Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

Regional & Federal Studies

ISSN: 1359-7566 (Print) 1743-9434 (Online) Journal homepage: www.tandfonline.com/journals/frfs20

# Introduction: Government Coalitions in Multi-level Settings—Institutional Determinants and Party Strategy

Irina Ştefuriuc

**To cite this article:** Irina Ştefuriuc (2009) Introduction: Government Coalitions in Multi-level Settings—Institutional Determinants and Party Strategy, Regional & Federal Studies, 19:1, 1-12, DOI: 10.1080/13597560802692199

**To link to this article:** https://doi.org/10.1080/13597560802692199

*Regional and Federal Studies*
*Vol. 19, No. 1, 1–12, March 2009*

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

# Introduction: Government Coalitions in Multi-level Settings—Institutional Determinants and Party Strategy

IRINA ŞTEFURIUC

Vakgroep Politieke Wetenschappen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Brussels, Belgium

ABSTRACT Government formation is an essential aspect of party politics. In those countries with a multi-level system of governance, coalition formation itself is a multi-level game. This special issue brings together contributions that explore regional coalition formation in Belgium, Spain, Germany and Italy. Party coalition choices appear to be constrained by systemic determinants, such as whether the federal setting tends to be joint or competitive, bipolar or multipolar, majoritarian or consociational and uni- or plurinational. Furthermore, the distribution of veto powers in the multi-level decision-making structure is a crucial determinant of how integrated party coalition strategies are across levels. Other key factors that explain these choices pertain to how integrated national and subnational party systems are and to individual party attributes, such as ideology, goals and internal organization. Last, but not least, it appears that the role of personal relations both within parties at different governing levels and between parties at the same level is also highly important, as multi-level settings are characterized by great complexity.

KEY WORDS: Government formation, coalition congruence, decentralization, political parties, regional government

## Introduction

Coalition formation is one of the main challenges that political parties face in politically decentralized countries. And yet it has received surprisingly little attention from scholars of party politics in multi-level settings. In unitary systems, coalition formation is often a complex game, but its determinants can largely be found among attributes of the national party system, national electoral competition, national institutions and national party organizations.

On the contrary, in decentralized countries, coalition formation is a multi-level game. In such settings, political parties operate simultaneously in different party systems and different institutional settings, hold varying weights therein and often

*Correspondence Address:* Irina Ştefuriuc, Vakgroep Politieke Wetenschappen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Pleinlaan 2—Building M—Room 209, 1050 Brussels, Belgium. Email: irina.stefuriuc@vub.ac.be

ISSN 1359-7566 print/1743-9434 online
DOI: 10.1080/13597560802692199 

need to strike deals with possibly different partners at different levels. All this obviously means that parties are confronted with difficult choices: To step in government at only one level or to stay in opposition at both? To opt for a single consistent strategy or to try out various, but sometimes conflicting, coalition formulae? To replicate coalition agreements at the federal level or to adapt them to the regional context, even if this means departing from a coherent party line?

The contributions in this special issue explore the coalition strategies of political parties in such multi-level settings. We use the term 'multi-level settings' to encompass those countries in which a meso-level of governance endowed with decision-making autonomy exists between the national and the local level. The multi-level institutional arrangement can take different forms—federalism, devolution and regionalization being three commonly applied labels. For our purposes, the common denominator of all these categories is the fact that the meso-level (be it called *region*, *community*, *Land* or *province*) is endowed with its own electoral tier by which subnational parliaments and governments are put in office.

This special issue brings together contributions that explore party strategy towards coalition government in four European countries: Belgium, Spain, Germany and Italy.[1] These four countries are characterized by decentralization arrangements that differ in both scope and detail. This variation offers an excellent opportunity to explore the effects of institutions on party coalitional behaviour. As will be shown below, systemic determinants, such as whether the federal setting tends to be joint or competitive, bipolar or multipolar, majoritarian or consociational and uni- or plurinational, clearly structure party coalitional choices. Furthermore, the distribution of veto powers in the multi-level decision-making structure is a crucial determinant of how integrated party coalition strategies are across levels. Other key factors that explain these choices pertain to how integrated national and subnational party systems are and to individual party attributes, such as ideology, goals and internal organization. Last, but not least, it appears that the role of personal relations both within parties at different governing levels and between parties at the same level is also highly important, as multi-levels settings are characterized by great complexity and interpersonal trust or adversity are useful devices that reduce the information costs related to striking coalition agreements.

