

# Untangling Territorial Self-Governance

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## New Typology and Data

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The high degree of conceptual confusion in the field of territorial self-governance constitutes a major obstacle to robust findings. Based on a parsimonious definition involving three individually necessary and jointly sufficient criteria (constitutional protection, territorial quality, and strength of self-rule), we develop a new typology of territorial self-governance that carves out subnational differences in kind. Empirically, we take a fresh look at territorial self-governance in more than 2,200 second-level regions in 96 Western and non-Western democracies, semi-democracies, and a selection of autocratic regimes between 2000 and 2018. The TERRGO dataset introduced in this article contains over 39,000 region-year assessments. Based on the identification of eight specific types of territorial self-governance, TERRGO allows to untangle country-specific profiles. The dataset can be used to analyze changes and asymmetries of state architectures. The framework reduces the conceptual complexity and enhances our grasp on the empirical complexity of territorial state structures.

**Keywords:** territorial self-governance; autonomy; federalism; regionalism; decentralization; power-sharing

## 1. Introduction

No coherent research program on territorial self-governance has developed so far as very different fields, including comparative politics, public administration or conflict research, have independently contributed concepts and measurements. Long-standing challenges in conceptualizing and classifying sub-state entities are still largely unresolved. The heterogeneity of the field is a major reason for the fact that the literature has so far not produced a uniform framework of territorial self-governance, but has rather generated largely disconnected “islands of theorizing” (Hooghe and Marks 2003). The high degree of conceptual confusion constitutes a major obstacle to robust findings, as has been repeatedly criticized in recent years (Dardanelli 2018; Erk 2006; Schneider 2003; Suksi 2011). Empirical results are often inconclusive and at times even contradictory. While some scholars and policy makers have advocated decentralization reforms in order to promote good governance and to strengthen regional democracy (Grindle 2009; Manor 1999; Thomas 2010; Wallis and Oates 1988), others have challenged these findings (Gerring, Thacker, and Moreno 2005; Malesky, Nguyen, and Tran 2014; Spina 2014; Treisman 2007). Nor do we fully understand, for instance, whether granting territorial autonomy really is the best recipe for building sustainable peace in deeply divided societies (Cederman, et al. 2015; Weller and Wolff 2005) or whether it has reverse effects (Cornell 2002; Horowitz 1985; Roeder 2007).

There is little consensus on what territorial self-governance exactly means and how different subtypes such as federalism, regionalism, devolution or decentralization can be conceptually and empirically distinguished from each other. This applies in particular to the analysis of causes and effects of highly complex institutional configurations in countries such as Canada, India, or Spain, which leads many authors to use plausible but vague umbrella terms such as “asymmetric federalism” (Swenden 2002) or “complex power-sharing” (Wolff 2011). The terminological diversity and conceptual inconsistency in regional and federalism studies are reflected in the empirical measurement approaches employed. Harguindéguy, Cole, and Pasquier (2019) identified no less than 25 indices that seek to cover subnational entities and their political or fiscal autonomy.

Table 1 shows a correlation matrix containing the most relevant datasets used in recent literature, namely the Local Autonomy Index (LAI, Ladner, Keuffer, and Baldersheim 2016), the Localization and Decentralization Index (LDI, Ivanyna and Shah 2012), the Regional Authority Index (RAI, Hooghe, et al. 2016) and the Regional Government Index (RGI, Coppedge, et al. 2019). The weak cross-correlations question the validity of the conceptualizations and the generalizability of the empirical results based on them. Researchers seem to analyze ontologically different, only partially overlapping phenomena.

**Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Self-Government Indices**

	<b>LDI</b>	<b>LAI</b>	<b>RAI</b>	<b>RGI</b>
<b>LDI</b>	-	0.69	0.08	0.4
<b>LAI</b>	0.69	-	0.21	0.36
<b>RAI</b>	0.08	0.21	-	0.48
<b>RGI</b>	0.4	0.36	0.48	-

We seek to address the conceptual deficiencies by proposing a new, coherent typology of territorial self-governance. Our conceptualization offers three crucial advantages. First, it is parsimonious, allowing for a more empirically applicable and falsifiable approach. Second, it carves out qualitative “differences in kind” in addition to gradual measurements. Third, it focuses on subnational entities instead of the national level. We seek to meet the challenge arising from the empirical complexity of subnational governance by addressing it in an incremental way: from fundamental criteria to a relatively simple typology and on to more complex country-specific “profiles”.

Existing approaches have been largely “state-centric” in the sense that they distinguish between a central level and a generic sub-state level, lumping together highly diverse units such as municipalities, provincial governments, or regional autonomies of sometimes very different standing (Harguindéguy, et al. 2019; Lijphart 1999; Scartascini, Cruz, and Keefer 2018; Teorell,

et al. 2019). We focus on subnational entities as units of analysis instead of the national system level. The properties of a system cannot be understood without looking at its constituents first. As the debate about whether Spain is federal with or without adjectives (see Sala 2014) illustrates, there is no hope of settling the matter on the national level without analyzing each subnational unit individually, thereby differentiating Catalonia, for instance, from the Canary Islands. By shifting the level of analysis, we also seek to overcome the shortcomings of existing gradual measurements of decentralization, which usually take place at the national system level. Gradual measurements alone are not able to capture “differences in kind”. While the reality of vertical state organization is complex, phenomena such as “federalism” or “autonomy” are not merely constructions but reflect discoveries of real-world regularities. Focusing on empirical nuances alone does not enable to capture these differences in kind. Qualitatively defined types of territorial self-governance have played a key role in most studies on the causal effects of this form of authority division on variables such as democracy, efficiency, or stability (see Cederman, et al. 2015; Gerring and Thacker 2008; Ginsburg 2019; Grindle 2009).

Our aim is to reduce the conceptual and, linked to this, the terminological confusion by developing a concept of territorial self-governance that is as parsimonious as empirically possible. Seeking to reflect the empirical complexity, concepts are often “overfitted” as they translate more case-specific “noise” into the conceptualization than necessary. While conceptual simplicity is not an end in itself, the principle of “Occam’s razor” tells us that more complex concepts lead to less falsifiable theories.

