

Close to Home

Local Ties and Voting Radical Right in Europe

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Local Political Salience and Radical Right Party Success in OECD Countries*

In this chapter I ask whether the political salience of countries' local units influences the success rates of radical right parties in national elections. Evidence presented in previous chapters highlights the importance of local attachments as motivations for radical right voting. Further analysis also points to a strong conditioning role of local political salience in enhancing the impact of the localist impulse on radical right support. In Chapters 5 and 6 I demonstrate that local political salience factors such as having meaningful local elections and forfeiting local authority (in France and Switzerland) render local attachments particularly potent for electoral behavior in favor of radical right parties and candidates.

Here, I investigate the concept of local political salience and its implications further, asking what conditions allow radical right parties to flourish and what conditions make them fail to thrive or fail to even emerge? I examine the role of the political relevance of localities across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) member countries and over time within these countries. The analysis draws on a novel dataset combining parliamentary election results, local autonomy measures, electoral timing, and socio-economic contexts – all at the national level. It covers three decades (1980–2010) and over thirty countries. I disaggregate the concept of local political salience into three dimensions: level of tax authority, level of policy control over areas such as primary education and policing, and electoral institutional features. I use measures associated with each aspect of local salience to predict radical right support levels in legislative elections. The central finding

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is that radical right parties are more successful where and when localities are particularly salient units for politics.

INSTITUTIONAL/STRUCTURAL ACCOUNTS OF RADICAL RIGHT SUPPORT

To account for the fact that radical right parties thrive more in some countries than in others, scholars have put forth a host of institutional theories. National factors such as citizenship and nationhood regimes (Koopmans and Statham 1999), party systems (Bale 2003, Givens 2005, Bustikova 2014), welfare systems (Swank and Betz 2003, Arzheimer 2009) socio-economic structures (Betz 1994, Kitschelt, with McGann, 1995), and internal party features (Art 2011, Widfeldt 2015) headline various accounts. Certain electoral institutions also feature prominently in several studies. Proportionality of the system and the related electoral threshold for gaining seats, for instance, are key predictors of radical right success rates (Carter 2005, Norris 2005, Veugelers and Magnan 2005, Skenderovic 2009). I address many of these in Chapter 3.

While we have learned a great deal from institutional studies, these kinds of factors tend to be relatively stable over time. As such, they are not well suited to addressing the dynamic nature of radical right party success rates. National institutional factors that change significantly over time and that differentiate countries have not yet surfaced in the literature to address both dimensions of variation. Furthermore, existing institutional theories of radical right support are not equipped to predict which *kinds* of parties will rise in popularity and maintain electoral relevance. They tend to be value-neutral in that these are features that theoretically could facilitate the rise of any kind of party. As a result, they do not help us to understand the advent of radical right parties in particular.

A major aspect of national institutions that has shifted significantly over time and across countries is the structure of state authority. Chapter 5 examines key aspects of this process in Switzerland; Chapter 6 explores its electoral implications in France. Reorganization of powers across various levels of government has been a major trend in many democracies over the past three decades. The main direction of authority shifts have been downward: central states are devolving formal authority to regional parliaments and lower units. Existing research details processes of devolution of authority over time in democratic systems (e.g. Rodriguez-Pose and Gill 2003, Hooghe et al. 2010, Schakel 2011). The dominant version of the narrative is state-centric: it relates to central governments handing down responsibilities to a range of sub-national units. A locally centered version, which I develop here, emphasizes trends through which municipalities – in particular – gain powers.

Despite the prevalence of large-scale authority changes in many democratic societies, their attitudinal and electoral implications have not attracted much scholarly attention. In particular, we do not yet understand how these

shifting institutional factors may relate to radical right success rates. Some work considers the impact of “federalism” generally on the radical right phenomenon. Swyngedouw (2001) stands out for connecting individual voters’ support for federalism to Vlaams Blok support in Belgium.

Others have considered the role of authority structures in influencing how radical right parties do at the national level. For instance, Arzheimer and Carter (2006) broke ground by presenting and testing hypotheses on the role of federalism in their study of radical right support across countries over time. These authors outline competing propositions for the relationship between devolved authority structures and radical right electoral success levels. Using a political opportunity framework to understand how these parties can rise to relevance on the national stage, they reason that *either* decentralized authority helps parties develop because they can get a foot in the door via lower-level elections *or* that decentralized authority undermines these parties at the national level when voters are satisfied to vent their frustrations only in lower-level elections. The first mechanism they put forth is primarily mechanical in nature. Party development may be more possible in national contexts where new parties can gain a foot-hold in governing units below the national arena. Others have made this argument with respect to the nature of party organizations (i.e. Lubbers et al. 2002).¹ The alternative hypothesis Arzheimer and Carter posit can be described as expressive; where citizens have lower order opportunities to register their dissatisfaction with politics-as-usual, political development is less likely at the national level. In their study, the authors do not find evidence in support of either hypothesis linking federalism to radical right support. But their intuitions about authority structures hold significant potential.²

To the extent, then, that federalism has been advanced as a possible explanation for variation in radical right electoral success rates, the existing approach is limited. First, the ideas advanced so far involve a circumscribed view of federalism with the central state as the point of departure (how much power does it share with lower units?) rather than focusing directly on lower levels of authority, namely the municipality, that are closer to people’s daily experiences.³ Second, by evaluating static authority structures rather than dynamic ones, a

¹ This logic may be more useful for understanding radical right parties’ national breakthroughs rather than their electoral returns once they have established a national presence.

