

Call for Papers: International Conference

**Voting in Regional Elections:
The Rise of Regional Authority and Electoral accountability**

Eupen (Belgium), 31 October 2017

Organized by the Centre for Citizenship and Democracy of the University of Leuven, in co-operation with the Parliament of the German Speaking Community of Belgium

Deadline for submissions: May 21, 2017

Topic

Across liberal democracies there is a well-documented trend towards more and stronger regional or sub-national authority. In countries like Belgium, the United Kingdom and Spain there has been a shift towards devolution, resulting in a larger degree of autonomy for specific regions. And there have been other, less well-publicised, changes in numerous other states.

This trend towards devolution poses a challenge for research on electoral accountability and transparency. Traditionally, it is assumed that regional elections are considered as second order elections, since many citizens do not take the time nor make an effort to get fully informed about the programme and the candidates for that specific level of government. Therefore, it is routinely assumed that regional elections are mainly used to send out a signal to the governing federal coalition. The theoretical question is for how long these regional elections will continue to be regarded as second-order elections, even long after the regions themselves have obtained more competences, and increasingly control a larger share of the state budget. Does the trend toward regionalisation of power imply that regional elections are no longer second-order elections? And what about one of the traditional arguments against multilevel governance: does regionalisation tend to render the political system too complex for most citizens, with the result that the standard functions of electoral accountability and transparency are no longer present?

Questions that can be addressed in papers presented at this conference, include:

- Do regional elections remain second-order elections, and if so, what are the consequences for vote choice models?
- Do elections for different levels of government give an advantage to knowledgeable voters who understand the structure of multi-level governance?
- Do referendums on independence (e.g., Scotland, Catalunya) subsequently have an effect on regional vote choice models?
- How do political parties and media respond to the devolution of power, and does this have an effect on the second-order character of regional elections?
- Does multilevel governance weaken the accountability mechanism of elections, and hence the nature of electoral democracy?
- Given the increasing complexity of multilevel governance, is there still a theoretical foundation for the distinction between first and second-order elections?

We invite contributions from scholars working on regional government, electoral studies, and vote choice models.

Keynote speakers:

Charlie Jeffery (University of Edinburgh): Do Voters Think Regional Elections Matter?

Roger Scully (University of Cardiff): Regional Elections in Wales

Rob Johns (University of Essex): Reverse order? Identity, priorities and heterogeneity in vote choice models for regional elections

Robert Liñeira (University of Edinburgh): Voice Choice Consideration in the Regional Elections of Catalonia

Arjan Schakel (Maastricht University): Multilevel governance and the functioning of electoral democracy.

Ann-Kristin Kölln (University of Leuven/University of Aarhus): Party Strategies in Regional Elections for the German Länder

Marc Hooghe (University of Leuven): Electoral Accountability in Complex Federal Systems

Target audience

We envisage a closed workshop with about 25 participants, preferably scholars working on regional elections, electoral behaviour, regional parliaments, multi-level governance, referendums on local autonomy, and comparative electoral research. Our aim is to leave sufficient time for presentations and discussions, so that the conference could lead to high quality output.

Venue

The Conference is organized by the Centre for Citizenship and Democracy of the University of Leuven, in co-operation with the Parliament of the German Speaking Region in Belgium. The conference will take place in the Parliament building, where we will be welcomed by the Speaker of the Parliament.

Parlament der Deutschsprachigen
Gemeinschaft, Platz des Parlaments 1, B -
4700 Eupen [Location \(Google Maps\)](#)



Applications and deadline for submissions

Please send a 400 word abstract to: Anna.Kern@kuleuven.be by May, 21, 2017 at the latest.

Participation to the conference is free of charge. We made a group booking at a reduced rate of € 80 per night at the [Bosten Hotel](#) located in the center of Eupen. The rate is valid from 30 October to 1 November 2017.

Timeline

- Confirmation of the programme: May 31, 2017
- Reservation of the hotel: June 13, 2017
- Papers uploaded by: October 10, 2017

How to reach Eupen

- By train: there is a direct train (one every hour) between Brussels-South (Bruxelles-Midi) and Eupen. Brussels-South is the arrival station for Eurostar (London) and Thalys (Paris and Amsterdam). From Germany: the ICE train from Frankfurt calls in at Liège-Guillemins, from where there is a direct train to Eupen every hour.
- By air: from Brussels Airport, take the train to either Brussels-South or Leuven. From both destinations you can take the direct train to Eupen (total travel time from airport to Eupen is 2h).