We argue that types of self-governance can be differentiated on the basis of three individually necessary and jointly sufficient criteria: The territorial quality of the region in question (its standard or special character), its degree of self-rule and its constitutional protection. Depending on how the three attributes are shaped, the result is a specific type of territorial self-governance. Our typology results in eight different types of subnational units in terms of territorial self-governance, namely federated, semi-federated, regionalized, and deconcentrated as well as autonomous, semi-autonomous, devolved, and territorialized entities.

Our aim is to “untangle” territorial self-governance, both “internally” in terms of the empirical variety of the concept as well as in an “external” sense by dissociating the concept from the logic

of power-sharing, with which it is often confused. We argue that attempts at dividing political authority are based *either* on the principle of power-sharing *or* on the logic of self-governance. Confounding the two functional logics, which are located at two different levels (national and subnational), and conceptualizing territorial self-governance as the “second dimension” of power-sharing, exacerbates the prevalent terminological confusion (Graham, et al. 2017; Lijphart 1969; Norris 2008; Wolff and Yakinthou 2012:26). Disentangling self-governance from power-sharing requires to include the latter in our investigation on the national *and* the subnational level.

Typologies without data are of little use. Existing datasets often have important limitations as they either reflect overly complex or vague concepts, do not contain all the information necessitated by the concept, or they are geographically and temporally limited. The Territorial Self-Governance Dataset (TERRGO) provides comprehensive data for the eight types mentioned above on a worldwide scale for the period between 2000 and 2018. TERRGO extends the boundaries of contemporary federal and regional studies by expanding the empirical framework to non-Western democracies, semi-democracies, and a selection of autocratic regimes. The dataset overcomes existing data biases towards Western democracies (Dardanelli 2018; Hooghe, Marks and Schakel 2010), ethnic autonomies (Panov and Semenov 2018; Vogt, et al. 2015) or post-conflict cases (Ottmann and Vüllers 2015; Sambanis, Germann, and Schädel 2018). The TERRGO dataset and the codebook can be downloaded at [territorial-governance.com](http://territorial-governance.com).

The article proceeds as follows. The first section outlines our concept and typology and introduces the eight types of territorial self-governance. The second section describes the TERRGO measurement criteria, levels of aggregation, and extended scope. The third section draws on the TERRGO dataset to present key patterns. We illustrate the main advantages by untangling the within-system complexities into country-specific profiles. We show that these configurations frequently change over time and give rise to considerable asymmetries within countries. To conclude, the article situates the contribution of our approach in the field and discusses avenues for research uses.

## 2. Towards a new typology of territorial self-governance

Thinking about territorial self-governance requires breaking the concept down into its individual components. We define *governance* as a system's property of being able and entitled to unilaterally impose decisions on its constituents. It consists in a perpetuated hierarchical relationship between those in control, who possess authority, i.e. the power resources to exert this ability and entitlement, on the one hand, and those who are controlled, i.e. whose conformity is ensured by reducing their "degrees of freedom", on the other (Luhmann 1997:603; Khan 1968; Schliesky 2004; Weber 1922). Governance is, in short, the ability and right to rule. Depending on the political, legal, and financial power resources available, this authority can vary considerably.

We argue that self-governance and power-sharing, or "self-rule" and "shared rule" in the terminology introduced by Elazar (1987), should be kept conceptually apart, but that both are forms of the higher-order concept of "divided authority". In modern democracies political authority is often divided in three different dimensions: through a) the horizontal separation of powers, b) vertical self-governance, and c) the "diagonal" form of power-sharing.

Separation of powers assigns political authority to different, mutually controlling bodies, typically consisting of the legislature, executive, and an independent judiciary. Power-sharing refers to a division of authority by *integrating* segments of society into centers of political decision-making, typically involving representation in parliaments or cabinets (Lijphart 1984). Self-governance, on the other hand, means the division of authority by *distributing* powers among multiple centers of political decision-making, typically creating subnational entities such as states or regions.

While power-sharing aims at inclusion, drawing relevant segments of society together into a political center, self-governance works in the opposite direction by distributing authority away from the main political center and creating more or less autonomous entities. This integrative-distributive distinction in the "kinetics" of political authority is crucial as it highlights that power-sharing and self-governance are based on a different functional logic. This prevents us from subsuming power-sharing under the concept of self-governance or vice versa.

Mixing both concepts increases the risk of conceptual stretching and leads to problematic classifications. The RAI dataset, which is the current workhorse in the field, is an illuminating example. It mixes the concept of territorial self-governance, which it measures with its “self-rule” dimension, with aspects of national governance, the “shared rule” dimension. According to the RAI score, the German *Länder* or the US states enjoy more “regional authority” than, for example, the Swiss cantons (Hooghe et al. 2016). This is difficult to reconcile with the broad consensus among most country experts (Dardanelli 2018; Krumm 2015; Vatter 2018).

In defining “self-governance”, we refer to an entity defined by a certain collective identity. Self-governance in a cultural sense stipulates that the rulers belong to the *same* cultural entity as the ruled. A self-governing collective is not free of rule but free of “foreign” rule. This is the difference between “autonomy” and “heteronomy”. Self-governance requires the existence of a *self* as the subject and object of governance (Emerson 1969). The “self” in this case is a collective which maintains a certain degree of “sameness” (internal coherence) over time and across space as well as a certain amount of “distinctiveness” (external alterity) to distinguish it from others who are “foreign” (Levinas 1961). However, the notion of the self not only implies identity but also agency. A collective’s “selfhood” consists in its ability and right to develop and pursue intentions and thus determine its own fate (“self-determination”). This presupposes that collectives possess a certain “unity of being” (Jones 2018) and, even more fundamentally, that “collective intentionality” is conceivable (Searle 1990; Wencker 2018; see Malloy 2015). If this is the case, collective self-hood entails not only a shared experience of the collective’s history and presence, but also an inherent, non-derivative authority to *have* its own history, presence, and future.