² Schain (2006) provides a different logic connecting authority structures that is more dynamic in nature. He observes in France: “decentralized structures – regions and municipalities – are reinforced by strong local party units and local notables to give these structures important policy-making roles. These structures, then, can be used as leverage to magnify the influence of the extreme right in national politics” (287). The proposed mechanism is similar to the first outlined by Arzheimer and Carter in that it explains how sub-national structures may enhance a party’s status at the national level.

³ Arzheimer and Carter, for instance, use the Lijphart index of territorial decentralization as their measure of authority structures. This approach aligns with the classic conceptualization of federal versus unitary structures (Lijphart 1999).

traditional federalism approach forfeits an opportunity to trace patterns of radical right support as these structures shift over time. Third, an authority structure approach has great potential to generate novel insights if it is theoretically linked to what we know about public opinion. Here, I redirect this line of inquiry to gain leverage on aspects of radical right support that are thus far under-theorized and under-studied. I take a different viewpoint of devolution and federalism. Per the theoretical framework built in the preceding chapters, I consider whether the level of authority attributed to localities relates to radical right support. I predict that greater local political salience boosts radical right support. This approach is a novel way to consider the role of a country's institutions in structuring local political salience.

In addition to authority structures, I propose that electoral institutions represent another aspect of political salience. As I posit in Chapter 2, the presence of *meaningful* local elections links people's notions about their communities to the political realm in a powerful way. Impactful local elections politicize the community sphere. In Chapter 5 I show that when Swiss citizens feel close to their neighbors, they are particularly likely to support the Swiss People's Party. This impulse is especially strong in parts of the country that elect local parliaments. I argue that these elections fuse the local and the political in people's minds. In this chapter I further test this idea that meaningful local elections benefit the radical right – this time directly rather than in interactive fashion. The greater the implications (or “stakes”) of local elections in a country, the more support the radical right will receive in national contexts as local considerations and attachments become politicized.

The notion that electoral timing matters for radical right vote shares also merits additional attention. In Chapter 6 I supply descriptive evidence suggesting that Jean-Marie Le Pen benefitted in the 2002 presidential election from the combination in 2001 of communal authority losses *and* local elections. Losing communal power in 2001 was a significant predictor of Le Pen support (boosts) at the communal level in 2002. Generalizing from these French patterns yields an expectation that when local elections – which politicize local ties – are held in close proximity to national elections, the radical right benefits in these latter contests. Chapter 2's development of the concept of local political salience underpins this expectation. This chapter furthers the exploration of this theme.

DATA AND METHODS

I subject the local salience thesis to a cross-national test in which national success rate of radical right parties in legislative elections is the dependent variable. The data include several cases where no viable radical right party competes in national elections. Examples include Ireland and Portugal within Europe and the United States and Japan outside of Europe. There are also years since 1980 (the starting point for the data employed here) during which

countries – even those that have since hosted radical right party development – did not exhibit any support for such parties. Accounting for these variations across countries and over time is essential to ensure that selection bias does not interfere with statistical analysis of the radical right phenomenon. This is a critique leveled at much of the radical right literature. For discussion of selection bias inherent in models that exclude countries because they do not have radical right parties that compete in national elections, see Jackman and Volpert (1996) and Golder (2003a). Yet simply coding as zero those cases where and when no radical right party exists can also threaten the validity of estimates. Both of these matters should be dealt with in modeling radical right support across countries.

To address this issue of selection bias, I use tobit models for this chapter's primary analyses (per Golder 2003b: 434–435).⁴ Tobit models distinguish between level of support for the radical right where it actually competes and the zeros that represent no support due to the non-existence of such a party. Tobit's maximum likelihood estimator accommodates what in this case can be called “left-censored” data, providing more valid inferences than other estimators.⁵ Another advantage of this modeling strategy is that as a censored regression model, tobit coefficients can be interpreted in a relatively straightforward manner.

The cases are OECD members for which there is standardized OECD data available to measure concepts such as the level of authority granted to municipalities, immigration levels, and unemployment rates. The countries are: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK, the US. Years covered are 1980–2010. The unit of analysis is the country-year (i.e. Austria 1980, Austria 1981, Austria 1982 ...). This data structure allows for a country's values on key variables to vary over time, capturing shifts in the fortunes of radical right parties across years. Also, only country-years in which there is a national legislative election are included in the models. Including intermediary years would be problematic as radical right vote shares could not change while other variables could.⁶

⁴ I also run all models as time series regressions (using `xtreg` in Stata 11) to address the panel nature of the data and the results are substantively consistent.

⁵ Hiro (2012) takes on this topic as well, advocating Cragg's model instead of tobit to model successes of radical right (and other “new challenger”) parties across countries. He argues that the *presence* of a radical right party should be modeled in a separate step from the *level* of support for an existing one. And while he makes a strong case for a “double hurdle” model given his dependent variable (number of seats won by the party), it is less applicable for the modeling of vote percentage.

