the stewardship of Jean Lesage, and created a separate infrastructure, personnel and membership

(Lemieux 1993). Until 1975, Québec was the only province in which the federal and provincial Liberals were formally separated into two extra-parliamentary organisations.

The separation of the PLQ from its federal brethren was the product of a number of factors. Four years earlier, the party had won office in Québec after 16 years of conservative rule. The PLQ undertook sweeping governmental reforms and championed a new political vision of Québec. In order to best serve the interests of Québec, it was argued that Liberal Party should exercise complete autonomy over policy and campaigns. Moreover, Québec-Ottawa relations were frayed over the federal Liberal retreat from the province following a deal with the *Union Nationale*. Following separation, the Liberals pursued a strategy of moderate nationalism from a federalist perspective, but which was not beholden to federal interests. This was particularly important during the period of Pierre Trudeau's premiership when his vision of a multicultural Canada sat uneasily with the PLQ's advocacy of Québec as a distinct society (Carty 2001). Party relations have become especially strained since the Meech Lake Accord in 1987, when PLQ leader Robert Bourassa declared that 'Québec has always been, is now and will always be a distinct society, free and capable of taking responsibility for its own destiny and development' (quoted in Tanguay 2004: 229). The party thereafter considerable decentralization of federal powers to Québec and proved that it too was capable of playing the nationalist card.

Conservatism in Québec has tended to come in strongly nationalist guises. The *Union Nationale* dominated Québec politics from the 1930s until the death of party leader Maurice Duplessis in 1959. The party had secured a 'non-aggression pact' with the Catholic Church and anglophone economic elites, as well as an entente cordiale with the Progressive Conservatives in Ottawa so that they did not organize in Québec. Yet the hegemony of the UN was increasingly questioned with changes in the social fabric of Quebec, and although the UN won a last term in office in 1966-70 it was unable to recover from splits between its nationalist and federalist wings (Tanguay 2004: 223). A different sort of right-wing nationalism emerged two decades later. The ADQ was formed in 1994 by nationalist members of the PLQ who were disappointed with the federal Liberal government's failure to recognize Québec as a distinct society (Boily 2002). The ADQ was been successful in winning traditional rural electoral districts that were once considered the base of *Union Nationale* support. Given its provincial roots, the ADQ is only loosely affiliated to the federal Conservative Party.

Quebec nationalism has also emerged at the federal level. The *Bloc Québécois* was formed by several disgruntled Conservative Party MPs following the failure of the Meech Lake Accord in 1987 and has since adopted a left-wing guise. The Bloc was formally established in 1991 to represent Quebec interests in the federation, with the full support of the provincial *Parti Québécois*. The BQ leader, Lucian Bouchard (a formal federal minister) was able to galvanise strong support for his new party in the 1993 federal election, with the Bloc winning 54 out of 76 seats in Quebec (49.3% of the vote). Yet relations between the Bloc and the PQ have since remained difficult, especially as the Bloc is heavily dependent on the PQ for resources, staff, campaign support and polling data (Carty et al 2000: 46, 53). The Bloc is also tied to the PQ's electoral fortunes, evident when the unpopularity of the PQ government rubbed off on the Bloc's electoral appeal in 1997. Thus, although the Bloc has a separate organizational and membership base from the PQ (with 60% of BQ members not part of the PQ), it is unable to become a fully autonomous party animal.

Finally, the New Democrats are the most decentralised of the Canadian parties, constituting a federation of powerful provincial organizations. However, in Québec, the French-English linguistic divide had confined the NDP to working-class English-speaking Canada (Carty 2001). Although the NDP supports Québec's right to self-determination, they oppose further

devolution of financial and political powers to the Québec National Assembly. This position has made the NDP an unpopular choice in provincial politics. Moreover, the Québec wing of the NDP which was founded in 1963 to contest only federal elections, seceded from the NDP in 1989 and changed its name to *Parti de la démocratie socialiste* (PDS) in 1994. After a poor electoral showing in the 1998 federal election, the PDS subsequently joined the Québec-based movement *Union des forces progressistes* (UFP), which in turn merged into *Québec solidaire* in 2006. *Québec solidaire* is an independent political party with no formal links to the NDP.

Scotland

Since devolution, statewide parties in the UK have decentralised their Scottish branches to enable them to compete with a resurgent political nationalism. But even before then, Scottish parties had distinct features and personalities that marked them out from their British counterparts. Although British parties have generally been treated as ‘unitary’ actors in party scholarship, parties in Scotland have often issued distinct manifestos, taken specific policy lines and advanced different solutions to Scotland’s constitutional question that have diverged from the statewide party line (Hepburn 2010).