## State-of-the-Art in Subnational Coalition Research

For most of its lifespan, coalition scholars focused on explaining national government formation. This produced a rich body of theoretical literature and large amounts of cross-national data. However, as Laver (1989: 16–17) put it, this exclusive focus on national governments also fostered the development of an "incestuous relationship" between the theories that were put forward and the data used to test them, as it was ultimately this same data that generated new coalition theories. A solution to this problem of theory stagnation is to investigate subnational coalitions. Using new datasets about local and regional governing coalitions provides us with a fresh and "fast growing" (Downs, 1998) set of observations for testing old coalition theories and developing novel explanations that take into account additional factors that have previously passed unacknowledged by the literature.

Despite the fact that pleas for research on subnational coalitions had already been voiced in the late 1970s (Dodd, 1976; Pridham, 1986; Laver, 1989), the empirical literature on the topic has remained rather thin. Leaving local coalitions aside[2] and focusing on regional coalitions only, research in the field can be grouped into a number of broad categories.

1. ***Cross-country comparative studies***. This is the least populated category. It features only one prominent study, that of Downs (1998), which gives a comparative perspective of regional and provincial coalition governments in Germany, Belgium and France. Downs' work remains the seminal contribution that placed coalition formation in multi-level settings firmly on the research agenda.
2. ***(Fairly) Large-*N *studies within a single country***. Given that it compares across different settings, the previous type of research has the highest potential to put forward theories of coalition formation of general applicability. It is also the most difficult one to undertake, due to the cross-country variations in the degree and type of state decentralization. Large-*N* studies within individual countries enjoy the advantage of being able to hold constant a series of contextual variables, while at the same time ensuring a sufficiently large sample of cases to maintain a good degree of generalizability. Examples in this category include the works of Debus (2008), Jun (1994), Mershon and Hamann (2007), Pappi *et al.* (2005), Reniu (2005), Roberts (1989) and Ştefuriuc (2007).
3. ***Case studies of coalition formation***. This is by far the most populated category. The units of analysis here are regions (e.g. Matas, 2000; García Rojas, 2003; Laíz Castro, 2003), cabinets (e.g. Finnie and McLeish, 1999; Kropp, 2001; Ştefuriuc, 2009a; 2009b), or parties (e.g. Koß and Hough, 2006; Buelens and Deschouwer, 2007; Laffin, 2007). This literature provides valuable insights about the coalition formation process, analyses particular strategies of political actors, and sheds light on specific contextual matters that large-*N* analyses are unable to capture.

The big methodological debate that is present in general coalition research between rational choice and inductive approaches to coalition formation is also reflected in the emerging literature on subnational governments. The rational choice approach has dominated coalition research since its beginnings in the early 1950s.[3] The so-called European political science approach (Browne and Dreijmanis, 1982; Bogdanor, 1983; Pridham, 1986) criticizes the rational choice paradigm for relying on overly unrealistic and restrictive assumptions—such as attributing *a priori* unique goals to political parties, modelling coalition formation as snapshot rather than dynamic processes, or viewing parties as monolithic collective actors that follow unique strategies and goals in conditions of strict discipline.

Authors of this alternative research school have proposed an inductive approach based on thick description rather than *a priori* assumptions. It is only by having an exhaustive inventory of the variables that might explain coalition formation that we can start identifying what are the real determinants of coalition choices. Projects like those conducted by Budge and Keman (1990), Laver and Schofield (1990), Müller and Strøm (2000) or Blondel and Müller-Rommel (1988) collected a large and highly valuable amount of systematic comparative data on West European cabinets.