⁶ Though including non-election years, as well, produces the same substantive results.

Because the data come from a range of continents, it makes sense to address the implications of extending the analysis beyond Europe, which is the focus of most radical right studies. Numerous cross-national comparative analyses as well as single-country case studies of the radical right phenomenon consider non-European cases. Norris (2005), for instance, includes Canada, Australia, Japan, and other non-European countries in her study. Mughan and Paxton (2006) study support for Australia's One Nation party,⁷ and Mondon (2013) compares the rise of Australia's radical right with parallel electoral developments in France. It is reasonable to include non-European cases that are also advanced industrialized democracies since they share important characteristics (such as basic institutional structures, similar economic strains, etc.) found to be relevant to the phenomenon of interest.

The data come from a variety of sources. The dependent variable, *Radical right vote*, represents the percentage of the valid vote won by a country's radical right party (or, in the case of more than one, the combined electoral percentage) in national elections.⁸ This information is drawn from various electoral sources on the web: Psephos (Adam Carr's Election Archive),⁹ Extreme Right Electorates and Party Success (Evans and Ivaldi 2000–2002),¹⁰ and numerous national statistical agencies. Approximately 41 percent of country-years in the data have no radical right support. The maximum value is 31.1, which is the combined vote share for all of Switzerland's radical right parties in 2007.¹¹

The key independent variables in the models represent the political salience of localities.¹² I use a number of these measures to gain a broad perspective on the role of local unit salience for radical right support. The central measure of local salience at the national level is the *OECD-DPI Local authority index* that I created by combining three distinct indicators of powers held by municipalities. The first is local tax authority, which denotes the percentage of a country's tax revenue that the locality spends (OECD 2010b). The second component of this index measures the level and kind of discretion localities have in establishing taxation rates and tax policies (OECD 2011). It indicates the percentage of local tax revenues that are primarily controlled by localities.¹³ The

⁷ This party peaked electorally in 1998 with 8.4 percent of the national vote in Australia.

⁸ This raises (again) the important matter of identifying a party as Radical right. See Chapter 3 and Norris (2005) for extreme right party identification rationale. And see Table A7.1 in the Appendix for the full list of parties classified as radical right in this selection of OECD countries.

⁹ <http://psephos.adam-carr.net/>

¹⁰ www.politik.uni-mainz.de/ereps/electoral_results.htm

¹¹ Smaller radical right parties (in addition to the Swiss People's Party) are: Lega dei Ticinesi, Swiss Democrats, and Freedom/Automobile Party. See Helms (1997), Norris (2005), and Skenderovic (2009). For this analysis the vote shares of all four parties are summed.

¹² For methodical examination of various measures of decentralization and federalism, see Blume and Voigt (2008).

¹³ This percentage is calculated by adding up the portions of collected taxes over which localities have the power to set rates. The categories that I include to pull together this total figure are described as: "(a.1) The [locality] can set the tax rate and any tax reliefs without needing to

basis for this OECD tax autonomy measure is described as “the proportion of the revenues of ... local governments that fall into each of the autonomy categories” (Blöchliger and Petzold 2009: 7). The third component of the OECD-DPI Local authority index is the level of electoral control citizens have over their municipal leadership. Are local legislatures (or city or town councils) publicly elected or appointed from a higher power? Are local executives (typically mayors) publicly elected or appointed from a higher power? The Database of Political Institutions (DPI) supplies this information for numerous countries over time (Keefer 2010, Beck et al. 2001). Their “muni” variable is coded so that higher values mean more local choice in these leadership positions. These three items – local tax authority, local tax discretion, and local leadership choice – are combined into an index to represent how much power local leaders and residents have to shape their own fortunes. By integrating these three components of local salience, this index represents key dimensions of interest (spending authority, policy autonomy, and electoral relevance). According to my theory, the greater this power, the greater the political salience of the locality.

For some context, the highest case on this scale is Sweden in 2010.¹⁴ Thirty-five percent of total tax revenues were spent by localities, the rates of nearly 98 percent of local taxes were controlled substantially by the localities, and municipal legislators and executives at that time were publicly elected. The lowest values are for Ireland in 2002. Two percent of revenues were spent by localities, none of the tax rates for such revenues were established by the localities and both local legislators and local executives were popularly elected. I predict that higher levels of local authority are associated with greater radical right support.

I also ran a robustness check using a separate local salience index. The *Kearney local authority index* was created using data collected by Kearney (1999), who coded a range of sub-national powers across countries and over time. Kearney compiles data on the division of authority across local, regional, and central governments in fifty countries, including numerous developing

consult a higher level government; (a.2) the [locality] can set the rate and any reliefs after consulting a higher level government; (b.1) the [locality] can set the tax rate, and a higher level government does not set upper or lower limits on the rate chosen; and (b.2) the [locality] can set the tax rate, and a higher level government does set upper and/or lower limits on the rate chosen.” Taxes that are not controlled in one of the ways just described, fall into the following alternate categories: “(c) The [locality] can set some tax reliefs (tax allowances and/or tax credits) but not tax rates; (d4) there is a tax-sharing arrangement in which the revenue split is determined annually by a higher level government; and (e) other cases in which the central government sets the rate and base of the [localities’] tax[es]” (OECD 2011). All of the associated percentages (a–e) sum to 100 percent. Only the (a) and (b) categories are combined to create this local tax rate autonomy measure.