Traditionally, the Scottish Council of the Labour Party had constituted administrative branches of the unitary UK Labour Party. This ‘council’ enjoyed little more autonomy than English county branches, but a number of developments forced Labour to reconsider its centralist organisation. First, Labour needed to respond to the North-South polarisation of Labour and Tory support that peaked during the 1987 election. Second, there was a strategic need to combat the resurgence of political nationalism in Scotland, which Labour did by supporting a programme of devolution. And third, there were tensions emanating from its Scottish ‘regional council’ for more autonomy. A breakaway party was formed in 1975 that sought to fuse socialism with nationalism, and other factions within the party have called for greater Scottish autonomy and a more distinctive identity (Mitchell 1996; McEwen 2004). Scholars have called this the ‘tartanization’ of Scottish Labour, as it becomes more nationalist in its strategies (Geekie and Levy 1989).

In 1994, a degree of autonomy was granted to the Scottish branch, which changed its name to the Scottish Labour Party. The SLP had its own headquarters, executives and annual conferences, and there was little interference in the day-to-day running of the Scottish party. Yet it also had little decision-making power, as party policy, candidate selection rules and campaign strategies were decided by the British leadership. Furthermore, the Scottish Labour Party, like the other unionist parties in Scotland – the Liberal Democrats and Conservatives – does not have a separate membership structure from the statewide party. In the early years of devolution, Labour transferred a number of powers to the Scottish branch, including control over internal party decision-making, devolved campaign strategies and policy development (Bradbury 2006). The latter function allowed Labour to develop a policy programme more attractive to Scottish voters, which was important in the context of ‘New Labourism’, a middle-England strategy that failed to resonate north of the border. Scottish Labour has since diverged with UK party policy on issues of healthcare and higher education, implementing distinctly non-New Labour policies when in power at the devolved level from 1999-2007.

The British Liberal Democrats, in line with their constitutional preferences, constitute a federal party. Prior to devolution, the party in Scotland enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. It had its own party headquarters, executive, annual conferences, and was free to develop their own policies, internal procedures and select their own candidates. In this sense, the LibDems were the best prepared out of all the main statewide parties to meet the challenges of devolution, which

simply adapted its federal arrangements to the new constitutional settlement. The British leadership had no desire to control these procedures; instead, the Scottish party was encouraged to develop their own initiatives and adapt their policies to their governing coalitions with Labour in Scotland during 1999-2007.

The Conservative Party, despite its distinctive roots in Scotland, was in the years leading up to devolution perceived as an English, anti-Scottish party (Seawright 2002). Following its election defeat in 1997, where it failed to elect any candidates in Scotland, the party struggled to accommodate the territorial dimension in its organisation and policies. The party was highly centralised, owing to former UK Party Leader Margaret Thatcher's efforts to bring the Scottish branch into line as a 'regional unit' by assuming central control over its personnel, finance and political office. Previously, the Scottish party, known as the Scottish Unionist Party 1912-1965, had been constitutionally separate from its English counterparts. Yet, sections of the Conservative party in Scotland also harboured a desire for greater autonomy (Bradbury 2006). Following devolution, the Scottish party held an internal review on how to respond organisationally to the devolved legislatures and to win back electoral support. The outcome was a decision to transform the branch into a more 'Scottish' party by granting it constitutional independence, though it was still affiliated to the British party. This allowed the party to control procedures for candidate and selection, campaign strategies and policy programmes. The result was a confederal relationship between the Scottish and British parties, though the Scottish party is still strongly tied to the British party in UK elections.

Bavaria

Whilst all of the German political traditions are represented within Bavaria, each has taken on a peculiarly Bavarian hue. The Christian Social Union was part of a long tradition of Bavarian regionalist parties. However, it did not seek to restrict its activities to the regional political arena. Instead, it negotiated an agreement with the Christian Democratic Union in the years 1947-9, whereby the CSU was able to participate in federal politics as part of the Christian Democratic parliamentary group and fill Cabinet posts in CDU-CSU governments. At the same time it was a fully independent party, with separate party programmes and congresses, organisational and membership structures, and the existence of a CSU *Landesgruppe* in the Bundestag. Both parties agreed not to contest elections outside of their territories (Bavaria for the CSU and the rest of Germany for the CDU) and the CSU became known as the sister-party to the CDU. There is a common party caucus of both parties in the Bundestag and a permanent exchange of political positions among the leading politicians of both parties. As a result of this agreement, the CSU developed an institutional and political 'dual role' as an autonomous *Land* party with special federal characteristics (Mintzel 1990: 92).

