Protest in context. Decentralization and contention in European cities

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PROTEST IN CONTEXT

Decentralization and contention in European cities

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1.INTRODUCTION

The upsurge of protest in Europe over the past decades has led to its acknowledgement as a mainstream rather than marginal manifestation of political behavior (Wallace and Jenkins 1995), yet stark differences exist in levels of collective action across local European jurisdictions. Context-specific institutional factors have emerged as particularly useful in explaining variation in protest, due to their role in providing means and ends for involvement in contentious action (e.g., Eisinger 1973, Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 1995). Among institutional features, the role of government decentralization has occupied a spotlight as a predictor of cross-national variation in protest (Kriesi et al. 1995; Jenkings and Schock 2003; Brown 2009; Quaranta 2013; Vráblíková 2013; Spina 2013; Fatke 2016). Proponents of political process theory, in particular, have argued that decentralized states act as a political opportunity (POS) structure for contentious action by resulting in more fragmented, less responsive institutions while opening multiple venues to challengers through the multiplication of the number of state actors at lower levels (Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995, 28). However, despite its emphasis on the shift of political processes from central to lower tiers of organization, decentralization has rarely been examined as a source of subnational variance in collective action. As such, the main question addressed in this study is **"How does decentralization influence the levels of protest across European cities?"**

Empirical studies that have tackled the effects of decentralized governments on protest participation have focused primarily on the interplay between the attributes of national institutions and individual political participation, and the results are indecisive. Some studies (Jenkings and Schock 2003; Quaranta 2013, Vráblíková 2013) confirm that territorially decentralized states are associated with more protest activity (such as street demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts), while others find the contrary (Spina 2013), confirm it only partially (Brown 2009), or conclude the relationship is reversed (Fatke 2016).

In part, the results likely owe some of their incongruence to the way decentralization is measured. For example, Spina (2013) uses an aggregated regional autonomy measurement and finds no relationship between decentralization and protest. Quaranta (2013) and Fatke (2016) use only one indicator capturing regional self-rule from the same index, and find a positive relation with protest. On the other hand, Brown (2009), using the same data on regional autonomy, tests each dimension of the index separating the shared rule (the access of regional authority to national policy making) from self-rule and finds that the former has a strong protest-reducing impact, while the latter had no statistically significant effect. Employing different measurements of vertical, horizontal and shared institutions, Vráblíková (2013) finds that the first two have a positive relation with protest while shared institutions did not. Decentralization scholars point out that the varying and partial measurement of the concept is problematic, as decentralization along one dimension could be related to one set of causes and effects, and decentralization along another dimension could relate to a different or opposite set of outcomes (Schneider 2003, Dubois and Fattore 2009, Falleti 2005).

Moreover, a common denominator of conceptualizations and measurements of decentralization as a POS in extant literature is the exclusive focus on the attributes of the central state. This approach accounts solely for the extent to which authority is removed from the central government along one dimension or another. As decentralization shifts power away from the central state and divides it over many actors (Tilly 2004, 14), focusing on national governments alone fails to capture the opportunities born at lower levels of the state that are allegedly empowered by this arrangement. Examining the subnational variance in protest is also a chance to expand on the existing literature by inquiring if decentralized governments create political opportunities at both the national and local level and further test the multidimensionality of the decentralization concept.

Therefore, to answer the research question, this study draws on political process theory to develop a multilevel, bi-dimensional POS that encompasses the features of both the decentralizing and the (empowered) local levels government. Political process scholars have argued that the formal design of state institutions can encourage or discourage social movement mobilization, as well as influence the choice of collective action repertoires and forms of participation, such as protest. Decentralization, in this view, acts as a facilitator of protest in at least two ways. First, a decentralized state multiplies the levels and numbers of separate authorities in charge of policymaking. More entry-points to decision-making can invite action

by facilitating access, while also provoking it through unwanted policies and political threats, thereby raising the costs of inaction (Kriesi et al. 1995). Second, an increased number of decision making institutional actors leads to a smaller capacity of any one part of the state to act, and hence to coordinate and implement policies (Kitschelt 1986, 63; Kriesi et al. 1995, 28). This lack of capacity leads the central state to be less responsive to its constituency and to struggle to address the needs of claim-makers, fueling protest. Thus, one main argument developed in this study is that increased access to decision making and lower policy capacity associated with decentralization predict higher levels of protest.

Third, POS adepts suggest that a decentralized state creates multilevel opportunity structures. Under vertically (territorially) decentralized systems, citizens also define interests and form identities on the basis of local concerns (Kriesi et al., 1995), and local governments are locally elected. Organizations such as parties, social movements, NGOs or social organizations operate locally and compete in the public arena over local issues (Schneider 2003, Fox and Aranda 1996), increasing the overall levels of mobilization. This leads to the assumption that decentralization creates more conducive conditions for protest at both central and local levels, which is the second argument tested in this study.

Using this framework I piece together data from several sources in order to empirically test these claims by analyzing collective action in European cities during the economic crisis (2008-2015). By fueling generalized discontent across Europe, the great recession provides a unique opportunity to study the effects of the institutional context in inviting or reducing protest. Moreover, substantial territorial reforms linked to the crisis provide an opportunity to examine the effects of both the average decentralization levels and of change in decentralization.

First, I test if more access of local governments to central decision making and a lower policy capacity of the central government lead to higher levels of protest. Second, I seek to verify that institutional access and lower policy capacity of local governments also have an effect on the levels of protest. In one final step, I explore the interactions between the central and local government features, to see if it is the system-level decentralization that moderates the features of local governments.

This research extends the current literature on decentralization and protest in several ways. First, it adopts a meso-level perspective on protest and focuses on collective action instead of

individual participation. Second, it uses two measurements of decentralization, each in their turn capturing two distinct dimensions, which allows to account for conflicting effects on collective action that would have gone unnoticed with the use of an aggregated index or just a partial measurement. Finally, it explores how local political institutions fit into the political opportunity structures of decentralized states. While previous research has focused on decentralization to regions, this study looks at a level of government that is touted to be more relevant to political participation, as it is closer to individuals.