Collective identity is often based on cultural attributes. However, we can also observe a weaker form of cultural identity which arises from *territoriality* alone. Often it is enough for people to live in a defined territory to develop a feeling of belongingness and togetherness, without reference to stronger cultural attributes such as religion, language, or descent (Croissant et al., 2009). Geography alone can facilitate the creation and maintenance of a coherent, distinctive collective self (Kelle 2017; Maier 2007; Malmberg 1980). “Territory” in this sense is the confluence of natural space and cultural identity. In cases where territorial identity combines with strong cultural attributes this often creates a potent sense of uniqueness.

Territorial self-governance is based on geographical rather than primarily group-based distinctions (Broschek, Petersohn, and Toubeau 2018). Group-based self-governance is also often referred to as “personal”, “non-territorial”, or “functional” autonomy (Coakley 2018; Huegelin and Fenna 2015; Malloy, Osipov, and Balázs 2015; Nootens 2015; Tkacik 2008). The identity groups in question typically comprise religious communities or language groups. Geographical and cultural distinctions can fuse, as is the case, e.g., with spatially concentrated ethnic groups. Similar to self-governance, power-sharing can be territorial or group-based, as well. Table 2 gives examples of possible configurations.

**Table 2: Forms of Political Authority-division**

	<b>Territorial</b>	<b>Group-based</b>	<b>Fusional</b>
<b>Power-sharing</b>	US states in the US Senate	Linguistic groups in the cabinet of Brussels, Belgium	Ethnic groups in the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina
<b>Self-governance</b>	States of Mexico	Millet system in the Ottoman empire	Basque and Catalan communities in Spain

Group-based, non-territorial self-governance has been exceedingly rare (Coakley 2016). Only a small number of, mostly historical, cases can be identified. Examples include the millets in the Ottoman Empire and the Jewish National Council in Mandatory Palestine (Erk 2015). In general, the notion of “non-territorial autonomy” is inappropriate for two reasons. First, most such labelled cases have nothing to do with self-governance as they do not constitute instances of political rule but of minority rights, aiming to protect the cultural identity of a group. Second, most cases are not really non-territorial at all but rather represent situations in which territorial and group-based distinctions are fused, as shown by Indian tribal governance in the United States. The predominant variant of self-governance is territorial, either in a pure form or in combination with some group-based properties.

“Governance”, the “self”, and “territoriality” are the ontological dimensions which constitute our concept of territorial self-governance. We translate these dimensions into three attributes: “self-

rule”, “constitutional protection” and “territorial quality”. We argue that this conceptualization is ontologically complete so that the three attributes are individually necessary and jointly sufficient to grasp the nature of territorial self-governance and to distinguish all possible types of institutional arrangements at the sub-state level.

The *self-rule* attribute captures the degree of authority that a subnational entity enjoys. We distinguish the material from the institutional dimension (Suksi 2011), focusing on a region’s competences and its institutional set-up. Both dimensions are important, as a simple thought experiment can tell, imagining a region with a large amount of powers but no independent institutions to use them, or with independent institutions but no powers to speak of.

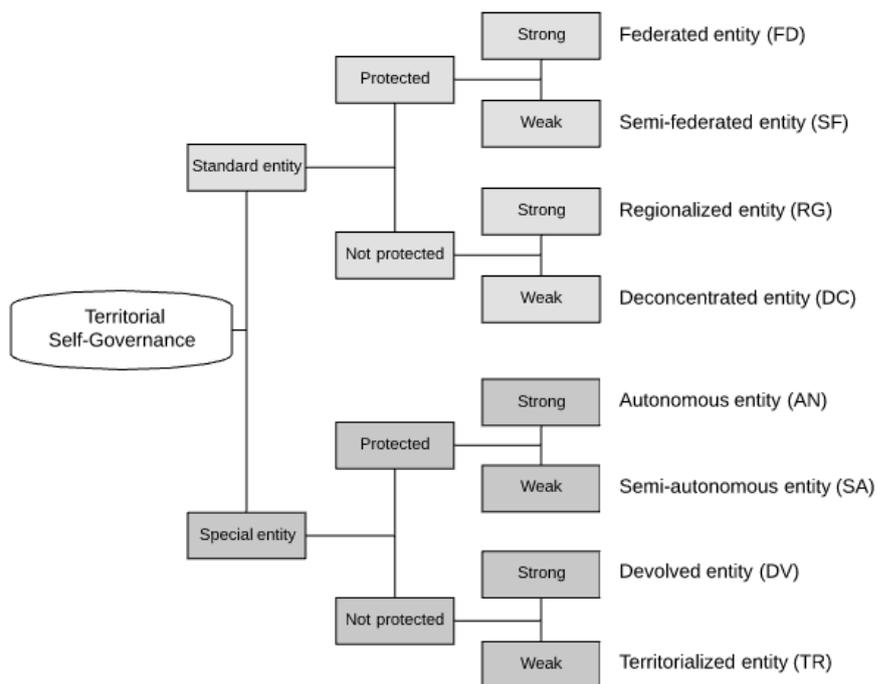
The term *constitutional protection* describes the “security of existence” (Ivanyna and Shah 2012) through guarantees accorded to a subnational entity by the national constitution. Constitutional protection reflects the recognition by the national level that the region *eo ipso* “owns” inherent authority, not, or no longer, delegated or derived from the nation state’s authority but as an “original entitlement” (Henig 2006; Sala 2014). By constitutionally removing the possibility of (unilaterally) revoking the region’s status, it is no longer “dependent” or “subordinated” to the national level in the strict sense (Suksi 2011).<sup>1</sup>

Finally, *territorial quality* refers to the fact that not all subnational entities in every country enjoy the same constitutional status. In many cases, a country’s territory is entirely or mostly covered by the same type of “standard” entity. In other cases, in contrast, we find self-governance arrangements where one or few “special” areas enjoy more self-rule (e.g., Greenland compared to the regions of Denmark) or less self-rule than the standard entities of the same country (e.g., the Nunavut territory compared to Canada’s provinces) (Ginsburg 2019; Knuepling 2016; Watts 2008). This reflects the fact that some regions are culturally more ordinary or more unique than others (compare the German *Länder* with New Caledonia). These three attributes result in a total of eight types of territorial self-governance (see Figure 1).