¹⁴ This is the year the Sweden Democrats made their electoral breakthrough with nearly 6 percent of the vote and twenty seats.

ones, at five year intervals from 1960 to 1995. The four items that provide insight into the autonomy of local governments are combined to create an index: (1) autonomous selection of local executive, as well as levels of local authority over (2) primary education, (3) infrastructure, and (4) policing. The present analysis uses data from 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1995 (imputed forward through 2010).¹⁵ Though there is much stickiness to these institutional features, some change does occur over time. Notably, many Central and Eastern European countries devolved powers to the local level in the course of the 1990s; these shifts are reflected in the data. Hungary is the country with one of the lowest scores: in 1990 residents could elect local executive(s) but local authorities had no policy control in any of the three areas under investigation. Hungary's score then shifts to the highest score in the dataset as of 1995, with local power in all three policy areas and continued electoral choice over local executives. The expectation here, again, is that more local authority is associated with greater shares of votes for radical right parties at the national level.¹⁶

A third measure of local political salience denotes whether each national election studied takes place in what is also a *Local election year* for the country as a whole.¹⁷ While some countries leave the scheduling of local elections up to the municipalities, themselves, or an intermediary regional authority, other countries hold all of their local elections simultaneously. Where and when this occurs, this Local election year variable is coded 1. Where and when this is not the case (either it's an off-year in countries that do coordinate their local elections or it's a country in which local elections are held at varying times), the variable is coded 0. The expectation is that when local attachments and contexts are prevalent and politicized in people's minds, as they would be at the time of municipal elections, the radical right will benefit electorally at the national level.

Several controls are also included in the models. *Immigration level* and *Unemployment rate*,¹⁸ collected from the OECD's International Migration Database,¹⁹ Annual Labor Force Statistics,²⁰ and national statistical offices, represent socio-economic context at the national level.²¹ *Electoral threshold*

¹⁵ Running these models only through 1995 and through 2000 generates the same substantive results as those presented below. The effect sizes are slightly larger when analyzing this more limited subset of the data.

¹⁶ The pairwise correlation between the OECD-DPI authority index and the Kearney authority index is .40 (significant to .0001).

¹⁷ I pieced this variable (as well as a dummy variable for regional elections) together using a host of national statistical agencies. This measure is a combination of "vertical" and "horizontal" simultaneity (Schakel 2011).

¹⁸ These have been found to be relevant predictors across national contexts, whether independently or in conjunction with each other (Anderson 1996, Jackman and Volpert 1996, Golder 2003b, Lubbers et al. 2002).

¹⁹ <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=MIG>

²⁰ <http://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=STLABOUR>

²¹ An interaction variable of immigration and unemployment rates was introduced into each of the models shown below as a further robustness check per Golder (2003b). In no configuration did it approach statistical significance. These models are not included in the presentation.

and partisan *Polarization* represent political opportunity structures; these are drawn from the DPI database (Keefer 2010, Beck et al. 2001). Electoral threshold (“thresh” in the DPI data) is defined as “the minimum vote share that a party must obtain in order to take at least one seat in PR [Proportional Representation] systems. If there are more than one threshold, [we] record the one that governs the most seats” (Keefer 2012: 17). And polarization (“polariz” in the DPI data) is defined as “the maximum difference between the chief executive’s party’s value ... and the values of the three largest government parties and the largest opposition party” (Keefer 2012: 19).

The analysis also considers the general role of federalism as a separate phenomenon. To ensure that local salience measures do not simply reflect this broader, decentralization phenomenon, a standard *Federalism* control is also incorporated into the statistical models. This, too, comes from the DPI database (labeled as “state”). It is coded highest if regional legislative bodies and executives are publicly elected and lowest if neither is publicly elected. The DPI measures whether public elections are in place for selecting both regional legislators and regional executives, whether only regional legislators are elected but not executives, or neither electoral procedure is in place. Per these data, countries in which there are no regional elections include Finland, Hungary, Lithuania, and Portugal. Countries with only legislative (and not executive) elections at the regional level are Belgium, Croatia, Netherlands, and Poland. And though most countries do not alter these arrangements during the course of the time period covered by this study, some do. Countries in flux include Belgium, Portugal, Romania, and Finland. Country dummy variables are included in all models to account for national-level factors, such as citizenship regimes, that are not specifically measured by these variables.

In models that estimate the Local election year impact, *Regional election year* is introduced as a control to rule out the possibility that the effect is associated with sub-national elections in general rather than local ones in particular. The local election variable also raises questions about the mechanism(s) at work here. The thesis is that there is something specific to the presence of a local election during a national election year that benefits radical right parties at the national level. Yet it is important to consider the possibility that scheduling various levels of elections to occur simultaneously can raise turnout rates (Lijphart 1997, Geys 2006). It could therefore be argued that the effect of combined local and national elections operates through influencing participation levels. To test for this possibility, *Turnout* in the national election is utilized. The turnout rate comes from the Comparative Political Data Set (CPDS) database (Armingeon et al. 2012).