2.PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Many explanations have been proposed to account for variation in political protest as collective action. Relative deprivation (e.g. Walker and Pettigrew 1984), resource mobilization (e.g., Mc Carthy and Zald 1977) and POS explanations (e.g. Eisinger 1973, Kitschelt 1986) are the well-established frameworks for research on social movements in general and protest in particular. Political process theory (McAdam 1982) corroborates them in an over-encompassing model.

Among these determinants, the role of context in the facilitation of protest has gained prominence with the literature that analyzed urban riots in the 1960s, which eventually fed into social movement theories such as POS (e.g. Eisinger 1973). With Charles Tilly (1978), POS conceptualizations moved from its initial focus on the urban and local political predictors of protests to exploring national institutions, alliances and conjunctures more broadly. It is within this body of literature that the relationship between decentralization and protest has received the bulk of attention (Kriesi et al., 1995; Jenkings and Schock 2004; Quaranta 2013; Vráblíková 2013; Fatke 2016). In the following sections, I summarize these two bodies of literature briefly.

2.1 Protest in context: mapping the conceptual development of political opportunity structure

Defined as "consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements" (Tarrow 1996, 54), political opportunities or lack thereof are linked to changes in the political system that directly affect mobilization (Giugni 2009). They constitute "options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them, which depend

on factors outside the mobilizing group" (Koopmans 2004, 65).

The basic elements of the political opportunity structure conceptual framework emerged in conjunction with the urban riots that took place in the 1960s in the United States. Peter Eisinger (1973) sought to explain why some cities in the United States were confronted with extensive riots during the last part of the decade while others were not. He focused on the openness of urban governments to political inputs external to the system in formulating a theory of political opportunities, defined as "a function of the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system" (Eisinger 1973, 25). Eisinger found that cities with a combination of "open" and "closed" structures for citizen participation were most likely to experience riots. He concluded that the frequency of protest bears a curvilinear relationship with the openness of the political system: cities with extensive institutional openings preempted riots by allowing conventional means of political participation to redress grievances; cities with institutions that did not invite participation discouraged activists from organizing protests. Eisinger had an inclusive view on opportunity structures, which comprised formal political institutional features of the local executive and electoral systems along with policy response, the distribution and availability of resources, and the degree of social disintegration.

Like Eisinger, Tilly (1978) also concluded that political openness bores a curvilinear relationship with the frequency of protest. Building on Eisinger's work, Tilly (1978) developed a more comprehensive theory, distinguishing between structural and conjunctural political opportunities that could explain the more general process of choosing tactics from a "repertoire of contention" to optimize the openings for action. In contrast to Eisinger's cross-sectional approach, Tilly was drawn more towards a longitudinal perspective. His study of British popular politics (Tilly 1993) involved tracing the shift from local, direct, and idiosyncratic collective action to longer term, national forms of contention across a sequence of demographic, economic and political changes. In doing so, he shifted the scale of analysis away from cities and established a conception of social movements as phenomena that moved beyond the local dimension with the emergence of democratic nation states.

In a cross-sectional study, Kitschelt (1986) proposed a bidimensional conceptualization of political opportunity structure, depicting the relationships among governments and social movements based on open/closed (related to the ability to process political requests, or input

structures) and weak/strong (referring to a state's ability to implement public policies, or output structures) dichotomies. Open-strong and open-weak political models tend to adopt assimilative strategies towards movements, paying careful attention to protest and seeking to build public policies that react to the demands of movements. Closed-strong systems, on the contrary, compel activists to adopt more radical strategies and repertoires against the political institutional system. In Kitschelt's model, it is primarily the degree of institutional openness that determines the choice between institutional or confrontational movement strategies.

A third significant development in the political opportunity model is its incorporation in the more comprehensive political process model developed by US sociologist Doug McAdam's (1982). His theory tries to bridge sociological and political science literature, merging the political opportunity assumptions outlined by Eisinger (1973) and Tilly (1978) with the resource mobilization theory as it had developed in sociology. The resulting model emphasizes the interaction between the external political environment and the internal organization of social movements. The interaction of these factors helps movements decide on the type of repertoire they estimate as most efficient to alter the power relationships in the political system.

While European POS scholarship is dominated by the view that protest variation can be traced back to structural factors, Kriesi and his colleagues (Kriesi et al. 1995) draw on the longitudinal approach and embrace complexity in a study of new social movements in four European countries (France, Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland). In contrast to Kitschelt's minimal model, their definition of opportunity structures includes the nature of political cleavages, institutional structures, alliance structures and prevailing strategies of response to social movements. They dedicate significant space to the way decentralization shapes political opportunity structures, which is discussed more broadly in the following section.

2.2 Decentralization and protest

The previous section showed that two of the most employed dimensions of the POS concept are the openness and the capacity of the political system, two features associated with the input and output structures of the state (e.g., Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 1995). The decentralization

of state power, described largely as the allocation of power away from the central government (Treisman 2007; Falleti 2005), has often been incorporated in POS studies of protest as an indicator of government openness and/or of weakness.

A handful of studies examining the effects of decentralization focus on protest in the European context. Looking at old and new European democracies, Vráblíková (2013) employs the POS concept to examine the relationship between the vertical and horizontal dimensions of decentralization and non-institutional political participation, such as signing petitions, contacting politicians or the media, taking part in demonstrations and attending political rallies. She finds that more vertically decentralized states with a more horizontally-separated power system lead to increased participation in these acts of protest. In contrast, her results indicate that decentralization within state institutions, based on power sharing and joint responsibility, does not increase nonelectoral citizen activism.

Another POS-guided study (Quaranta 2013) examines the same dependent variables, but using a different measure of decentralization provided by the Regional Authority Index (RAI) developed by Liesbet Hooghe and her collaborators (Hooghe et al. 2010). This measure distinguishes between the extent to which regional authorities the subnational units have political autonomy and the financial independence from central government to design and implement policy (self-rule) and the extent to which they are emancipated from vertical control and can participate in the national level policy-making process (shared-rule) (Hooghe et al. 2008). Using the values for the self-rule dimension, the author finds that the level of decentralization is statistically significant and positively associated with political protest in Western Europe.