More recently, however, coalition scholars are pleading for a cross-fertilization of the two approaches as the only way forward in theory regeneration (de Winter and Dumont, 2006; Bäck and Dumont, 2007). Thick descriptions are likely to produce accounts of coalition formation that are indeed more complex and realistic on the one hand, but that are also excessively geared to the specific political contexts being surveyed, and thus of reduced general theoretical validity. That is why, in order to adequately test existing theories and uncover the causal mechanisms which lead to the formation of certain coalitions, de Winter and Dumont (2006) called for a "theoretically-informed inductive approach" that builds on the existing rational-choice theory and attempts to verify and improve its predictions.

## This Special Issue

By bringing together contributions from all three categories described in the previous section, this special issue attempts to bridge this methodological divide. One undisputable conclusion that can be drawn upon reading some of the articles gathered here is that several important concepts and hypotheses put forward by rational choice theory can be well applied to study subnational coalition formation. To a certain extent, subnational coalition formation processes can be conceptualized as regular instances of coalition formation. Classical coalition models that conceive of parties as actors pursuing a combination of office- and policy-seeking goals in an institutionally constrained environment (Strøm, 1990) seem to fit the multi-level reality rather well. Nevertheless, classical predictors, such as minimal winning and minimal connected winning status, the inclusion of the median legislator or incumbency status, can tell only part of the story. The full picture emerges only when specific multi-level factors are also accounted for.

One concept widely used in the existing literature on subnational coalitions is that of coalition congruence (Roberts, 1989). Coalition congruence refers to the situation in which the party composition of a subnational government is overlapping with that of the national government. Congruence is an attractive concept. It substantively accounts for a very important problem parties are challenged with in multi-level systems—that of maintaining a coherent and well-coordinated party line across levels of government, while at the same time responding to what might prove to be highly dissimilar political and electoral cross-level dynamics.

The general expectation proposed in the literature is that party leaders will, as far as possible, attempt to enter into *congruent coalition formulae* across levels (Roberts, 1989). This expectation is plausible if we think that congruent coalitions are more likely than incongruent ones to help parties maintain policy coherence and co-ordination across levels of government. But the primary justification for this assumption is that incongruence has generally been associated with stalemate in those policy areas which necessitate joint decision making between the centre and the regions (König *et al.*, 2003; Hough and Jeffery, 2006). As Thorlakson (2006: 45) argued, "pressure for congruent coalitions can occur in response to the institutional incentives of 'joint federalism' systems, where a high degree of intergovernmental coordination is required in policy making, and sub-state governments may potentially block federal legislation".

It has also been shown that where incongruent majorities occur, inter-governmental relations are more vulnerable to the logic of inter-party conflict (Bolleyer, 2006).

Contributions in this issue explore the importance of congruence for coalition formation in Belgium, Italy, Germany and Spain. These four cases encompass a variety of **institutional arrangements** that fall under the generic "multi-level polity" label. Germany is a classical federation with sixteen federate units (*Länder*) with real veto power on federal policy making via territorial representation in the upper legislative chamber. With its 17 *Autonomous Communities*, Spain differs from Germany in two key aspects relevant for our topic. First, its federate units have no collective veto power on the action of the central government as the Spanish Senate acts more like a second reading chamber than as a chamber of territorial representation (Roller, 2002). Nevertheless, certain regional governments at certain critical junctures can limit the central government's leeway in Spain, acting thus as individual veto players in the national decision-making process. Secondly, unlike Germany whose federalism is largely based on administrative grounds, Spain's federalization was motivated mainly by the plurinational character of the state territory. This plurinational reality fostered the consolidation of highly asymmetric party systems at the national and regional levels. This obviously has a direct impact on the sheer possibility of striking congruent alliances across levels.

The other two countries in the selection have their own particularities. Belgium is a recent federation of what is commonly called a "holding together" type (Stepan, 2001). The most notable aspects of Belgian federalism are its strong bipolarity and the related consociational mode of governance. If in order to exert the power of veto the German *Länder* need to foster a majority in the Bundesrat, in Belgium any of the two core linguistic components may block the action of the federal government. The party composition of regional and federal governments is crucial for nearly all aspects of policy making in this country.