Parties representing the competing ideologies of socialism and liberalism in Bavaria have failed to pose a major threat to the governing CSU. Although Land branches have tried to strengthen their Bavarian identities, they are generally perceived as affiliates to Berlin, with common membership structures and policy programmes. The Bavarian Social Democrats have long exhibited a separate identity from the rest of the party, due to their sympathy with the need to preserve Bavaria's unique identity, in addition to the challenge of operating within a conservative political context (Unger 1979; Ostermann 1994). Whilst regional branches of the SPD were being integrated into the federal executive and directed by the centre, the Bavarian SPD was allowed to constitute itself as a *Landesverband* (regional association), which allowed for a degree of policy divergence. There were also further reforms in 1990, when the branch achieved Land party status and renamed itself '*BayernSPD*'.

The FDP has been equally hampered by its perception as a Bavarian ‘affiliate’ of Berlin and by the federal party’s opposition to regional patriotism. Because of its post-war affiliation with the Christian Democrats at the federal level, the FDP has been reluctant to criticise the CSU at the Land level, making it an ineffective opposition party. Yet the FDP has also suffered because of its unwillingness to develop a strong ‘Bavarian’ profile, despite its recent acknowledgement that it must appeal to the Bavarian identity to win more votes (Hepburn 2010). Finally, the Green Party won their first seats in the Bavarian Landtag in 1986. Some scholars argue that the Greens should be considered less an ecological movement and more of a protest movement against the ‘unholy trinity’ of the Bavarian state, the CSU and the Catholic Church (Mintzel 1990: 172; James 1995). However, the party has also been slow in committing itself to a specifically Bavarian agenda as it too viewed regionalism as exclusive and particularistic.

Party competition on the left-right and territorial dimensions

Elkins and Simeon identified a particular constraint in party scholarship that prohibited a full account of regional dynamics of party competition. This was the tendency to view class and regional politics as antagonistic (1980: xiii). Elkins went on to argue that ‘there is some tendency to use the left-right dimension to structure perceptions of the party systems in Canada, but other dimensions must also be at work...’ (1980: 231-2). Elkins plotted the left-right dimension against the French-English dimension in the case of Québec in order to accommodate the specific nature of party competition there (ibid: 235). Yet I would go further and argue that the main ‘secondary’ line of competition in Québec and other regions is the ‘territorial’ dimension – a broader concept than language that accounts for party views on region-state relations. The following section seeks to account for party positions on the territorial and ideological axes of competition, to give a more rounded account of the organizing principles of the party systems.

Québec

Scholars have often pointed to the unprogrammatic nature of the main statewide parties in Canada (Smiley 1972: 96). The ideological agility of the Liberals and Conservatives means that parties tend to competing over the centre ground on ‘valence’ issues (Stokes 1963; Elkins 1980: 214). In federal terms, only the NDP has articulated a strongly class-based programme, and has rejected pressures to develop a ‘third way’ platform à la Tony Blair (Carty 2001). In Québec, however, the situation is rather different. The existence of a left-leaning nationalist party has created a more ideologically, and territorially, bipolar system in Québec. Since the late 1960s, party competition pitted the social-democratic, independence-seeking *Parti Québécois* against the free-market, federalist Québec Liberal Party. It was not until the 1990s that Québec voters backed a more right-wing ‘third’ party in provincial politics. The Left, meanwhile, is hugely under-represented and the former NDP-USP- *Québec solidaire* remains a minor force.

Table 1 Québec parties’ positions on the left-right and territorial dimensions

	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>
<i>Independence</i>	PQ	-	-

<i>More Autonomy</i>	-	-	ADQ
<i>Status Quo</i>	NDP	PLQ	-

The above analysis represents an ideology-based interpretation of party competition. But according to some scholars, partisan competition in Québec ‘centres on the unresolved question of Québec’s constitutional status’ (Tanguay 2004: 222). The centre-periphery, or territorial dimension is key to understanding party competition in Québec. Until the mid-1990s voters had a choice between two options on the constitutional issue: either a form of independence or sovereignty-association as espoused by the PQ, and moderate reform of the status quo as represented by the Québec Liberal Party. Burgeoning support for the *Action Démocratique du Québec* from 1994 onwards indicated that a sizable number of voters wanted a third way between separation and the status quo (Tanguay 2004: 235). ADQ success also meant that there was a large left-leaning nationalist party (PQ) and a new neoliberal nationalist party (ADQ) operating in Québec. Yet the ADQ’s position is ‘soft nationalist’ (Keating 1996), seeking more autonomy and greater recognition of Québec nationhood within Canada. Based on this analysis, the positions of Québec parties on the territorial and ideological dimensions are shown in Table 1.