Employing the same self-rule measurement of the RAI index and keeping the focus on the European context, Fatke (2016) offers evidence that regional self-rule is significantly related to engaging in all forms of participation (working in parties, contacting politicians, protesting, and boycotting), except for voting. He subsequently shows that it acts as a POS, moderating the influence of individual driving forces of participation. However, his further analysis focused on protest only leads him to conclude that the causal relationship runs in the opposite direction, namely that it is protest that increases decentralisation.

Spina (2013) aggregates the self-rule and shared rule measures in RAI constructed by Liesbet Hooghe and her collaborators (Hooghe et al. 2008) to test if regional autonomy increases participation by cultivating civic values in European citizens. His research scrutinizes various forms of participation, including the probability to contact a politician, sign a petition, wear a campaign badge or sticker. He comes to the conclusion that decentralisation increases only party activity, and has no effect on the other types of political involvement.

Few studies examine the link between decentralization and collective action rather than individual participation. Moving beyond the European context in a study that covers Europe, North America and Australasia, Brown (2009) examines the particular case of ethnic protest. Noting that previous research on the role of political decentralization in diffusing ethnic conflict yielded mixed results, the author seeks to test if these inconsistencies are caused by differences in decentralized institutions, historical conditions of their emergence and their interaction with the broader socio-economic and political context. To measure decentralization, he also uses the RAI (Hooghe et al. 2008), distinguishing between the two dimensions of the index, i.e. 'self- rule' and 'shared-rule' features. Brown finds that 'shared-rule' features of decentralization have a strong protest-reducing impact: allowing subnational units a greater say in the national-level policy-making process appears to reduce the risk of ethnic mobilization. 'Self-rule', however, interacts positively with demographic ethnic difference to increase the risk of ethnic protest, but negatively with spatial disparity to reduce the risk in richer regions.

Using global data from the 1970s, Jenkins and Schock (2003) show that countries with a higher score of decentralization of state authority are associated with more protest activity (such as street demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts), but manage to steer clear of rebellion (armed attacks and assassinations).

These studies show that political opportunity structure is a useful framework to examine the effects of decentralization on protest. For the most part, findings indicate that some dimensions of decentralization (to the regional level) is perceived as a political opportunity structure by claim-makers. However, the results vary depending on the measurements employed, with disaggregated measurements of the concept performing better than aggregated ones and leading to more nuanced findings (e.g. Brown 2009, Vráblíková 2013). This study builds on this body of research, embracing a similar theoretical approach to examine different levels of analysis. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework that will act as the scaffold of the analysis.

3.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Existing theses that link the decentralization of states to more vibrant protest activity argue that the increase in protest is due to the multiplication of venues for claim-making through the shift in authority from the central towards subnational governments. While these arguments suggest that protests are emboldened by a more open and weaker central government, they do not account for the role of the allegedly empowered subnational governments in protest activity. Yet under politically decentralized systems, political actors and issues are significant at the local level and protests are at least partially targeting local political institutions (Schneider 2003, Fox and Aranda 1996) This study aims to test if, and how, the power shift from the central to local governments creates local configurations of power that are more conducive to protest. Specifically, it tests if decentralization increases protest due to resulting in a combination of open and weak central government with open and weak local governments.

This chapter is structured as follows. In the first two parts, I present a definition of the type of protest and the type of decentralization I focus on. In the third, I present the arguments of political process theory which link decentralization and protest through POS. Finally, the last section lays out my expectations about how decentralized POS affect the level of protest activity.

3.1 Defining protest

Protest activity is defined as a mode of political action oriented towards objection to one of more policies or conditions, characterized by showmanship or display of an unconventional nature, and undertaken to obtain rewards from political or economic systems while working

within the systems (Lipsky 1968, 1145). The focus is on collective action and not on individual participation. In selecting relevant theory and formulating assumptions, a distinction is made between protest and rebellion. While they often overlap spatially (Jenkins and Schock 2003), political process theory sees them as different repertoires that are employed in response to different conditions. For example, Jenkins and Schock (2003) showed that more decentralized countries are associated with more protest activity (such as street demonstrations, strikes, and boycotts), but manage to steer clear of rebellion (armed attacks and assassinations). In Eisinger's words, "Efforts to Control Costs Distinguish Protest from Political Violence (*capitalization in original*). Those who pursue violent political strategies are also attempting to maximize the impact of relatively insubstantial resources, but by their action they are also exposing themselves to the possibility that the costs of such behavior will be maximized, if death, serious physical injury, and loss of freedom and legitimacy are taken as maximum costs. Protestors on the other hand seldom must make such expenditures" (Eisinger 1973, 13). This study draws on theoretical assumptions that apply to protests (which might turn violent spontaneously), rather than on propositions that explain planned violence such as armed attacks and assassinations.

3.2 Defining decentralization

When linking decentralization to contention, it is important to recall that the former is not an unambiguous attribute of institutional design. Definitions of decentralization tend to vary significantly based on the purpose of research. Dubois and Fattore (2009) review decentralization definitions formulated in articles after WWII and find that they predominantly refer to a horizontal/functional and a vertical/territorial dimension along which the power is allocated away from the central government. While these features are constant, they may differ as far as dynamics (process or structure), content (power, formal authority, responsibility, etc) and receiving entity (sub-national government, periphery, autonomous entity, etc) (Dubois and Fattore 2009). Furthermore, distinctions are made among diverse typologies, most common being administrative, political and fiscal decentralization (Dubois and Fattore 2009; Treisman 2007). These typologies are however interdependent to such extent that some authors assimilate them to the dimensions of the same concept (e.g. Schneider 2003, Hooghe et al. 2010, Ladner et al. 2015). These are defined as follows: "Fiscal decentralization refers to how much central governments cede fiscal impact to non-central government entities. Administrative

decentralization refers to how much autonomy non-central government entities possess relative to central control. Finally, political decentralization refers to the degree to which central governments allow non-central government entities to undertake the political functions of governance, such as representation. Decentralized systems are those in which central entities play a lesser role in any or all of these dimensions. In such systems, central governments possess a smaller share of fiscal resources, grant more administrative autonomy, and/or cede a higher degree of responsibility for political functions" (Schneider 2003, 33).