Not the same can be said about Italy. Contrary to the Belgian and German systems and similar to the Spanish one, the Italian regions are not represented in a territorial parliamentary chamber at the centre (Fabbrini and Brunazzo, 2003) and are thus not endowed with collective veto power at the central level. Unlike in Spain, though, the majoritarian electoral system and the lack of region-specific party systems obstruct the possibility that regional governments act as individual veto players in national decision making. But the most important thing to note about the Italian case is that here the pursuit of congruence is an electoral strategy. The electoral system fosters the formation of pre-electoral coalitions that contest governmental majorities in a preset formula. The dynamics of coalition formation is thus very different than in the three other countries, where parties negotiate coalition formulae after knowing the electoral results and after having evaluated the multi-level consequences of the different available choices.

But institutional factors are obviously not the only determinants of coalition choices. **Party system attributes** also emerge as important factors that structure coalition opportunities. The distinction between integrated and territorialized party systems is highly relevant for our topic. The bipolarity of Belgian federalism is mirrored in its party system. Belgium has no state-wide parties and no state-wide party system. Two party systems operate separately in Flanders and Wallonia, and

the parties composing them are represented jointly, but elected by separate constituencies at the federal level. Together with the consociational rules for government formation at the federal level, this party system characteristic obviously adds a great level of complexity to the coalition formation game in Belgium.

Italy lies towards the opposite pole from Belgium. With very few exceptions, most parties competing at the regional and national level have state-wide organizations. It is only the Northern League, Udeur and, more recently, Movement of Autonomies, which are either not fielding candidates or are electorally irrelevant in certain regions. This allows Italian parties to replicate pre-electoral coalition agreements easily across levels.[4] Germany and Spain, the other two countries in our case selection, can be placed somewhere in between Italy and Belgium on this issue. Germany has a rather integrated party system at the federal and regional level, but like in Italy, some parties always come out strong in regional elections in some regions and weak in others. The German Left party, which has become a critical governing partner in some of the Eastern German *Länder*, is still weakly represented in the Western part of the country. Likewise, the German Greens, which formed governing coalitions at both federal and regional level in the West, have a very poor electoral performance in the Eastern *Länder*. This situation has been at the root of an increase in the number of incongruent coalition governments after German reunification.

Finally, the Spanish party system is highly asymmetric both across levels and between units at the same (i.e. regional) level. Given the majoritarian tendency of the proportional representation system in Spain, two main state-wide parties have traditionally alternated in government at the national level, sometimes relying on the parliamentary support of strong non-state-wide parties elected in Catalonia, the Basque Country and the Canary Islands. There is much more variation at the regional level, where a host of non-state-wide parties acquire coalition potential, while being absent or only weakly represented at the national level.

Another variable that appears to matter strongly pertains to the **electoral cycle**. The position of regional elections in the national electoral cycle affects the salience of the former: the closer regional elections are to the upcoming national elections, the more the two arenas are likely to be confounded and regional coalition formation likely to be used as a testing ground for prospective coalition formation at the national level. Besides this, the timing of regional and national elections also has a direct impact on how similar or dissimilar electoral results are across levels—and thus on the availability of congruent coalition options. The time sequence in which elections are organized at the different levels (simultaneously or at dissociated times) is an important intervening variable that obliges political parties to attempt making complex calculations spanning over two levels and needing to cover extended time horizons.

Finally, in order to have a comprehensive understanding of coalition formation in multi-level settings, party attributes beyond sheer parliamentary strength and policy positioning should not be overlooked. In such settings the coalition formation game is being played both *among* and *within* political parties. As Downs (1998: 55) put it, it is a "'two-table' bargaining process in which subnational parties negotiate simultaneously with their local rivals *and* with their own central party leader". The **autonomy of subnational party leaders**, together with a **party's bargaining weight and coalition prospects** at different levels, narrow or expand the set of feasible

coalition options. Other attributes, such as the **ideological orientation** and the **party's territorial structure**—i.e. state-wide or non-state-wide (see Ştefuriuc, 2009a)—are also important for understanding variations in parties' coalition strategies.