A final variable, *Decentralization platform*, comes from the Comparative Manifestos Project (CMP) database (Lehmann et al. 2015). The CMP codes parties’ manifestos to facilitate comparison of their attention to various themes. For the parties of interest in this chapter, the variable derived from the CMP represents the percentage of statements in the party’s most recent manifesto at the time of each election that positively emphasizes

decentralization.²² Though this is not so precise as to directly connect to municipal themes alone, the overall interest in delimiting central authority in favor of sub-national units complements the local salience theme. While most radical right manifestoes coded by CMP do not bring up this issue at all, some of the high scorers are the Slovak National Party and Italy's Lega Nord in the early 1990s as well as Belgium's Vlaams Belang/Vlaams Blok since 1995. For each of these countries during those years, the radical right parties' platforms included double-digit statement percentages of decentralization content.

Due to the diverse sources of data, these predictor variables detailed in the pages above provide substantial but inconsistent coverage for the set of countries identified above. This means that by including certain independent variables, the set of countries represented in the models shifts somewhat. Table A7.2 in the Appendix reports the countries and years included in each model's sample. To ease interpretation of model results, all predictors are coded to run from 0 to 1. This means that each coefficient represents the percentage change in radical right support associated with moving the relevant predictor from its minimum to maximum value. I also present substantive effects of key independent variables as they shift from their lowest to highest quartiles. This makes for a more conservative set of estimates.

DESCRIPTIVE PATTERNS

Here, aggregate patterns in radical right support and shifts in local authority levels are investigated in relation to each other. Figure 7.1 displays shifts in the OECD-DPI local authority index and shifts in support for the radical right parties over fifteen years in fourteen countries.²³ Local authority, which ranges from values of 0 to 1 in the data, trends upward from .62 to .73 during this period for this set of countries. Average radical right support nearly doubles during this period, ranging from 3.9 percent in 1995 to 7.7 percent in 2010. Recall that these are somewhat conservative numbers for the radical right since countries without meaningful radical right parties competing in elections (such as Ireland and Japan) are included in these data.

Figure 7.2 presents these same trends using the Kearney authority index. Because this index is comprised of four snapshots (1980, 1985, 1990, and

²² Per the CMP codebook, this variable is described as "Support for federalism or decentralisation of political and/or economic power. May include: Favourable mentions of the territorial subsidiary principle; More autonomy for any sub-national level in policy making and/or economics, including municipalities; Support for the continuation and importance of local and regional customs and symbols and/or deference to local expertise; Favourable mentions of special consideration for sub-national areas." See https://manifestoproject.wzb.eu/coding_schemes/mp_v5

²³ The countries chronicled annually in Figure 7.1 are: Denmark, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the UK. These are all the countries for which both variables are available over this timeframe.

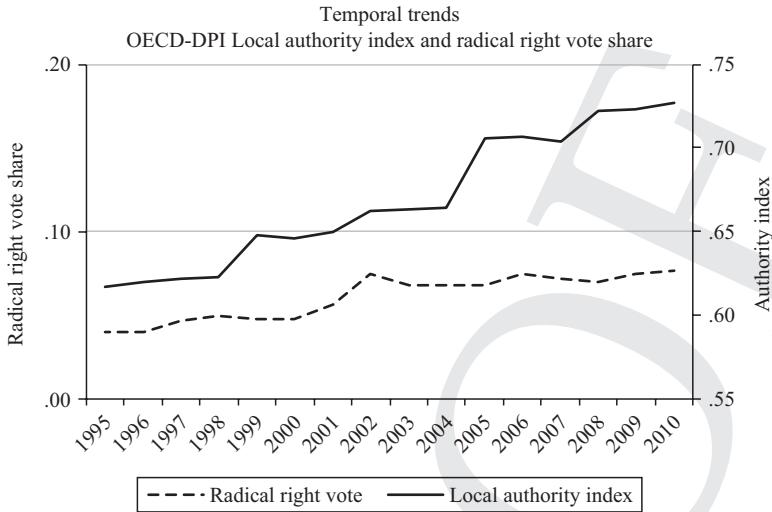


FIGURE 7.1

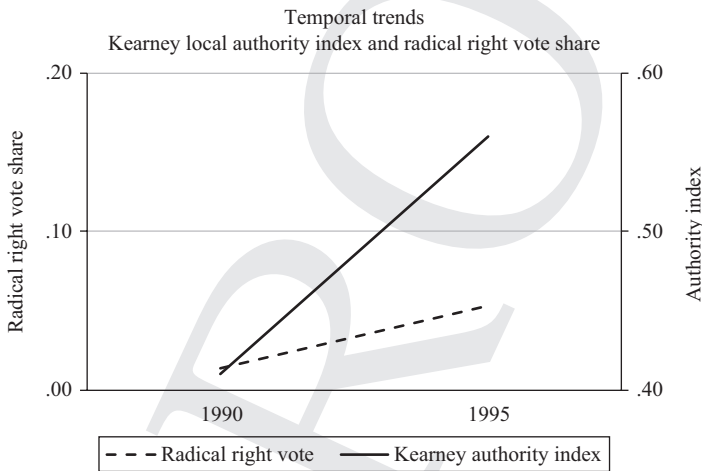


FIGURE 7.2

1995) and elections were not democratic in Central and Eastern Europe in the 1980s, I only plot the figures from 1990 and 1995 data. This provides full data for twelve countries.²⁴ The authority index, which ranges from 0 to 1, rises

²⁴ These countries included in the data displayed in Figure 7.2 are: Australia, Canada, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, and the UK. As in Figure 7.1, this is the full set of countries for which I have relevant data.

during this period from .41 to .56 for these countries. And the radical right share of the vote in the most recent national parliamentary election rises from 1.4 percent to 5.3 percent across these years.