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<sup>1</sup> The issue of constitutional protection is silent on the question of whether a region enjoys a constitutionally protected ability to unilaterally withdraw from an existing nation-state.

**Figure 1: Concept Tree of Territorial Self-Governance**



The intention of this typology is not to multiply the terms in current use but to reduce the terminological confusion by giving extant terms a more precise content. While the term “federalism” has a relatively clear meaning, there is much uncertainty about the conceptualization of weaker forms of constitutionally protected standard types. We opt for the designation “semi-federated entities” as deriving from the term “semi-federal” (Lijphart 1999; Loughlin 2011; Rufus 1978). Following the debates on semi-presidentialism and semi-democracy (Case 1993; Duverger 1980), we use this term to describe the *sui generis* character of these entities.

In our typology, “regionalized entities” are similar to federated units, but lacking constitutional guarantees. We derive this expression from the terms “regionalization” and “regionalism” primarily discussed with regard to Italy (Baldi 1999; Giovannini and Vampa 2019). We apply the word “deconcentration” for the least extensive standard type.

“Autonomy” arguably has the longest terminological history. In contrast to other authors (Ladner, Keuffer, and Baldersheim 2016; Weller and Wolff 2005), we do not use the term to describe the overarching concept of territorial self-governance but apply it in a restricted sense

to regional autonomies proper. This is in line with the designation of areas such as Greenland or South Tyrol. We use the term “semi-autonomous” to describe weaker forms of constitutionally protected special entities (Hagendoorn, Poppe, and Minescu 2008; Rarick, Charles; Winter, Gregory; Barczyk, Casimir; Merkt 2014; Setas 2011). The term “devolution” is widely but inconsistently applied, resulting in a high degree of terminological confusion. Originating in the UK, the only common denominator seems to be the delegated, constitutionally unprotected character of non-standard entities (Bogdanor 2001; Knuepling 2016). We apply the term accordingly. Based on empirical examples such as India’s Union Territories and Malaysia’s Federal Territories, we use the term “territorialized entities” to capture the weakest form of non-standard state architectures.

### 3. Introducing the Territorial Self-Governance dataset (TERRGO)

In the following we apply the concept and typology developed above to 96 countries worldwide between 2000 and 2018. TERRGO includes 87 fully and defective democracies, i.e. all states with a cumulative value of the Polity IV *xrcomp*, *xropen* and *xconst* variables of 13 or more in at least one year during this period (Marshall, Gurr, and Jaggers 2017).<sup>2</sup> Added to this sample were nine non-democratic countries contained in the RAI dataset in order to preserve the comparability with this important dataset. The central analytical unit in TERRGO is the region-year. The category of “regions” encompasses all first-level subnational entities, such as provinces, states or cantons, but may in some cases also include other forms of regional governance such as cities or districts, indigenous governments, or dependent, “unincorporated” territories. We excluded those regions which are not under the effective *and* internationally acknowledged control of one of the case countries (see Panov and Semenov 2018). This is the case for Abkhazia and South Ossetia in Georgia, Transnistria and Bender in Moldavia, the Palestinian National Authority as well as, for part of the period, Crimea and Sevastopol in Ukraine.

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<sup>2</sup> This strategy was chosen to leave out the Polity IV measurements contaminated with reference to violent conflict in order to avoid endogeneity issues (Vreeland 2008). The Polity IV universe excludes states with a total population of less than 500,000 in the most recent year.

TERRGO comes in two levels of aggregation. TERRGO\_C offers information on each *generic category* of self-governance units, while TERRGO\_U provides data for each *individual unit*. Whereas, for instance, variant C has the standard “region” of Italy as an entry, plus five different regional autonomies, variant U lists 20 distinct regions (with different types of self-governance). Both variants are disaggregated by calendar year. TERRGO\_U covers a total of 2,243 regional units. They are grouped into four regional *character types* of self-governance in TERRGO\_C, resulting in 279 distinct entries. Among these, 148 are instances of regional government, e.g. provinces, governorates or states. Local government types on municipal and intermediary levels (e.g. cities, districts, or counties) can be found in 71 cases. TERRGO\_C includes 46 different dependent governments in overseas territories, constituent countries, or associated states. Finally, there are 15 instances of indigenous government in the countries under review. Differentiating between these forms of territorial self-governance can help to reduce the problem of comparability between the units of analysis (Ivanyna and Shah 2012). Table 3 gives the number of category- and unity-years in TERRGO\_C and TERRGO\_U, respectively.

**Table 3: Regional Character Types of Territorial Self-Governance**

	TERRGO_C (category-years)	TERRGO_U (unit-years)
Total	4,771	39,319
Regional government	2,554	29,070
Local government	1,103	9,094
Indigenous government	284	284
Dependent government	830	871

Qualitative analysis determines the *territorial quality* of a subnational entity, i.e. whether it is a standard region or a non-standard region with a special status. A close reading of legal documents enabled us to determine whether the status of a standard or special region is constitutionally protected. The minimum requirement of *constitutional protection* is provided by mentioning the region in the constitution’s text (see Riker 1964:11). Some regions are protected by a specified entrenchment clause, which makes changes to the region’s status more difficult or impossible (Sala 2014).

At the heart of TERRGO is the assessment of the degree of *self-rule* that a subnational government enjoys. The level of autonomous decision-making power is measured by the *scope of the competences* of the regional government in question as well as by the relative *independence of regional institutions*, which determines to what extent competencies can be put into practice. Here, we follow the ideas of previous approaches (Dardanelli 2018; Hooghe, et al. 2016; Ivanyna and Shah 2012; Ladner, Keuffer, and Baldersheim 2016; Panov and Semenov 2018).