Last, but not least, parties also appear to base their choices on the trust or adversity that characterizes **interpersonal relations** between their leaders. Familiarity with certain coalition partners is thus often preferred to a leap in the darkness. While this is also the case with coalition formation in unitary settings (Franklin and Mackie, 1983), in multi-level contexts in which actors need to find ways to reduce the extraordinary level information uncertainty and avoid making impossibly complex rational calculations, the importance of this type of factors cannot be overstated.

## Description of the Contributions

The previous section mapped the common analytical ground for this special issue. A summary of each individual contribution is presented in what follows.

**Deschouwer**'s contribution looks at coalition formation as a game being played at two levels with different time sequences. As a country with a recently federalized setting, Belgium offers a unique opportunity to explore how parties adapt their coalition strategies to a new institutional setting. As explained above, the case of Belgium is very particular. It is a bipolar federation with no state-wide parties and a party system split on linguistic lines. Coalition formation in Belgium does not follow the patterns identified in the traditional coalition literature: governments are generally oversized, ideologically heterogeneous and do not fully reflect the seat distribution in the parliaments that they emerge from. Via a carefully crafted process-tracing analysis, the author shows that one can explain coalition formation in Belgium only by taking into account simultaneously developments at both the federal and the regional level. We see that congruence is a crucial determinant of coalition formation in Belgium. Its weight is, however, filtered by party size and position in the party system. We also see that actors make complex calculations that span extended time horizons not limited to the following elections at the same level, but include expectations about the following elections at the other level.

**Hough and Verge** look at a particular type of coalitions that have previously been largely unexplored at the national level too. These are coalitions formed by Social-Democratic parties with parties on their left. In democratic settings, these latter have cultivated until recently an opposition-as-a-vocation profile. Their legacy as radical left or Communist organizations makes them less straightforward coalition partners. Nevertheless, we observe a clear departure from this profile as left-wing parties begin to join coalition governments with centre–left forces. These formulae are frequently first tried out at the regional level, and their occurrence at this level allows the authors to investigate under which conditions these coalitions are more likely to form. Hough and Verge present a series of hypotheses which are then verified by a comparative analysis on a selection of six cases from Germany and Spain. The authors find that left–left coalitions are more likely to form when Social-Democratic parties do not feel their competitor on the left threatens their electoral results. They also find that when left parties move closer to the Social-Democratic position on key policy areas, these coalitions are more likely. The analysis brings support to

what might seem an obvious but is, in fact, an under-researched claim made in coalition literature: that the personal climate between leading politicians affects coalition decisions.

**Wilson** explores the Italian case from a different angle. He looks at the formation of pre-electoral coalitions over three series of regional elections. The existing literature on Italian pre-electoral coalition formation generally assumes that at the regional level the process is largely similar to what can be observed at the national level. Wilson shows that this is not the case—zooming in to explore the process at the regional level across the whole of Italy allows the author to observe clear territorial variations with important consequences for government stability and portfolio distribution. There is also strong evidence that Italian parties learn from past successes and mistakes and reshape their coalition strategy accordingly. Regional electoral contests, regulated by a different institutional regime than elections at the national level, appear to act as laboratories for national coalition testing.

**Däubler and Debus** depart from the inductive analytical paradigm employed by the previous three contributions and look at coalition formation in the German states from a quantitative perspective. Their findings about coalition formation highlight the importance of multi-level factors. Classic policy- and office-related predictors (such as minimal winning and minimal connected winning status, the inclusion of the median legislator and incumbency status) do perform very well on German regional-level data. However, the predictive power of these traditional models of coalition formation significantly improves when they include new variables that grasp the influence of multi-level factors. Thus, we see that parties at the regional level avoid coalitions that cut across the government vs. opposition divide at the federal level. This effect varies depending on where the regional formation is situated within the federal electoral cycle. Federal-level factors do not only determine state governments' composition, but also appear to have an effect on their policy positions. Däubler and Debus' innovative analysis of coalition agreements shows that the aggregate policy position of *Länder* coalition governments as reflected in the coalition agreement documents is closer to the policy position of the federal government than it is to the positions of constituting parties taken on average as reflected in their electoral manifestoes. This analysis also fuels the argument that collapsing the policy space of party competition into a single simplified left–right dimension is not adequate for analysing German politics: the trends observed when the policy space is split in two components—a social and an economic dimension—are remarkably different.