The prevalence of concurrent local and national elections (or at least the prevalence of these elections occurring in the same year) has also risen slightly over time. The variation across countries in election timing makes for a strange figure, but there is efficiency in taking large time segments and reporting average occurrences. For the full set of thirty OECD countries included in this study, approximately 22 percent of national election years were also local election years from 1990 to 1999. The corresponding figure for the years 2000–2010 is over thirty percent. Radical right vote shares also increased modestly between these two decades for this set of countries: 5.3 percent average over 1990–1999 and 6.2 percent average for 2000–2010.²⁵

The purpose of presenting data on these trends is to illustrate the upward trajectory in both local political salience and radical right support. To date, no research has considered these specific patterns in relation to each other. Surely, many things have changed in these countries over the past few decades that could fuel the radical right. But the trajectories displayed provide initial empirical support for the proposition that there is a meaningful, aggregate-level relationship between local political salience and support for radical right parties in advanced democracies.

RESULTS

Table 7.1 tests the relationship between the compiled OECD-DPI Local authority index and radical right electoral share. The first model contains only the index (made up of tax revenue expenditure, tax rate control, and public election of local officials) and a dichotomous control variable for each country. Per the baseline model, where and when local authority is at its highest, the radical right receives approximately 10 percentage points more electoral support than it does in cases in which the local authority is lowest. Shifting from the more moderate .25 quartile to the .75 quartile is associated with just over a 4 percentage point boost in radical right support. (Unpacking this index reveals that none of its components is statistically significant on its own, though public election of local officials is very close.) The full model in Table 7.1 contains additional independent variables but includes fewer cases due to issues of data availability. Unemployment rate, Immigration level, Electoral threshold, and Polarization account for the contextual and institutional environment. The federalism variable is also included to test whether the local salience impact is simply an echo of broader, federal authority structures. Per this specification,

²⁵ Figure A7.1 in the Appendix provides a contrast by plotting the change in average percentage of tax revenue controlled by the central government over time alongside the radical right electoral rise.

TABLE 7.1 OECD-DPI local authority index and radical right vote in legislative elections across countries and over time

Tobit models

Predictor	Baseline		Full	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Local authority index	.10	(.04) *	.09	(.04) *
Unemployment rate			.21	(.24)
Immigration level			.03	(.12)
Electoral threshold			.51	(.41)
Polarization			-.002	(.02)
Federalism			.02	(.06)
Constant	-.14	(.25)	-.17	(.10)
N (country-years)	90		53	
-2Xlog likelihood	236		198	
LR chi ²	184		95	

* $p < .05$. All models contain country fixed effects.

the Local authority index's effects persist independent of these controls. None of these other predictors achieves statistical significance.

As noted above, Sweden and Ireland stand out as having the highest and lowest levels of communal authority in this collection of country-years. Sweden's peak of local autonomy aligns chronologically with the electoral breakthrough of the Sweden Democrats in 2010. To date, no radical right party has emerged to compete in Irish elections. Norway is a country that exemplifies the temporal trend here. Local tax rate control has risen considerably since the 1990s, shifting from approximately 4 percent to over 98 percent. And during these same years the Progress Party has grown its share of voters from about 7 percent to 23 percent.

Table 7.2 contains models that test the effect of the *Kearney local authority index* on radical right vote share. The models in this table corroborate the story told by previous models. Moving values on the Kearney index from the minimum value to the maximum value is associated with increasing radical right support by nearly 14 percentage points in the baseline specification, while shifting it by nearly 7 percentage points when comparing the lowest and highest quartile cutoff points. The corresponding figures for the full model are 9 percent and 5 percent. No other predictor is statistically significant. See Figure A7.2 in Appendix for comparative substantive effects of the three different local salience measures.

Unpacking this index allows for a closer examination of the most relevant aspects of local authority for radical right voting. The results of these models are presented in Table A7.3 in the Appendix. As detailed above, the Kearney index combines autonomous selection of local executives with municipal authority over primary education, infrastructure, and policing.

TABLE 7.2 *Kearney local authority index and radical right vote across countries and over time*

Tobit models

Predictor	Baseline		Full	
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.
Kearney authority index	.14	(.05) *	.09	(.04) *
Unemployment rate			-.18	(.51)
Immigration level			-.16	(.22)
Electoral threshold			.10	(.06)
Polarization			-.01	(.03)
Federalism			.04	(.04)
Constant	-.04	(.52)	-.10	(.06)
N (country-years)	102		66	
-2Xlog likelihood	105		84	
LR chi ²	36		35	

* $p < .05$. All models contain country fixed effects.