For measuring *competences*, we first take into account the scope of the authoritative powers of a regional legislative or executive in the areas of economic, cultural-educational, social, or internal security policy, without the central government having the right to intervene. Second, we measure the degree of fiscal competences achieved through the setting and raising of regional taxes. In the *institutional* dimension, we also include two indicators: the existence of a directly elected assembly and of a regional executive which is not appointed but directly elected within the subnational entity or emanates from the regional assembly.<sup>3</sup>

In measuring these four indicators we took inspiration from equivalent subcomponents contained in the RAI as the most comprehensive dataset.<sup>4</sup> Besides the re-conceptualization developed above, we have also significantly expanded the temporal and spatial coverage. Whereas the RAI dataset contains a total of 2,900 entries for 64 countries between 2000 and 2016, TERRGO comprises 4,800 entries for 96 countries from 2000 to 2018.

In contrast to previous, more complex approaches, we deem these two variables (competences as well as institutional independence) to be *jointly sufficient* to define the strength of autonomy. The consideration of a large number of very similar variables as by Ladner, Keuffer and Baldersheim (2016) or Dardanelli, et al. (2019) in our view complicates matters without adding to the conceptual validity of the index. The two dimensions of self-rule (institutional and material) do not interact and cannot compensate each other: Their scores are not conditioned by each other and one dimension cannot substitute the other. As discussed above, strong institutions without strong powers, or vice versa, do not imply strong self-rule. Following Munck, in

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<sup>3</sup> Details can be found in the codebook accessible at [territorial-governance.com](http://territorial-governance.com).

<sup>4</sup> Specifically, “tier\_policy”, “tier\_fiscauto”, “assembly”, and “executive”.

aggregating the two dimensions we thus apply the “minimum rule”, which means that the lowest of the two scores counts (Munck 2009).

In contrast, the two indicators operationalizing the material dimension (policy and fiscal) and the indicators measuring the institutional dimension (assembly and executive) are substitutable, respectively. Strong fiscal powers, for instance, can compensate for weaker policy competences. Accordingly, we summarize the scores for policy and fiscal powers and for executive and assembly institutions, respectively (Goertz 2006). This leads to the following formula for calculating the self-rule values:<sup>5</sup>

$$\text{MIN}((\text{policy} * 3 + \text{fiscal} * 5), (\text{assembly} * 5 + \text{executive} * 5))$$

Since our overall typology of territorial self-governance rests on a dichotomization of all three defining attributes, we follow the logic of fuzzy sets and code cases with a self-rule value of 0.5 or less as weakly autonomous and cases with values of larger than 0.5 as strongly autonomous.

To be able to unravel the empirical configurations of territorial self-governance in a comprehensive way, TERRGO also provides novel data on executive power-sharing as the “diagonal”, integrative form of divided authority. We distinguish between guaranteed national and subnational power-sharing. While previous approaches have focused solely on power-sharing agreements at the national level, we provide, as far as we know, the first comprehensive data on power-sharing agreements at the (first) subnational level. In both cases it is a prerequisite that the representation of all relevant political parties or organizations is laid down in the constitution or other legal documents. Due to a lack of available data, we had to code the sub-state version ourselves, whereas for the state-level variant we draw on quantitative data for inclusive power-sharing by Strøm, et al. (2017). TERRGO contains 190 unit-years of guaranteed subnational executive power-sharing as well as 4,811 unit-years (748 category-years) of guaranteed national executive power-sharing.

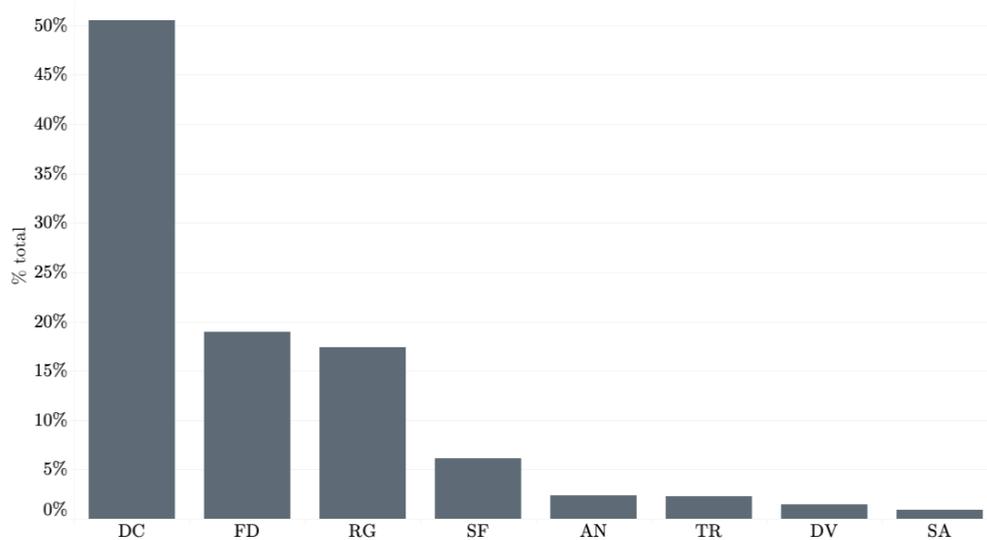
#### 4. Using the TERRGO dataset: Profiles and Asymmetries

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<sup>5</sup> The multiplications are to ensure that three-valued and five-valued variables have the same weight.

Whereas many recent analyses focus on the continuous level of decentralization (“differences in degree”), we are interested in providing a typology of territorial self-governance by identifying qualitative “differences in kind”. TERRGO thereby allows for a new perspective on the landscape of territorial self-governance on a subnational, national, and global scale. The four types of standard entities (federated, semi-federated, regionalized, and deconcentrated) are “basic” not only conceptually but empirically as well. Together they account for almost 93% of the subnational units in TERRGO\_U. Deconcentration is the most prevalent type of territorial self-governance by far, with more than 50% of the units in our sample (Figure 2). Federated and regionalized entities follow with about 19% and 17%, respectively. The share of federalism found in our sample echoes the findings of Ginsburg (2019), who classifies 18% of all countries as federal. The other five types are empirically rare, ranging between 1% (semi-autonomous) and 6% (semi-federated). (Semi-)federated and (semi-)autonomous entities are those which have received constitutional guarantees. Empirically, however, Figure 2 shows that 72% of subnational entities are constitutionally unprotected. On closer inspection, the “era of regionalization” (Hooghe et al. 2010:52) thus seems to stand on feet of clay.