**Ştefuriuc**'s contribution revises some basic assumptions that classical coalition formation theory makes, arguing that in multi-level settings political parties do not behave as unitary actors, that the goals they pursue might vary across levels at any given time, that regional coalition formation is part of a two-level game and that the policy space in which coalitions are mapped is often two dimensional. Employing a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques, her contribution tests several classical propositions of coalition formation on data about Spanish regional governments. The findings are, to a large degree, similar to what Däubler and Debus observe for the German data: classical predictors do their fair share in predicting government formation at the regional level in Spain, but multi-level factors cannot be ignored. A process-tracing analysis of two cases of government formation, which

complements the statistical analysis, brings clear evidence that the multi-level dynamic has a heavier weight in government formation than static quantitative models can account for.

## Conclusion

This special issue is a first attempt to look at coalition formation in multi-level settings in an implicitly comparative manner and from a variety of angles. Our key aim is to identify the relevant analytical issues for the study of this phenomenon and present a first series of empirical findings in the field.

Many of the concepts developed for the study of national coalition governments are useful for analysing coalition behaviour at the subnational level. In this sense, the subnational arenas act as mini political systems of their own, being much more than simple "proving grounds" (Downs, 1998) for prospective national coalition governments. Factors pertaining to the subnational level, such as parliamentary rules referring to government investiture, the ideological proximity of regional coalition partners, the inclusion of the party containing the median legislator or the governing-together experience at the regional level, do appear to explain regional coalition formation.

At the same time, however, coalition formation in such settings clearly also responds to factors situated at the national level and to attributes that characterize the dynamic between the national and subnational levels. The specificities of the decentralization arrangement—in particular the distribution of veto powers and the tightness of the intergovernmental decision-making process across levels—clearly structure coalition choices. Congruent formulae appear to be particularly sought for the higher the complexity of the multi-level institutional arrangement and the stronger the veto power of regional governments.

The degrees to which regional and national party organizations, party systems and patterns of electoral competitions are integrated or territorialized also appear to matter. Congruent coalitions are reached more easily in settings in which party systems are symmetrical and the patterns of party competition similar across the two levels. On the contrary, in those settings characterized by high electoral dissimilarity and different parties competing at the two levels and in which, furthermore, the regional party leaders can make coalition-related decisions autonomously, congruent coalitions are less likely to be formed (see also Ştefuriuc, 2009b).

The bulk of the contributions in this special issue focus on the key question of coalition congruence. This concept has been developed with the aim of grasping the multi-level dynamic of coalition formation. And, indeed, congruence emerges as a strong analytical tool for the study of government formation in multi-level settings. However, coalition congruence is not a measure that travels easily across countries. We show that congruence comes in different modes and that fine-tuning between fully and partially congruent coalitions and between fully incongruent and cross-cutting governments is necessary.

Research about coalitions in multi-level settings is still in its early stages and the contributions collected here are the result of individual research efforts. In order to corroborate our findings, future research needs to be genuinely comparative and follow a common research design. For this, substantial amounts of data still need to be

collected. With a host of subnational elections held regularly in decentralized countries, the set of subnational coalitions is indeed very "fast growing" (Downs, 1998). In order to make good use of the full theory-testing and theory-generating potential of this wealth of data, just as was the case with mainstream coalition scholarship, future research will need to be cross-national and collaborative.