Scotland

Party competition in Scotland tends to take place on one side of the political spectrum, whereby six out of the seven main parties may be classified as ‘centre-left’ (Labour, Solidarity, Scottish Socialist Party, SNP, Scottish Greens and the SNP). Because of this, party positions on welfare issues in Scotland often converge. On territorial issues, however, parties have continuously moved back and forth on the issue of Scotland’s constitutional future. In 1997, the Conservatives were the only party in Scotland not supportive of more constitutional powers in Scotland, whilst in 2007 Labour in Scotland held this isolated position by refusing to expand the Scottish Parliament’s powers (though it has since backtracked by supporting the Calman Commission’s recommendations for enhanced competences). The Conservatives and Liberal Democrats in the meantime have pressed for more fiscal powers. In the 2007 Scottish parliamentary election, parties were polarised on the territorial dimension, between the ‘Unionists’ (Labour, LibDems and the Conservatives) and the ‘Nationalists’ (SNP, Greens, Socialists and SSP).

Table 2 Scottish parties’ positions on the left-right and territorial dimensions

	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>
<i>Independence</i>	SNP, SSP, Solidarity, Greens	-	-
<i>More Autonomy</i>	Labour, Lib Dems	-	Cons

<i>Status Quo</i>	-	-	-
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As nationalism has become an increasingly important dimension of party competition, this has caused the two main parties to compete for the ‘centre ground’ over both policy and territorial issues (whereby the latter signifies ‘more autonomy’ as a halfway house between independence and the status quo). As Labour moved to support Scottish self-determination vis-à-vis devolution in the late 1980s, and the SNP moved to a more clearly social-democratic position in the early 1990s, it became apparent that both parties were fighting for the same vote. Their close-knit positions are clear in Table 2. Most parties are situated in the top left boxes, supporting greater autonomy (including independence) for Scotland, couched in left-wing terms. The Scottish Conservative Party represents a lone right-wing voice in Scottish party politics, and to date, there has been no successful right-wing nationalist competitor to the SNP.

Bavaria

In Bavaria, party competition takes place on the right of the ideological spectrum owing to the hegemonic position of the Christian Social Union in Land politics. The left, represented by the Social Democrats, rarely take more than 20% of the vote, whilst the Greens, which make their appeal to both rural conservative and urban left-leaning supporters in Bavaria, take less than 10%. The ideological centre-ground, represented by the Free Democratic Party (FDP) is very small in Bavaria, with the party taking 4-8% of the vote.

Table 3 Bavarian parties’ positions on the left-right and territorial dimensions

	<i>Left</i>	<i>Centre</i>	<i>Right</i>
<i>Independence</i>	-	-	BP
<i>More Autonomy</i>	-	-	CSU
<i>Status Quo</i>	SPD, Greens	FDP	-

Scholars have agreed that, just as important as the ideological dimension in Bavarian party politics, the territorial dimension is central to understanding the strength of the CSU. In fact, the main political traditions in Bavaria have been identified as ‘Catholicism and separatism’ (Padgett and Burkett 1986: 114). On the territorial dimension, the pro-autonomist CSU is pitted against the pro-federalist opposition parties, the SPD, FDP and Greens. Nationalism is associated with the right, further typified by the micro-party Bavarian Party (*Bayernpartei*), an independence-seeking nationalist party that once took up to 30% of the vote in the 1950s, but which has been reduced to less than 5% since then (Unger 1979; Hepburn 2008). There has been no development of a left-wing nationalist movement. Although the SPD in the past has sought to portray itself as a Bavarian party proud of its historical and cultural heritage, this tendency has been stifled by the

anti-regionalism of the federal SPD. As such, Table 3 reveals that there is a right-nationalist (i.e. more autonomy) confluence on one hand (CSU, BP), and a left-federalist (i.e. status quo) confluence on the other (SPD, Greens), with the FDP floating in the centre.