This research focuses on vertical/territorial decentralization, an institutional design characterized by the allocation of political, financial and administrative power and resources required to design and implement policy across both national and subnational levels of government (Scheneider 2003; Pollitt 2005; Falleti 2005; Treisman 2007; Kriesi et al. 1995; Brown 2009; Fatke 2016).

Previous research on protest has conceptualized decentralization as a stable system feature and ignored its variations. But decentralization can be a very dynamic process, especially if it is seen from the perspective of the lower units of government, at its receiving end. At the territorial level, reforms were common over the past few decades, in virtue of the concept of a 'Europe of regions'. These often took the form of merging municipalities or regionalisation of the territory. The financial crisis amplified the entropy by adjusting the functioning of local and regional authorities to the budgetary and operational restrictions imposed by the central governments. The reactions in response to the crisis varied from one country to another, mainly owing to the different political cultures and the place occupied by local authorities within the different administration models. Consequently, the effects on local self-government were accordingly very dissimilar. Western and Eastern Europe saw major reforms, while countries in central Europe undertook mostly moderate changes (CEMR 2013). Many entailed financial and administrative adjustments but political reforms were introduced as well. For example, in order to cut operating costs, many countries such as Greece, Portugal and Ireland have seen the number of their local elected representatives significantly reduced, often as a result of mergers. In some cases, the territorial reforms also entailed a change in the local voting districts, such as in Finland or in France, which introduced new voting systems at departmental level in 2014. These changes profoundly alter the representation of territorial communities in the political system and therefore institutional design and political opportunity structures. Taking into consideration these dynamics and their spikes during the great recession, this study

conceptualizes decentralization as both a structural and conjunctural political opportunity and measures it accordingly.

3.3. Political process theory: linking institutional context to protest through political opportunity structures

Political process theory has connected decentralized institutional systems with contentious action through the concept of POS, incorporating them into a comprehensive model of social movements that focuses on the relation between environmental factors and the repertoires of contentious action but also accounts for internal determinants of mobilization. More specifically, political process theory suggests how decentralization relates to the dimensions of POS as determining factors of protest, informing the modelling of the relations between decentralization and protest in this study.

The central political process argument (McAdam 1982; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) is that politically excluded groups garner resources to mobilize around grievances in response to increased POS. The political process approach stresses the necessity to identify the social, economic, and political conditions on the macro level that trigger claim-making (Meyer 2004). By these conditions, Tilly and Tarrow (2007) understand the characteristics of the sites where contentious politics take place, suggesting that certain sites' contexts make protest more probable, through institutions that regulate the access to resources and decision-making as well as the response to challengers.

Political process theory describes both structural and conjunctural political opportunities. In Tarrow's view, political opportunities consist of "consistent but not necessarily formal, permanent, or national signals to social or political actors which either encourage or discourage them to use their internal resources to form social movements" (Tarrow 1996, 54). Formal institutional design is what defines the structural constructs of political opportunity. These refer to the deeply embedded elements of a given political system, considered to be stable and permanent elements of the political context influencing contention. Structural definitions of political opportunities are most notably put forward by Eisinger (1973), Kitschelt (1986), and, as part of a more complex construct of political opportunities, Kriesi et al. (1995). These POS

constrain the social movement repertoires through two main features: the degree of access to policy decision making (qualified as open/ closed) and the policy capacity of the state (described as weak/strong).

Eisinger (1973), for example, defined POS in terms of the openness of the local executive and electoral systems, along with the actual policy response to grievances. Kitschelt (1986) proposed to split the political arenas between the structures associated with policy input, and structures associated with policy output, or the conversion of demands into public policies. The policy input structures consist of the party system, legislative system, access of interest groups and procedures to build coalitions. Kitschelt saw the openness - essentially the number of access points to decision making - of these arenas as the most relevant feature for social movements, as it indicates the ability to process political requests from challengers. The policy output structures, on the other hand, refer mainly to the administration as implementing authority. In this area it is the capacity of political systems to convert demands into public policy, also labelled as policy effectiveness or strength, which is deemed more relevant to social movements. The strength of policy capacity is defined by Kitschelt (1986) as a function of centralization, government size and independence of the judiciary.

Kitschelt acknowledged that the policy implementation structures may also offer points of access, mainly to interest groups, and hence influence the openness of the system. Kriesi et al. (1995), in fact, see the access to the system as a possibility that accompanies the whole policy cycle, as the decision-making extends into the policy implementation phase through interest group bargaining. Consequently they conflate policy input and output structures and refer to three political arenas - the parliamentary, administrative and direct-democracy arenas. They also argue that the strength of the state is a function of its openness, and therefore the two are not dimensionally distinct. Strong states are at the same time autonomous with respect to their environment and capable of getting things done, whereas weak states not only lack autonomy but also the capacity to act. In summary, Kriesi et al. (1995) attribute the influence of institutional POS on social movements to the strength/ weakness of the parliament, administration and of the direct-democracy arena, with the latter having an inverse effect as opposed to the former two.

Against this background, decentralization is an institutional design feature that shapes extensively the degrees of openness and of weakness of POS (Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al.

1995). Arguing that an open state is also a weak state, Kriesi et al. (1995, 28) note that the greater the degree of decentralization, the wider is the degree of formal access, and hence of openness of the state. Decentralization implies a multiplication of state actors and, therefore, of points of access and decision making. This, in turn, leads to a smaller capacity of any one part of the state to act. For Kriesi and his colleagues, "The strength of the state is, first of all, a function of two general structural parameters that characterize not only each one of the three arenas separately but also their mutual interrelationship: the degree of the state's (territorial) centralization and the degree of its (functional) separation of state power". Kitschelt (1986, 63) also pointed out that the capacity of political systems to implement policies depends greatly on the degree to which the state apparatus is centralized. A complicated division of jurisdiction between multiple semi-autonomous government agencies and a federal stratification of state authority will lead to less effective policy coordination and implementation.