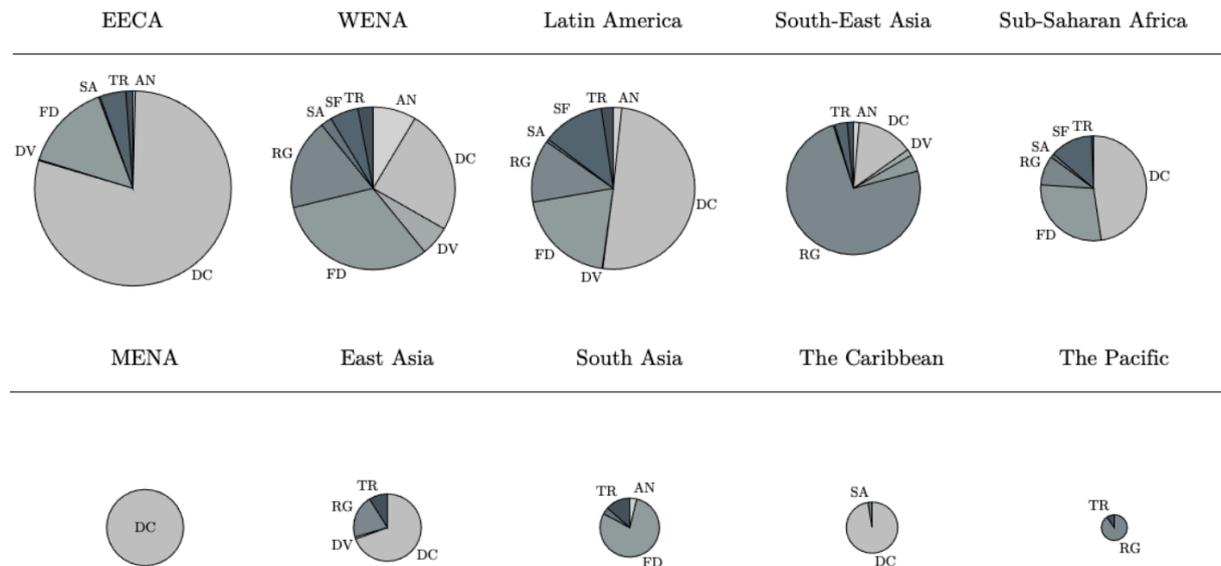
**Figure 2: Frequency of TERRGO Types**



In terms of the degree of self-rule, the strongest subnational regions, which reach the maximum self-rule\_1 score, are as follows: Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Åland Islands (Finland), Sabah and Sarawak (Malaysia), Bashkortostan and Tatarstan (Russia), Montenegro and Serbia (Yugoslavia, later Serbia and Montenegro) as well as the cantons of Switzerland. All these regions are either autonomous or federal entities with strong territorial identities rooted in cultural distinctions. Only the minority are found in consolidated democracies.

Looking at global patterns makes clear that the prevalence of the types of territorial self-governance varies significantly (Figure 3). Some world regions in our sample are dominated by one type: In the Caribbean, East Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) as well as Middle East and North Africa (MENA), deconcentrated entities predominate, while in South-East Asia and the Pacific many regionalized units can be found. In other regions, in contrast, we discover a great potpourri of territorial self-governance, especially in Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, and, most notably, Western Europe and North America (WENA) where we can find all of the eight TERRGO types. Federal entities occur in EECA, Latin America, and Sub-Saharan Africa as well as in WENA and South Asia, where this type is dominant. Regional autonomy proper is surprisingly rare. It is primarily a Western phenomenon.

**Figure 3: Global Patterns**



*Note:* The size of each pie chart reflects the total numbers of unit-years per type.

The eight TERRGO types can combine to *country-specific profiles* on the system level. Ordering the existing types in each country by frequency, we arrive at 41 empirical country profiles of varying complexity. While some cases represent a TERRGO type in its pure form (e.g. deconcentration or federalism), others show more complex configurations. The UK, for instance, exhibits a combination of devolution, territorialization, and autonomy from 2012 to 2018. A country switches to another profile when a TERRGO type appears or disappears.

Pure federalism is rare. It occurs only in six out of 21 countries with federal entities as the basic type. The correct classification of unequivocally federal systems such as Austria, Germany, and Switzerland shows that our minimalist definition is sufficient to identify federalism. The majority of federal systems contains special types. Brazil, Canada, India, and the United States, for instance, are varieties of federalism. With our system-level classification, we are able to carve out the specificities of individual cases. Spain, whose classification is often contested (Maiz, Caamaño, and Azpitarte 2010; Sala 2014), is a good example. The case exhibits a combination of federal as well as autonomous entities. This specification makes overly vague terms such as “quasi-

federalism” unnecessary (Conversi 2007; Harguindéguy and Cole 2017; Moreno 1997; Rius-Ulldemolins and Zamorano 2015; Wheare 1963).

In contrast to federalism, deconcentrated entities mostly occur in a pure form. It is the dominant form of territorial organization found in systems usually identified as “unitary”. Deconcentrated units are especially frequent in Eastern Europe. The combination of constitutionally unprotected and politically weak standard entities with autonomous, i.e. guaranteed and strong special regions almost only occurs in the Western world (Denmark, Finland, Greece, New Zealand).

Regionalization almost never occurs in a pure form and is primarily found in East and South-East Asia, Latin America, and Western Europe. Italy, which is frequently described as a “regionalized” country (Bassanini 2012; Mangiameli 2014), occurs as such in TERRGO. However, the presence of five autonomous entities makes the case more complex than that.

Semi-federal systems are mostly a phenomenon found in defective democracies and autocracies such as Ukraine, Venezuela, and Myanmar (2008-2018). France as a liberal democracy is a deviant case in this regard. Its semi-federated standard entities exist alongside autonomous and semi-autonomous entities, including primarily the French dependencies but also Corsica.