Conclusion

This discussion has demonstrated that the small worlds of Québec, Scotland and Bavaria have become increasingly distinct from the Canadian, UK and German party structures since Elkins and Simeon first introduced the concept thirty years ago. In particular, Elkins' findings about the regional distinctiveness of provincial party systems are increasingly pertinent due to the growing trend towards decentralisation across the industrialised world (Marks et al 2008). As Young et al (2002: 5) maintain, 'Regionalism has always been a significant force in Canada, and we have looked to national political parties to hold the country together despite its disintegrative tendencies'. However, Canadian parties' statewide reach has grown weaker over the years, and the current party system is characterised by a resurgent regionalism. Canada is not the only country experiencing this resurgence; all of the large states of Europe have seen the rise of a new regional level of government in recent decades. This has forced parties to disaggregate their strategies at the regional level in order to cope with the challenges of multi-level politics (Detterbeck and Hepburn 2010). In this contribution, I have focussed on the ways in which party systems at the substate level have become increasingly regionalised as a result of decentralising reforms and the rise of stateless nationalist and regionalist parties. This regional divergence is reflected in the development of distinct regional party systems, the territorialisation of statewide parties, and the increasing salience of the territorial dimension in structuring party competition.

To take our first indicator, the analysis revealed that there is incongruence between the regional and statewide party systems, and also between the other regional party systems in the state. This form of asymmetry was evident in the number and type of parties competing at the statewide and regional levels, the regionalization of voting behaviour, and the existence of one or more SNRPs in the regional party system.

A second indicator was the increasing importance of territory in party competition. The existence of SNRPs has forced statewide parties to adopt stronger positions on the constitutional status of the region. For example, the success of the PQ and SNP were largely responsible for the regionalisation and constitutional radicalisation of the Quebec Liberals and Scottish Labour. However, the positions of statewide parties and SNRPs on the territorial dimension are no means fixed (as is increasingly true of the left-right dimension). Parties move back and forth on the territorial dimension strategically in response to changes in political circumstances (evident in Labour's cyclical support for devolution, and in particular its u-turn in supporting more powers for the Scottish Parliament when the SNP came to power in 2007).

The third indicator of small world political distinctiveness at the regional level was the adaptation of statewide parties to multi-level politics. In general it was found that regional branches of statewide parties have sought to position themselves as *regional* parties that aim to protect regional interests. Moreover, parties have become increasingly required to develop regional strongholds in order to achieve electoral success –most evident in Quebec and Bavaria. But parties have adopted a variety of strategies to appeal to regional electorates. For instance, the Québec Liberals, Scottish Labour, Conservatives and LibDems have all sought greater organisational independence and control over policy development; the Bavarian Greens, SPD and FDP have sought to retain close cohesion across the federal parties whilst carving out a more distinct regional voice; whilst the NDP in Québec felt the need to secede altogether to embed

itself in regional politics. Notably, none of the parties have become more ‘centralised’ in response to multi-level politics.

There are a number of explanations for these developments. For Rayside, divergence between federal and provincial parties on the issue of regional questions is to be expected as ‘political actors tied to one or the other level of government would be expected to defend the jurisdictional prerogatives of that level’ (Rayside 1978: 503). Carty and Eagles (2003: 5) have maintained that it was natural for parties to tailor their appeals to meet the ‘tastes and concerns’ of the local electorate. Another explanation, explored in this discussion, is that regional branches have been forced to adopt stronger territorial positions to compete with SNRPs. Furthermore, in many cases statewide parties have not just responded to the local political environment, but are actually products of that environment with deep historical roots, i.e. Scottish Labour, the Québec Liberals, the Scottish Conservatives and the Bavarian Social Democrats.

Reading *Small Worlds* now, we can see that Elkins and Simeon’s analysis of regionalism in Canadian political life continues to hold explanatory power today. Indeed, not only does the Canadian party system appear to be more regionalised than it was in the 1970s, but so do party systems in other parts of the world. In federal, devolved and multi-level political systems, party systems have emerged at the regional level that are quite distinct from that at the state level, regional elections display different dynamics of party competition, statewide parties have become increasingly distinct and regionalised, and territory has (re)emerged as a major cleavage in party politics. States are seeing the rebirth of small worlds within their borders that can claim to constitute distinct, self-contained societies. This indicates that territory has not disappeared from party politics; rather, there is every indication that it is becoming an even more pronounced feature of advanced democratic states, in Canada and beyond.

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¹ I would like to thank Ailsa Henderson, Richard Simeon and an anonymous referee for their generous and constructive comments on earlier drafts of this paper.