Besides the obvious need for new data collection, the articles gathered here point to a few directions that seem to deserve further research. First, we need to explore the linkage between the regional and national arenas in a more comprehensive manner. The contributions in this special issue focus on subnational coalition formation, addressing the effects of various factors pertaining to the national level or to the dynamic between levels. The findings here suggest that, although having its own clear dynamic, the regional arena is often also used by parties as a laboratory for prospective national coalitions. A bottom-up approach that takes attributes of the subnational arena as independent variables for explaining national-level phenomena would also be an interesting research enterprise. Secondly, the linkage between party organizational factors and coalition formation should be explored in a more systematic way by further research. It is clear that in multi-level settings parties do not act as unitary actors. The capacity of national leaders to keep their regional colleagues in line and thus pursue a coherent coalition strategy across levels obviously depends on the level of autonomy the latter have for making coalition-related decisions and on how integrated they are in the national party organization. Thirdly, one could move beyond government formation and analyse, for example, how the composition of coalition governments across levels impacts on joint policy making in multi-level settings. Obviously, more classical themes, such as the allocation of government portfolios or government survival, are also welcoming research.

## Notes

[1]The articles are revised versions of the papers presented in a panel entitled *Government coalitions in multi-level settings: Institutional determinants and party strategy* held at the ECPR General Conference in Pisa in September 2008. The only exception is the contribution by Däubler and Debus, which was individually submitted at a later date.

[2]For a review of studies on local coalitions, see Bäck (2003: 19).

[3]For an overview of this literature, see de Winter and Dumont (2006).

[4]One should once again emphasize the fact that the formation of pre-electoral coalitions is very different from that of parliamentary and governmental coalitions, as it does not depend on parliamentary seat distribution (see Golder, 2006).

## References

Bäck, H. (2003), *Explaining Coalitions: Evidence and Lessons from Studying Coalition Formation in Swedish Local Government*. Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis.

Bäck, H. and Dumont, P. (2007), Combining Large-n and Small-n Strategies: The Way Forward in Coalition Research, *West European Politics*, Vol.30, No.3, pp.467–501.

Blondel, J. and Müller-Rommel, F. (eds) (1988), *Cabinets in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

Bogdanor, V. (ed.). (1983), *Coalition Government in Western Europe*. London: Heinemann.

Bolleyer, N. (2006), Intergovernmental Arrangements in Spanish and Swiss Federalism: The Impact of Power-concentrating and Power-sharing Executives on Intergovernmental Institutionalization, *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol.16, No.4, pp.1–23.

Browne, E. and Dreijmanis, J. (eds) (1982), *Government Coalitions in Western Democracies*. New York: Longman.

Budge, I. and Keman, H. (1990), *Parties and Democracy: Coalition Formation and Government Functioning in Twenty States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Buelens, J. and Deschouwer, K. (2007), Torn Between Two Levels. Political Parties and Incongruent Coalitions in Belgium, in K. Deschouwer and M.T. Jans (eds), *Politics Beyond the State. Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings*. Brussels: Brussels University Press, pp.71–90.

Debus, M. (2008), Party Competition and Government Formation in Multi-Level Settings: Evidence from Germany, *Government & Opposition*, Vol.43, No.4, pp.505–538.

Dodd, L. (1976), *Coalitions in Parliamentary Government*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Downs, W. (1998), *Coalition Government, Subnational Style*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.

Fabbrini, S. and Brunazzo, M. (2003), Federalizing Italy: The Convergent Effects of Europeanization and Domestic Mobilization, *Regional and Federal Studies*, Vol.13, No.1, pp.100–120.

Finnie, R. and McLeish, H. (1999), The Negotiation Diaries, *Scottish Affairs*, Summer, No.28, pp.51–61.

Franklin, M. and Mackie, T. (1983), Familiarity and Inertia in the Formation of Governing Coalitions in Parliamentary Democracies, *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.13, No.3, pp.275–298.

García Rojas, J. (2003), Pactos electorales y coalicion de gobierno en Canarias (1979–2002), *Política y Sociedad*, Vol.40, No.2, pp.137–156.

Golder, S. N. (2006), Pre-electoral Coalition Formation in Parliamentary Democracies. *British Journal of Political Science*, Vol.36, No.2, pp.193–212.

