

## Workshop

# **Vices and Virtues of Decentralization: Challenges in European multi-level democracies**

Mannheim Centre for European Social Research (MZES)  
University of Mannheim, Germany  
Friday 25 November and Saturday 26 November 2016

### **Organisation**

Thomas Däubler  
(MZES)

Christian Stecker  
(MZES)

Jochen Müller

(University of Greifswald and External Fellow MZES)

### **Venue**

MZES

A5, 6

Building A, Conference room A 231 (2<sup>nd</sup> floor)

---

## Theme

Many European democracies have experienced considerable decentralisation in the last decades. Responsibilities of the central state were transferred to regional jurisdictions, regional parties gained in strength and the importance of regional identities rose. These developments have far-reaching implications for the way democracies work. On the one hand, decentralization may come with different virtues. It is often argued, for example, that decentralised political authorities – in comparison to remote centralised ones – can better understand and implement the prevalent preferences of citizens.

On the other hand, decentralisation may come at a price. Most importantly, the resulting multi-level structures can create new obstacles for important goals of democratic representation. Making an informed voting decision, for example, is likely to be more difficult in multi-level polities, as the allocation of competencies to regional, national and supra-national authorities blurs the clarity of responsibility. Furthermore, voters often pay more attention to national than to regional politics. This well-known second-order effect may lead voters to choose inferior political options on the regional level. In relation to this “second-orderness”, recent studies also show that turnout in regional elections is lower than in national elections, with well-educated and better-off citizens being over-represented among those participating. Hence, decentralisation may also effectively increase political inequalities.

To date, the potential challenges in multi-level democracies have only been analysed separately, mostly in single case-studies. In the workshop we will look at these challenges in a comparative perspective, along the entire chain of responsiveness: starting from the translation of citizen preferences into voting behaviour; the translation of votes into the strength of parties in parliaments; the formation of governments and the actual patterns of decision-making and policy implementation.

---

## Programme

Each participant will have 45 minutes of time. This includes a 20 minute presentation and 25 minutes for discussion. For each paper, one participant is asked to give comments on key issues (5-10 minutes).

### Thursday, November 24

- 19.00            Dinner (for those who are in town, self-funded)  
                  Goldene Gans (<http://www.gasthaus-goldenegans.de/>)  
                  Bismarckplatz 7, 68165 Mannheim (round the corner from the hotel)

### Friday, November 25

- 9.30 – 9.45        Welcome and introduction
- 9.45 – 11.15      “Why deviate? Party ideology and decentralised vote-seeking in Switzerland”  
**Sean Müller and Julian Bernauer**  
*Discussant: Jochen Müller*
- “EU regional policy and the support for European integration among political parties”  
**Marc Debus and Martin Gross**  
*Discussant: Arjan Schakel*
- 11.15 – 11.45     Coffee break
- 11.45 – 13.15     “When the incumbents can only gain: Economic vote in local government elections in Poland”  
**Paula Kukołowicz and Maciej A. Górecki**  
*Discussant: Kris Deschouwer*
- “Attributing blame? Evidence from multi-level governments in Western Europe”  
**Sandra León, Ignacio Jurado and Garmendia Madariaga**  
*Discussant: Christian Stecker*
- 13.15 – 14.15     Lunch  
                  At the MZES
- 14.15 – 15.45     “Local elections and second-order effects in a multi-level democracy”  
**Michael Jankowski and Markus Tepe**  
*Discussant: Maciej Górecki*
- “Does Decentralization Bring Government Closer or Too Close to the People?”  
**Arjan H. Schakel and Emanuele Massetti**  
*Discussant: Yvette Peters*
- 15.45 – 16.00     Coffee break

... continued on the next page.

- 16.00 – 17.30 “Federal reform and the quality of representation in Belgium”  
**Kris Deschouwer and Emilie van Haute**  
*Discussant: Thomas Däubler*
- “Career patterns in multi-level systems: regionalism does matter but nationalism prevails”  
**Jérémy Dodeigne**  
*Discussant: Martin Gross*
- 20.00 Dinner  
Da Vino (<http://www.davino-mannheim.de/>)  
S 6, 20 (near the National Theatre), 68161 Mannheim

### **Saturday, November 26**

- 10.00 – 10.45 Discussion of possible next steps
- 10.45 – 11.00 Coffee break
- 11.00 – 13.15 “Partisan politics and public investment in education: a regional level analysis of public education spending in 14 OECD countries”  
**Leonce Röth, Julian L. Garritzmann and Hanna Kleider**  
*Discussant: Sandra Léon*
- “Decentralizing controversial issues: The shift of legal competences in federal states as a strategic move”  
**Ulrich Hartung and Jale Tosun**  
*Discussant: Sean Müller*
- “Party Politics, Institutions, and Identity: the Dynamics of Regional Venue-Shopping in the EU”  
**Oliver Huwyler, Michaël Tatham and Joachim Blatter**  
*Discussant: Jérémy Dodeigne*
- 13.15 – 13.30 Concluding discussion