Political process theory suggests that the mechanisms that link the degrees of openness and strength of the state to social movements pass through the conversion of the latter into motivational factors for claim makers. These take the shape of either means - such as facilitation or repression -, or ends - such as the success chance and the possibility of reform or threat. Thus, the openness of the institutional design of the state would act as a facilitator of massive, but moderate mobilization, by providing multiple institutional channels of access to decision making. A strong and repressive state will raise the cost of collective action, and especially of the radical repertoires that are primarily targeted by repression. However, the low levels of repression in democratic states strengthen the collective identity that countercultural activists derive from conflictive interaction and stimulates the levels of mobilization. Partially open and responsive institutions would signal challengers the chance of success, sustaining their motivation to mobilize. Higher chances of success will lead to more moderate repertoires. Finally, very responsive states that enact reforms will not justify the cost of collective action, while policy directions that threaten the direction of the movement will raise the stakes of inaction.

3.4. Decentralized POS and protest

Drawing on political process theory and integrating prior conceptualizations of POS, this study theorizes the relationship between vertical decentralization and protest along two functional dimensions of POS and two levels:

1. A distinction between access to decision making and governmental policy capacity, characterized as decentralized/centralized
2. A national and local level of political opportunities.

Table 1. Levels and dimensions of decentralized POS

Levels	Functional dimensions	
	Access to decision making	Policy capacity
Central	Access to central decision making (centralized/decentralized)	Central policy capacity (centralized/decentralized)
Local	Access to local decision making (centralized/decentralized)	Local policy capacity (centralized/decentralized)

3.4.1. The two functional dimensions of POS

Following Kitschelt (1986) and Kriesi et al. (1995), I distinguish between the two functional dimensions of institutional design, namely between access to policy decision making, and policy capacity. Taking into consideration the critique of Kriesi et al. (1995), who point out that attributing these functions to corresponding separate structures or political arenas (such as the legislative on the input side and the administrative on the output side) does not reflect the actual decision making process and all its opportunities for the populations concerned to access it, or the span of government capacity, I focus instead on emphasizing the institutionalized access to decision making and policy capacity as a transversal feature of the central and local political arenas.

The access to policy making is construed, drawing on Kitschelt (1986) and Kriesi et al. (1995), as a function of the formal decentralization of the decision making system within and among

the political arenas. The greater the vertical decentralization of power of the different political arenas the greater the degree of formal access.

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Finally, policy capacity is defined by Kitschelt (1986) as a function of centralization, government size and independence of the judiciary, while Kriesi and his colleagues (1995, 27) refer to autonomy and the capability of "getting things done", primarily linked to the availability of resources. For the purpose of this study, policy capacity is defined by bringing the state-centered elements in the construct of Kriesi et al. (1995) closer to classical (and more relational) definitions, which highlight political, analytical and operational dimensions (e.g. Wu et al. 2017). Political capacity involves the mechanisms of deriving support and legitimacy for political action, while analytical - operational capacity covers the alignment of resources with policy actions so they can be correctly formulated and implemented (Wu et al. 2017). Governments have more policy capacity if they have centralized access to the legitimacy and resources required to formulate and implement policy. Decentralized governments that may have to compete for policy support with subnational proposals for policy alternatives and have to share national resources with subnational governments will have less political capacity.

3.4.2. The central and local levels of decentralized POS

While a majority of POS studies refer primarily to the national political arenas by highlighting attributes of the central state, Eisinger's definition (1973) illustrates the relevance of local POS in fueling or restraining protest. Local POS is salient in decentralized political systems, where there are multiple points of relevant access on the subnational level (Kriesi et al. 1995). In highly decentralized, weak states, local or regional elements of POS may be more important for the mobilization of new social movements than those of the national political context (Idem, 74). Political actors and issues reference the local level, and protests are at least partially targeting local political institutions (Schneider 2003, Fox and Aranda 1996). Citizens define interests and form identities on the basis of local concerns, while organizations such as parties and social movements operate locally and compete over local issues and in local elections (Schneider 2003).

Therefore, for this study POS encompass both the central and the local levels of the state. Including both central and local dimensions of POS helps better understanding the relation between decentralized political structures and protest by allowing us to identify relevant factors at both the center and the periphery of the power configuration. For the purpose of this study, the national arenas where the POS may be located include the legislative and the administrative, leaving out direct democracy as a not so common feature of European countries. The local arena for POS includes the local deliberative and executive bodies.

3.4.3. Hypotheses

After outlining the elements I presume to affect protest, in this section I bring together the two dimensions and the two levels of a decentralized POS and formulate this study's hypotheses. I first address the relation between a territorially decentralized state and protest. This is followed by hypotheses on how the receiving end of territorial decentralization - the local political context - affects protest. Finally, I consider and describe how the interaction between these two levels shapes the level of protest.

A territorially decentralized system multiplies the points of access to state-level decision-making by opening it to some extent to lower levels of government (Kriesi et al. 1995, 28). The lower level of government functions as an intermediate between population and the central government, which may be more or less open to the input coming from bottom up. An accessible political system will signal discontented groups that their demands might be met with open ears and encourage political participation. Kriesi et al. (1995) maintain that more entry-points to decision-making can invite action by facilitating access, while also provoking it through unwanted policies and political threats, thereby raising the costs of inaction. Thus, a decentralized system with dispersed decision making power is expected to raise the overall levels of mobilization, forms of moderate protest included, by facilitating greater access to decision making and greater competition for the preferred course of action. Moreover, an increased number of decision making agents leads to a smaller capacity of any one part of the state to act,` and hence to coordinate and implement policies (Kitschelt 1986, 63; Kriesi et al. 1995, 28). This lack of capacity leads the central state to be less responsive to its constituency

and to struggle to address the needs of claim-makers, fueling protest. The first two hypotheses resume these relations as follows:

H1a. Greater institutional access of local governments to central decision making will lead to higher levels of protest.
H1b. Lower policy capacity of the central government will lead to higher levels of protest.

Following the same theoretical reasoning, this pattern is expected to apply to the level of local jurisdictions.

H2a. Greater institutional access of residents to local decision-making will lead to higher levels of protest.
H2b. Lower policy capacity of local governments will lead to higher levels of protest.