Disaggregating the index and running the above models with each component reveals which components of this index have the greatest impact. In the baseline model, local executive choice, educational control, and policing authority are all statistically significant predictors. The strongest of these is local electoral choice. When controls are added and the number of observations drops (not displayed), only educational policy control and policing authority remain significant. Both of these have a substantive impact on radical right vote share of approximately 7 to 8 percent across these specifications (moving each from its minimum to maximum, which is also the cutoff for the top and bottom quartiles due to the distribution of values within these data).²⁶

A subset of countries that represents these general findings is composed of France, Italy, and Germany. France and Italy rank high on this authority index, with democratic elections for communal executives and some level of policy authority over education, infrastructure, and policing. Germany, in comparison, has similarly autonomous elections for local executives, but did not have policy control in any of these areas in the years examined. France and Italy have had relatively successful radical right parties in the past three decades. France's National Front's top legislative electoral share was over 17 percent in 1997; Italy's combined share of radical right votes was over 26 percent in 1996. In contrast, Germany's radical right does not make much progress over

²⁶ Alternate versions of the models in Tables 7.1, 7.2, and 7.3 include additional independent variables investigated by other scholars. These include: changes in unemployment and immigration levels, the use of proportional rules for legislative elections, mean district magnitude for legislative elections, and GDP and GDP change. None affects the substantive findings.

TABLE 7.3 *Local election timing and radical right vote in legislative elections across countries and over time*

Tobit models

Predictor	Baseline		Full		
	Coeff.	S.E.	Coeff.	S.E.	
Local election year	.06	(.02)	* .07	(.02)	*
Regional election year			.002	(.02)	
Unemployment rate			-.19	(.22)	
Immigration level			.02	(.16)	
Electoral threshold			-.21	(.16)	
Polarization			.01	(.02)	
Federalism			.15	(.08)	
Turnout			-.21	(.09)	*
Constant	-2.29	(.06)	.10	(.12)	
N (country-years)	296		128		
-2Xlog likelihood	416		250		
LR chi ²	304		162		

* $p < .05$. All models contain country fixed effects.

these years, maxing out around 3 percent. Over time, Hungary's significant boost in local policy control in all areas (especially infrastructure) in the 1990s correlates temporally with the subtle but noticeable rise of the Hungarian Justice and Life Party (MIEP) from under 2 percent of the vote in the 1994 elections to over 5 percent in 1998.

Table 7.3's models display the relationship between the presence of local elections and radical right support at the national level. The first simply estimates the link between Local election year and radical right support with country dummy variables as controls. The presence of local elections is associated with nearly 6 percentage points greater returns for radical right parties in national elections, and the effect is statistically significant. Stepwise addition of other variables into the model does not influence the effect of proximal local elections, but it does reduce the number of usable observations. The second model in Table 7.3 contains the full set of predictors. In addition to the controls for unemployment, immigration, threshold, polarization, and federalism, this model includes two additional independent variables. The first is Regional election year, which shows no significant impact. Its inclusion boosts confidence that the identified impact of electoral timing is specific to local elections and not other sub-national elections.²⁷ This model also controls for turnout at the national level, which proves to be a strong, negative influence on radical

²⁷ Regional election has no effect in any version of this model, even in a bivariate configuration.

right support. This implies that if the presence of local elections does raise turnout levels, then it actually does so at the expense of radical parties. So an indirect effect of local elections on radical right successes via raised turnout is not identified here.²⁸ In this model, the substantive impact of holding local elections in the same year as national elections is about a seven point jump in electoral support for radical right parties. A country that exemplifies this pattern is Denmark. In my sampled timeframe over three decades, only once were Danish local and national elections held at the same time: November 20, 2001.²⁹ This was also the election that elevated the Danish People's Party from the margins to a more meaningful position in Danish politics (Andersen 2004).

One consistent finding in the analyses presented above is that local electoral factors – be they in the form of meaningful elections for local officials or proximity of local elections to national elections – influence radical right success rates in national legislative contests. Where and when the locality is electorally salient, the radical right does best. One last analytical step serves as a robustness check. If the correct interpretation of this finding is that certain aspects of electoral timing and municipal authority heighten the salience of the local community for national elections, then this effect should be strongest when and where radical right parties campaign on locally relevant themes. In particular, radical right parties that emphasize decentralization of authority from the political center to peripheral units in their platforms should be the most likely to benefit from the heightened salience of the locality.

The Comparative Manifesto Project data makes it possible to test this interactive proposition. I interact Local election year with the Decentralization platform variable to predict radical right support in legislative elections. The baseline and full models are presented in Table A7.4 in the Appendix. Figure 7.3 depicts the conditional relationship of interest. The bars represent the substantive impact of Local election year on radical right vote share when the party's level of attention to decentralization shifts from its lowest (.25) to highest (.75) quartile cutoffs. A proximal local election is only influential on radical right success in legislative elections when there is some attention in the party's platform to devolving authority. The impact of Local election year on radical right vote share is nearly 8 percent for a hypothetical party that devotes over 2 percent of its manifesto statements to decentralization.³⁰ These results further illustrate a strong local dimension of radical right voting that includes

²⁸ One might also suspect that the presence of coordinated local elections at all in a country represents low local or sub-national authority just by virtue of the fact that these sub-national units do not make their own election schedules. To address this possibility, an alternate version of these models (not presented) includes a control for coordinated local elections. This variable is not statistically significant and does not influence the observed relationship between Local election year and radical right vote share.