Hough, D. and Jeffery, C. (2006), Germany: An Erosion of Federal–Lander Linkages? in D. Hough and C. Jeffery (eds), *Devolution and Electoral Politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.119–139.

Jun, U. (1994), *Koalitionsbildung in den deutschen Bundesländern. Theoretische Betrachtungen, Dokumentation und Analyse*. Opladen: Leske & Budrich.

König, T., Blume, T. and Luig, B. (2003), Policy Change Without Government Change? German Gridlock after the 2002 Election, *German Politics*, Vol.12, No.2, pp.86–146.

Koß, M. and Hough, D. (2006), Between a Rock and Many Hard Places: The PDS and Government Participation in the Eastern German Länder, *German Politics*, Vol.15, No.1, pp.73–98.

Kropp, S. (2001), *Regieren in Koalitionen. Handlungsmuster und Entscheidungsbildung in deutschen Länderregierungen*. Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag.

Laffin, M. (2007), Coalition Formation and Centre–Periphery Relations in a National Political Party: The Liberal Democrats in a Devolved Britain, *Party Politics*, Vol.13, No.6, pp.651–668.

Laíz Castro, C. (2003), Formación de gobierno, democracia consensual y polarización de las elites: El caso vasco, *Política y Sociedad*, Vol.40, No.2, pp.121–136.

Laver, M. (1989), Theories of Coalition Formation and Local Government Coalitions, in C. Mellors and B. Pijnenburg (eds), *Political Parties and Coalitions in European Local Government*. London: Routledge.

Laver, M. and Schofield, N. (1990), *Multiparty Government: The Politics of Coalition in Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Matas, J. (ed.). (2000), *Coaliciones políticas y gobernabilidad*. Barcelona: Institut de Ciencies Politiques i Socials.

Mershon, C. and Hamann, K. (2007), Regional Governments in Spain: Exploring Theories of Government Formation, Paper presented at the APSA Annual Meeting, Chicago, 30 August–2 September.

Müller, W. and Strøm, K. (eds) (2000), *Coalition Governments in Western Europe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pappi, F. U., Becker, A. and Herzog, A. (2005), Regierungsbildung in Mehrebenensystemen: Zur Erklärung der Koalitionsbildung in den deutschen Bundesländern, *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, Vol.46, No.3, pp.432–458.

Pridham, G. (1986), *Coalitional Behaviour in Theory and Practice: An Inductive Model for Western Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Reniu, J. (2005), Multilevel Government Formation: An Assessment on Spanish Regional Democracy, Paper presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions of Workshops, Granada, 14–19 April.

Roberts, G. (1989), Party System Change in West Germany: Land–Federal Linkages, *West European Politics*, Vol.13, No.4, pp.98–113.

Roller, E. (2002), Reforming the Spanish Senate: Mission Impossible? *West European Politics*, Vol.25, No.4, pp.69–92.

Ştefuriuc, I. (2007), The Coalition Strategies of State-Wide Parties in Multi-Level Settings, in K. Deschouwer and M.T. Jans (eds), *Politics Beyond the State. Actors and Policies in Complex Institutional Settings*. Brussels: Brussels University Press, pp.45–70.

Ştefuriuc, I. (2009a), Government Formation in Multi-Level Settings: Spanish Regional Coalitions and the Quest for Vertical Congruence, *Party Politics*, Vol.15, No.1, pp.93–115.

Ştefuriuc, I. (2009b), Governing Strategies in Multi-level Settings—Coordination, Innovation or Territorialization? in W. Swenden and B. Maddens (eds), *Territorial Party Politics in Western Europe*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, pp.183–203.

Stepan, A. (2001), *Arguing Comparative Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Strøm, K. (1990), *Minority Government and Majority Rule*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thorlakson, L. (2006), Party Systems in Multi-level Contexts, in D. Hough and C. Jeffery (eds), *Devolution and Electoral Politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, pp.37–52.

de Winter, L. and Dumont, P. (2006), Parties into Government: Still Many Puzzles, in R.S. Katz and W. Crotty (eds), *Handbook of Party Politics*. London: Sage, pp.175–188.