Crook and Manor (1998, 11-12) argue that "decentralization tends to produce systems that are more open— that is, they are more transparent and easier for individuals and groups at local and supra-local levels to access and influence". Under politically decentralized systems, citizens also define interests and form identities on the basis of local concerns. Organizations such as parties, social movements, NGOs or social organizations operate locally and compete in the public arena over local issues (Schneider 2003). Rather than being appointed by a higher-level government, local officials may be popularly elected. Low central state capacity involves less accountability of local governments by bureaucratic hierarchy, which is generally compensated by accountability by local elections (Treisman 2002). It is argued that people's direct control is more favorable to political participation than their indirect control via central representatives. First, directly elected local legislators (a higher degree of self-rule) may provide more opportunities for debating critical local issues, which attract more citizen participation, and residents are better informed and more active when it comes to monitor their local representatives (Treisman 2002; Barber 2013). Second, if revenues for services are raised locally as a result of greater local authority, tax-payers have a stronger incentive to monitor the performance of local elected officials (Crook and Manor 1998). These relations can be summarized as follows:

H3a. Greater institutional access of local governments to central decision making will moderate the effects of local government access on protest.

H3b. Lower policy capacity of central governments will moderate the effects of local government access on protest.

Moreover, as decentralization leads to the implementation of mechanisms of accountability that submit local institutions to public scrutiny, monitoring, and sanctions, and to expectations that the local governments can respond to challengers autonomously, a lack of local policy capacity will be seized by claim-makers as an opportunity to demand change. In summary, decentralization can be expected to moderate the extent to which local governmental capacity becomes relevant to claim-makers and is perceived as a political opportunity structure.

H3c. Greater institutional access of local governments to central decision making will moderate the effects of local government capacity on protest.
H3d. Lower policy capacity of central governments will moderate the effects of local government capacity on protest.

4.DATA AND METHODS

In this chapter, I present the setting, data and the methodological strategy to test the theoretical arguments presented in Chapter 3. In the first section, I discuss the criteria used to select my cases of protest occurrence and local jurisdictions. The second section presents the operationalization of the different variables employed in the following empirical chapters. I conclude with a discussion on the statistical models used to account for the properties and structure of the data.

4.1. Case selection: urban protest during the great recession

To study the effects of decentralization on protest events in Europe, the aim of case selection was to reduce the presence of alternative factors, not accounted for, that could confound the relations observed in the data. My units of analysis are protest events occurring in local jurisdictions in European Union. Following previous research (e.g. Eisinger 1973, Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 2020) I propose to study cases clustered during a period of generalized discontent. For my analysis I select only protest events that occurred in European cities after the Lehman Brothers bankruptcy in October 2008 through the end of 2015. This entire time span was overshadowed by the great recession, which provided a similar base for discontent for Europeans, with arguably similar grievances and mobilization frames (Kriesi 2013). Political process theory suggests that grievances need to be considered along with resources and POS when we attempt to understand the occurrence of protest (McAdam 1982). A common source of grievance and similar mobilization frames reduce the variance caused by these factors.

On the other hand, using protest data collected during such a unique period of unrest as the great recession requires carving out the pace for discussing its very peculiar context and justifying this choice. A first concern is that most of the theory used as a scaffold for this study's hypotheses, such as the work of Kriesi and his colleagues (1995), was developed around so-called "movements of affluence" as opposed to "movements of crisis" (Kerbo 1982, cited in Kriesi et al. 2020). While the former mobilized primarily around cultural issues, the latter are more centered on economic protest, tend to manifest in a more spontaneous, disorganized way, and are more likely to be characterized by hostile outbursts and collective violence (Kriesi et al. 2020). However, Hunger and Lorenzini (2020) show that protest during the recession, while it manifested with higher frequency due to the presence of economic and political grievances and displayed some innovative characteristics, did not constitute a significant departure from established patterns of action, remained largely non-violent, and does not challenge existing analytical frameworks and tools. Moreover, it was shown that while there has been a rise in economically framed protests, their main target was the governments' handling of the crisis and it lacked sustained and radicalized protest mobilization (Gessler and Schulte-Cloos 2020). These findings support the assumption that protest during the great recession responded to national and local opportunity structures as expected.

A second aspect that needs discussion is that the uprisings during the great recession depart from regular protest activity by belonging to a global wave fueled primarily by transnational and global institutions (della Porta and Mattoni 2014, della Porta 2017, cited in Kriesi et al. 2020). In this case too, analyses carried out by Kriesi and his colleagues (2020) alleviate this concern. Wüest and Enggist (2020) demonstrate that Europe did not experience one big wave of political mobilization and protest after 2008, that protest remained confined geographically and temporally, and that diffusion processes remained very limited. This suggests that the national political arena has remained predominant in explaining protest. However, supranational constraints such as belonging to the Eurozone impacted internal opportunity structures by splitting governments' capacity to act between the response to local constituencies and supranational obligations (Kriesi et al. 2020, 26-27), and this additional constraint is taken into consideration in the research design by introducing a control for Eurozone membership.

The protests analyzed in this study are events nested in local jurisdictions. Local jurisdictions, or local administrative units (LAU), are generally identified as communes or municipalities in European countries. One of the challenges of comparative subnational analysis is, however, that local administrative units are hardly comparable across countries in Europe. They vary greatly in scope, size, density, number, distinctions between urban and rural, and, most importantly for this study, in their relation with the other tires of government. Moreover, there is very little data on LAUs that is being centralized at European level. To avoid confounding factors such as rural-urban cleavages, distinct electoral processes, different resource constraints etc. I decided to select only cases registered in cities, the latter being defined according to the common criteria elaborated by OECD and the European Commission in 2011.

This unifying definition was established in order to provide a coherent and comparable conceptualization of the urban and is based on the presence of an urban centre (a high-density area with more than 1500 inhabitants per sq km and a population of over 50000) with a corresponding political government (EC 2012). Ultimately, the decision to include one or more municipalities or communes (local units level 2 or LAU2) in an urban center was based on several criteria, adjusted on a case by case basis to best reflect political organization. Thus, cities the definition of cities was designed to correspond to the criteria of local jurisdictions. These adjustments favoring the relationship to political organization led to the inclusion of units below the 50 000 population threshold, but about half of these cities count between 50000 and 100000 inhabitants. Two of them (London and Paris) are global cities. This OECD-EC definition of cities excludes towns and suburbs - and obviously rural LAUs. Therefore this study also excluded protest events that did not occur specifically in the cities identified by the OECD-EC definition.