Devolved entities appear in a total of ten countries. The UK, where the term “devolution” originated, is the only case where this type is predominant. At the same time, the UK is a highly complex case that combines devolution with deconcentration, territorialization, autonomy, and semi-autonomy in various phases of the period under investigation. The UK is therefore not an example of devolution “pure and simple”. Other devolved entities can be found, for instance, in the dependent territories of Australia, the United States, and New Zealand.

Figures 4 to 7 show the four standard types (federalism, semi-federalism, regionalization, deconcentration) in combination with various non-standard types (autonomy, semi-autonomy, devolution, territorialization).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The size of the quadrant corresponds to the relative frequency of the profiles. Country IDs refer to the TERRGO cases.

**Figure 4: Country Profiles – Federal Systems**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Federated</b> <i>AT, DE, CS (2003-2006), ZA, LK, CH, YU (2000-2002)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Autonomous+ Devolved+ Territorialized <i>CA</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Autonomous+ Territorialized <i>MY</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Devolved <i>BA</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Semi-Autonomous <i>NG</i></p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Territorialized+ Devolved+ Autonomous <i>AU</i></p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Autonomous <i>AR, BR, MX, RU (2000-2017), ES</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Semi-Autonomous+ Autonomous+ Territorialized <i>PK</i></p>		<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Devolved+ Autonomous <i>US (2001-2018)</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Federated+ Territorialized+ Autonomous <i>IN</i></p>		

*Note:* Quadrant at the bottom right is Federated + Devolved + Autonomous + Territorialized (US 2000).

**Figure 5: Country Profiles – Semi-Federal Systems**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Semi-federated</b> <i>CV, PE, UA (2015-2018)</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Semi-federated+ Territorialized <i>VE</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Semi-federated+ Semi-autonomous <i>UA (2000-2014)</i></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Semi-federated+ Semi-autonomous <i>MM (2008-2018)</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Semi-federated+ Autonomous+ Semi-autonomous <i>FR</i></p>		

**Figure 6: Country Profiles – Regionalized Systems**

<p><b>Regionalized+ Territorialized</b> <i>KR (2000-2005), NO, SB, SE</i></p>	<p><b>Regionalized</b> <i>KE (2013-2018), UY</i></p>	<p><b>Regionalized+ Autonomous+ Territorialized</b> <i>CO</i></p>
	<p><b>Regionalized+ Devolved</b> <i>TH</i></p>	<p><b>Regionalized+ Territorialized+ Devolved</b> <i>KR (2006-2018)</i></p>
<p><b>Regionalized+ Autonomous</b> <i>DK (2000-2006), IT, NL (2000-2010), PH</i></p>	<p><b>Regionalized+ Devolved+ Autonomous</b> <i>ID (2004-2018)</i></p>	<p><b>Regionalized+ Autonomous+ Semi-autonomous</b> <i>NL (2011-2018)</i></p>

**Figure 7: Country Profiles – Deconcentrated Systems**

<p><b>Deconcentrated</b> <i>AL, BG, BW, CL, KM (2000), CR, HR, CY, CZ, SV, EE, GH, GT, GY, HT, HN HU, IE, IL, JM, JP, KE (2000-2012), LV (2000-2008), LT, LU, MK, ME (2006-2018), PL, RO, SN, SL, SK, SI, TL (2002-2013), TR</i></p>	<p><b>Deconcentrated+ Territorialized</b> <i>BO, CF, CU, DO (2000-2007), GE, KG, MN, MM (2000-2007), PA</i></p>	<p><b>Deconcentrated+ Semi-autonomous</b> <i>EC, MU, PY, RS (2006-2018), TL (2014), TT</i></p>		
	<p><b>Deconcentrated+ Autonomous</b> <i>DK (2007-2018), GR, PT</i></p>	<p><b>a</b></p>	<p><b>b</b></p>	
	<p><b>Deconcentrated+ Autonomous+ Territorialized</b> <i>MD, NI (2003-2018)</i></p>	<p><b>c</b></p>	<p><b>d</b></p>	
		<p><b>e</b></p>	<p><b>f</b></p>	<p><b>g</b></p>

*Note:* Quadrant *a*: Deconcentrated + Autonomous + Devolved: NZ; *b*: Deconcentrated + Devolved: DO (2008-2018), TH (2000-2003); *c*: Deconcentrated + Autonomous + Semi-

autonomous: FI (2000-2004; 2013-2018); *d*: Deconcentrated + Semi-autonomous + Territorialized: ID (2001-2003), NI (2000-2003); *e*: Deconcentrated + Autonomous + Semi-autonomous + Territorialized: FI (2005-2012); *f*: Deconcentrated + Regionalized: KE 2009-2011, BO; *g*: Deconcentrated + Territorialized + Semi-federated: IN 2000.

Our approach allows researchers to conduct diachronic and cross-case comparisons of country profiles. The periodization of the cases shows that a country's character in terms of territorial self-governance is often not static. Between 2000 and 2018, 17 countries experienced changes in their TERRGO types and thus switched the country profile. Examples include Denmark, which changed from a regionalized to a deconcentrated state due to its 2006 local government reform, and Ukraine, which in 2014 lost the semi-autonomous region of Crimea to Russia and became a purely semi-federal system. It is noticeable that systems which are overall federal or semi-federal are more resilient in terms of their country profile assignment. Deconcentrated and regionalized states are much more frequently subject to change.

The configuration of self-governance types as aggregated in the country profiles testifies to a considerable empirical variety. Our approach allows to reduce this complexity by calculating the overall asymmetry of a country system. Our measurement is based on the percentage of each TERRGO type in the total number of subnational units per country-year. Using the Simpson diversity index gives us

$$\lambda = \sum_{i=1}^R p_i^2,$$

where  $R$  is the total number of types and  $p_i$  is the percentage of type  $i$ . This is the asymmetry measure  $\lambda$ , which ranges from 1 (perfect symmetry) to 0 (perfect asymmetry). Forty-four countries in our sample are perfectly symmetrical (e.g., Austria). An additional thirteen cases are highly symmetrical ( $\lambda > 0.9$ ), among them the Philippines (0.98), Brazil (0.93) and Sweden (0.91). Seven countries, in contrast, are highly asymmetrical ( $\lambda < 0.5$ ): Australia, Pakistan, Denmark, Canada, Myanmar, the UK, and Indonesia (ordered by asymmetry).