²⁹ In 1981 and in 2005 they were held in the same year but not on the same day.

³⁰ Replicating this interaction with the authority indices is not feasible due to insufficient observations once the various datasets are merged together.

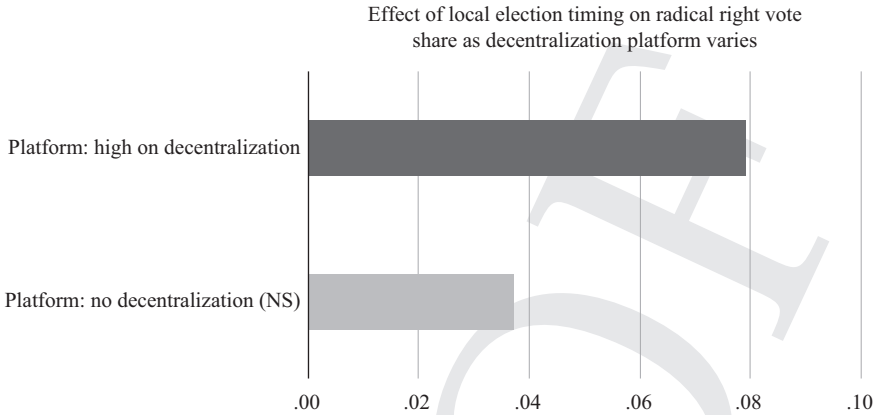


FIGURE 7.3 Results based on model in Table A7.4. Substantive impacts as Decentralization platform shifts from lowest to highest quartile (0 to 2.4 percent of manifesto sentences). Coefficient for “no decentralization” not statistically significant. Control variables in tobit model: Election regional, Unemployment, Immigration, Threshold, Polarization, Turnout, Federalism.

a preference for authority that is not solely divested in the federal government but that instead resides closer to home.

DISCUSSION

Local political salience benefits radical right parties in national elections. In particular, it positively influences the success rates of radical right parties that campaign in favor of devolution. These findings underscore the importance of factors that make the locality politically relevant for electoral outcomes. The concept of local political salience is complex. In this chapter I highlight the importance of three key dimensions: tax authority, policy control, and electoral institutions (which is further divided into meaningful elections of local government officials and the timing of local elections relative to national ones). I pulled measures of these salience dimensions into two authority indices and a simple measure of election timing. Each positively predicts radical right support: where and when the locality is especially salient for politics, the radical right benefits electorally.

In sum, the results presented in this chapter have implications for our understanding of the rise of radical right parties and for knowledge of how certain territorial attachments become relevant for electoral choice. Furthermore, this chapter illuminates some implications of devolved authority and the scheduling of elections in advanced democracies. It is not uncommon for governments to reconfigure state authority structures. Just as centralization of national state structures has been used historically to systematize and unify citizens' socio-political identifications, the reverse process of devolution prompts disaggregation and modern versions of parochialism. These sentiments provide

opportunities for parties that criticize national elites and their policies and for platforms that cue local themes. Yet scholarship on how such changes may influence attitudes, shape politically relevant identifications, and motivate different forms of political behavior has not kept up. While this chapter connects authority patterns to far right voting, changes in power structures may have much broader effects that we do not yet observe.

PROOF

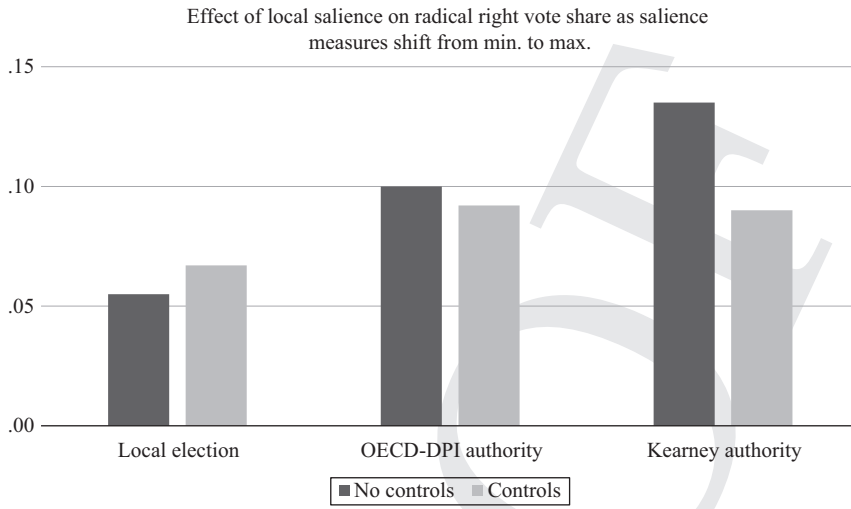


FIGURE A7.2 Estimates based on models in Tables 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3.