The availability of key data imposed additional constraints on the selection of cases. Of the 28 EU countries, Croatian cities were not covered by protest data and Romania does not centralize relevant urban indicators, so these two countries are excluded from the analysis.

4.2. Operationalization of variables

4.2.1. Dependent variable: Protest

To measure protest activity, I use the frequency of protest events aggregated by city and by period of study: October 2008 - December 2015. The data come from a relatively new set combining strike statistics provided by the International Labour Organization with protest event statistics collected through the ERC research program "Political Conflict in Europe in the Shadow of the Great Recession" (POLCON) conducted at the European University Institute. The data cover 30 countries (27 EU member-states plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland) over a period of 15 years (2000-2015). The new protest data were collected following protest event analysis using international news wires[1]. The coding accounted for petitions, demonstrations, confrontations (occupations, blockades) violent protests (i.e. riots, clashes with police) and other types of protest (vigils, symbolic events etc.). Additional variables in this dataset include the location of protests (a "community" variable indicating the region, city, or country, and a "country" variable) and the date at which they occurred, allowing for the selection of cases according to the time span and location criteria described in the first section of this chapter. Following these criteria, cases that did not occur in cities as defined in the first section of this chapter and in the specified time interval are discarded. Since this was a raw data file, the location name was checked against and harmonized with Eurostat nomenclatures before merging with city level-data.

4.2.2. Independent variables

Access to central decision-making and *central government's policy capacity*

Decentralization is conceptualized as access of local governments to central decision-making and as central government's policy capacity relative to that of local governments. The operationalization of both these dimensions makes use of the Local Autonomy Index database of Ladner et al. (2015), commissioned by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. The index, covering the time-span between 1990 and 2014,

[1] The corpus included automatically selected relevant newswires from AFP, AP, APA, BBC, BNS, CTK, DPA, MTI, PA and PAP

captures the extent of decentralization in 39 countries: all 28 EU member states, together with Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Albania, Macedonia, Moldova, Georgia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine. The approach used in developing these indicators closely followed a previous index of Regional Authority Index developed by Liesbet Hooghe, Gary Marks and Arjan H. Schakel (2010) frequently cited in previous research on decentralization and protest, while making some adjustments to tailor the index to municipalities.

The access of local governments to central decision-making is measured using the shared - or interactive - rule indicator of the index, which "characterizes the relations between local government and higher levels of the state" (Ladner et al. 2015, 327). This vertical relationship captures access (the degree of influence of local governments over political decisions at higher levels of government), legal protection of local autonomy, and unobtrusive administrative supervision of local government.

The level of the central government's policy capacity is assessed based on the extent to which such capacity is diminished by the autonomy of local jurisdictions to design, fund and implement policies in their territory. It is operationalized using the self-rule indicator of the local autonomy index, which captures the level of financial and organizational autonomy of local governments, policy scope and political discretion in their jurisdictions. (The coding scheme for the indicators in the Local Autonomy Index is provided in the Appendix 1).

Both variables are measured at country level. Two measurements are provided for each. The first one represents the mean score of their respective indicators from 2008 to 2014, reflecting a structural conception of decentralization. The second one reflects the change in scores that occurred between 2014 and 2008, reflecting the decentralization or centralization processes that took place under the pressure of the Great Recession. A positive difference in scores between 2014 and 2008 was coded with 1 to indicate a process of decentralization. A null or negative difference that indicates centralization during the recession years was coded as 0.

Access to local decision making

The openness of local governments was previously analyzed in terms of actual representation in local councils or among mayors of at-risk populations (Eisinger 1973). Eisinger (1973, 20) found that claim-makers engage in protest especially in those cities where they have been able to gain representation in the form of elected officials. While this does not guarantee them real

power, “it does indicate that certain types of political opportunities are available” and provided evidence that movement leaders speak from a legitimate forum (ibid.).

In this study I employ two measurements of electoral inclusiveness, voting rights and candidacy rights for citizen residents and non-citizen residents. In European countries, the specifics of local elections vary across states and sometimes at subnational level: voting and candidature rights may be granted to nationals, to local residents from the European union, or to all local residents regardless of country of origin, and franchise is granted on varying criteria. This creates distinct patterns of inclusion and exclusion of local residents (Arrhighi and Baubock 2017).

Measurements of voting and candidacy access for resident citizens and non-citizen residents in local elections are available for European countries from the ELECLAW database. The latest version – ELECLAW 5.1 – includes the 28 Member States of the European Union based on the electoral laws in 2013 and 2015. In lack of earlier data, the access of local input structures is hence operationalized as the average of the 2013 and 2015 ELECLAW scores for resident citizens and non-citizen residents.

Local policy capacity

Following Hendrix (2010), who recommends survey measures of bureaucratic quality as one of the most theoretically and empirically justified measurements of policy capacity, I operationalize the capacity of local government using the scores of the European Quality of Government Index (EQI) at regional level, which are based on survey data. The regional level EQI questionnaire, conducted in 2010 and 2013, covers 27 and 24 European countries respectively. It did not target specific subnational institutions, aiming instead to assess the ‘quality’, ‘impartiality’ and ‘corruption’ of service delivery in policy areas that are generally handled at subnational level: public education, public health care and law enforcement.

Scores for these three pillars are provided at NUTS 2 level and then aggregated up at country level. Since the NUTS 2 level is in-between cities and countries, the country-level aggregates were preferred to avoid an extra level in the data. The interval between the two surveys reflects the expectation that a two-year span can lead to change in the way inhabitants rate the quality of subnational government, and unfortunately there is no data earlier than 2010. In the absence

of earlier data, the variable was calculated as the average of the 2010 and 2013 normalized scores.

4.2.3. Control variables

National level control variables

Because the definition of POS that I use is relatively narrow, referring primarily to the territorial decentralization of state power, the set of control variables retained at country level includes another measure of fragmentation, namely the *effective number of parties*. The number of parties is touted as an indicator of horizontal decentralization (Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 1995) as it reflects a more complex national conflict structure and a higher degree of proportionality of the electoral system. Where there are large numbers of parties, social movements will be more likely to find allies within the party system. These allies may include challenging small parties as well as large established parties that adapt their positions under the impact of the competition by the smaller challengers (Kriesi et al. 1995, 29). This variable is present in the POLCON database describing country-month units, and it is used in this study as a country average over the period of study.