The asymmetry index goes beyond the usual understanding of asymmetry as a dichotomous feature of states (McGarry 2007; Zuber 2011). This allows for differentiated studies of the paths leading to asymmetric state architectures or their consequences. For instance, a broad strand of

literature argues that asymmetric federalism, especially in states with deep cultural cleavages, provides for a flexibly adaptable institutional framework that allows a balance between “the common and the particular” (Ghai 2000:24). Sceptics contend that asymmetric forms of state organization create anomalies, leading to non-empowered groups or regions seeking to catch up. Non-advantaged regions are relative losers and have high incentives to advocate re-symmetrization (Hombrado 2011; Maiz and Losada 2016; Zuber 2011).

The charts in Figures 4 to 7 contain some cases that are likely to arouse skepticism. Among the systems classified as federal, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Russia are cases where the division of authority is in doubt as the subnational entities are largely subordinated to the central government. Several authors have noted the potential gap between the *de jure* status of subnational entities based on legal provisions and the *de facto* realities on the ground (Bednar 2009; Bertrand 2010). What TERRGO measures is the rules of the game, not how the game is being played. However, since territorial self-governance is mostly used in institutional explanations, the real functioning of state architectures cannot be ignored. One solution consists in looking at the actual decision-making practices (Fleurke and Willemse 2006). As this requires in-depth case studies, this approach is hardly feasible in a quantitative design. As an alternative, we look at the level of norm adherence in a country. Our typology relies on formal norms, and so it is important to consider the extent to which political actors respect these norms. We measure norm adherence through the V-Dem rule of law index, which ranges from 0 to 1 (Coppedge, et al. 2019). We again follow the logic of fuzzy sets and code country-years with a rule of law value of lower than 0.5 as displaying defective norm adherence.

As a consequence, the countries mentioned above exhibit certain “deficiencies.” To give an example, TERRGO classifies Sri Lanka as a federal system. Its implementation, however, has major flaws, to the point that most authors would describe the state as unitary (Allison-Reumann and Baogang 2016; Cooray and Abeyratne 2017; Uyangoda 2007). However, the constitution of Sri Lanka gives protection to the country’s provinces, provides for considerable provincial legislative powers with regard to economic policies, state schools, and the police force and establishes directly elected assemblies with responsible governments. If Sri Lanka is described as a unitary system, this assessment confuses *de jure* and *de facto* aspects.

In total, the consideration of the *de facto* aspect results in 35 countries which show deficits in the degree of norm adherence at least once in the period under investigation. This also includes autonomies in Malaysia (Sabah, Sarawak), Moldova (Gagauzia), Nicaragua (North and South Caribbean Coast), Pakistan (Azad Jammu and Kashmir), the Philippines (Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) as well as Russia (Bashkortostan, Tatarstan).

Guaranteed subnational power-sharing is a rare phenomenon. It only occurs in the Brčko District and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (both in Bosnia and Herzegovina), the Northwest Territories and Nunavut (Canada), New Caledonia (France), Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol (Italy), the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (Philippines), Bern and Valais (Switzerland) as well as in Northern Ireland (UK). In most of these cases, subnational power-sharing arrangements were instituted by top-down processes. The rarity of subnational power-sharing clearly demonstrates that power-sharing and territorial self-governance diverge on the subnational level. Accordingly, they should be treated separately. The term “territorial power-sharing” (Hartzell and Hoddie 2015; Ottmann and Vüllers 2015; Wise 2018) is a misnomer in the sense that it more aptly describes a combination of territorial self-governance and subnational power-sharing.

## 5. Conclusion

Regional and federal studies are still in a regrettable state of “terminological mess” (García 2009). There is a plethora of concepts, whose definitions vary from author to author and which often have a large, and often unclear, overlap. Causal uncertainties inevitably follow from this. We seek to address this issue by providing a concise typology of territorial self-governance based on a parsimonious definition. We argue that the territorial quality of a region, its degree of self-rule, and its constitutional protection are individually necessary and jointly sufficient criteria to define territorial self-governance. Based on this, we carve out “differences in kind” and thus go beyond the gradual measurement dominating the field. In doing so we take a genuinely subnational perspective on territorial self-governance, which contrasts with largely state-centric approaches.

Implementing the concept and typology, we take a fresh look at territorial self-governance in 96 Western and non-Western democracies, semi-democracies, and a selection of autocratic regimes between 2000 and 2018. The TERRGO dataset introduced in this article includes information on both generic categories and individual subnational units. TERRGO contains more than 2,200 regional entities with over 39,000 unit-years. The dataset integrates information on the regional, municipal, indigenous, or dependent character of the government of subnational units. TERRGO comprises 17 content variables which specify each unit-year as well as ten identifiers such as HASC codes and world regions, providing a valuable tool for geo-referenced analyses. The dataset thus offers a ready-to-use resource for researchers studying territorial self-governance as a dependent or independent variable.

Based on the assignment of a country's subnational units to eight types of territorial self-governance, TERRGO allows to untangle institutional configurations by identifying country-specific profiles. This addresses the empirical complexity of the cases, many of which have been shown to defy simple country-level classifications. Complexity in the division of authority also appears in the form of executive power-sharing. Here, TERRGO provides data on the national and, uniquely, the subnational level. We have shown that TERRGO can be used to analyze changes of state architectures, which allows for longitudinal comparisons. Institutional configurations change over time. Together with assessing the overall asymmetry of a state's vertical architecture and taking first steps to close the gap between constitutional claims and political reality, this offers a more complete picture than has been available so far.

We demonstrate the utility of our approach by showing that with minimum operational effort we can correctly identify the manifestations of territorial self-governance on the subnational and aggregated national level and can at the same time help to clarify cases whose classification is disputed. The framework put forward in this article seeks to reduce the conceptual fuzziness and complexity. At the same time, it enhances our grasp on the empirical complexity of territorial state structures by taking seriously the multifacetedness of the cases.

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