Prior studies have shown that a longer history of democratic rule leads to more overall political participation. Following Kriesi et al. (2020, 37), *democratic history* is measured by a factor variable indicating if a state was governed by Communist regimes until 1990.

Finally, supranational constraints such as belonging to the Eurozone impacted internal opportunity structures by splitting governments' capacity to act between the response to local constituencies and supranational obligations (Kriesi et al. 2020, 26-27). This additional constraint is taken into consideration by introducing a control for *Eurozone membership*.

Local level control variables

Previous literature on the predictors of contentious collective action points to both the availability and distribution of resources as paramount to collective action. Resources for contention, as Tilly (1978) labelled them, may include people, money, the media, and organization. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) offer a broader categorization that splits them into moral, cultural, socio-organizational, human and material resources.

While they are more often seen as factors internal to the group attempting to mobilize than contextual ones, resources have also been construed as structural attributes of macroecological units such as countries, cities or industries. This approach refers both to the availability and the distribution of resources to and within an ecological unit (e.g. Tilly 1970; Eisinger 1973; Brown 2009). Eisinger (1973, 18) equates the distribution of resources with the distribution of informal power (power over resources) in the community. Edwards and McCarthy (2004) argue that localized socio-economic structural conditions are reproduced in the mobilization patterns based on resources' properties of idiosyncrasy and accessibility. The first property implies that certain resources are unevenly available across societies, and the second that they are unevenly available across groups within a society.

In terms of availability of resources, Edwards and McCarthy (2004, 116) appreciate that "human time and effort along with money are the most widely appreciated kinds of resources that are more or less available to collective actors". *City population size* is hence included as a control variable, scaled by 100 000. *Purchasing power standard (PPS) per inhabitant in percentage of the EU average* (NUTS 3 level) is included as an indicator of the availability of monetary resources that government challengers can draw on. The data were obtained from Eurostat for NUTS 3 level, which is a higher territorial level than cities but the closest available data and it often overlaps with city units. According to Kriesi et al. (1995, 29), the level of economic development can also act as a control for administration reliance on the private sector. The lack of resources also multiplies the points of access to governmental decision making because it makes the administration dependent on its private interlocutors in the system of interest-intermediation.

Resources that are less likely to be fungible and more likely to be context-dependent are social-organizational resources (infrastructures, social networks, and organizations) and human capital (labor, experience, skills, and expertise) (idem, 130). Following Edwards and McCarthy's rationale, the presence of these resources in a particular locale should increase the overall likelihood of mobilization and action in that setting. To account for an exceptional concentration of social-organizational resources, I created a dummy variable that designates *national capitals* (Almeida 2012).

Resources are unequally distributed among the social strata of a society also. Endorsements, skills, and money are proprietary and they tend to be predominantly available to privileged groups, despite the redistributive efforts of the state or nongovernmental organizations (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, 119-120). Consequently, resource-poor groups trying to mobilize are less likely to gain enough access to sufficient necessary assets. I therefore include among the local level controls the *percentage of population aged 25-64 qualified at level 5 to 8 ISCED* and *the unemployment rate.* Population age structure is also a source of uneven distribution of resources, with younger groups having more time and more up to date technological skills (ibid.), so *the share of population between 20 and 44 years old* is also included. All the city-level data, except the variable indicating national capitals, are sourced from the Eurostat Urban Audit database. When data were not available for the period of study, the data from the latest available year before 2008 was used.

4.3. Data overview

As pointed out above data came from a variety of sources. A table indicating their provenance is provided in the appendix, and the sources are cited in the bibliography. The descriptive statistics for the variables used are shown below (Table 2). The following page contains a table that provides the mean values of variables across countries.

Table 2. Variable descriptive statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
No. protest events	386	21.40674	82.78712	1	1169
City level variables					
GDP (PPS/c, %EU)	386	100.8285	45.26073	23.75	322.75
Population (scaled)	386	3.425053	7.298934	.46583	96.78497
Unemployment rate	386	12.5487	6.353271	3.866667	40.05
Young population	386	36.61723	3.899794	27.42667	50.33333
Population with tertiary education	386	32.70272	10.49993	8.6	74.7
Capital city	386	.0673575	.2509654	0	1
Country level variables					
No. parties	386	4.514917	1.445375	2.08	9.867586
Eurozone membership	386	.6217617	.4855769	0	1
Recent democracy	386	.2357513	.4250184	0	1

Self-rule (mean)	386	17.18822	3.262162	10.16667	23.66667
Interactive rule (mean)	386	6.107041	.9091513	3	7.000072
Self-rule (change)	386	.492228	.5005884	0	1
Interactive rule (change)	386	.0544041	.2271078	0	1
Voting rights resident citizens	386	.6278187	.1468358	.342	.918
Candidacy rights resident citizens	386	.6479948	.1538535	.3	.95
Voting rights non-citizen residents	386	.4126658	.2775299	.102	.983
Candidacy rights non-citizen residents resident	386	.4126684	.2533709	.097	.983
Quality of government	386	56.70193	17.18366	21.60597	86.91302

Table 3. Variable distributions, by country

Country	Protest Events (Mean)	GDP (PPS/C, %EU)	Population (Mean)	Young Population	Unemployment Share	Indiv. With Tertiary Ed.	No. Parties	Self-Rule (Mean)	Interactive Rule (Mean)	Self-Rule (Change)	Interactive Rule (Change)	Quality Of Gov. (Mean)	Voting Rights Res. Cit.	Voting Rights Non Cit. Res.	Candidacy Rights Res. Cit.	Candidacy Rights Non-Cit. Res.	N
All	21.40674	100.8285	3.425053	36.61723	12.5487	32.70272	4.514917	17.18822	6.107041	-.0185567	.1449908	56.70193	.628	.413	.648	.413	386
Austria	33	156.45	4.87167	37.85	7.286667	25.94	4.79	18.08136	7	0	.1820221	74.88681	.918	.102	.9	.097	5
Belgium	31.66667	116.1944	3.142818	35.55857	11.58889	35.88889	9.867586	18.2193	3.57584	-.0018317	-.0058321	67.08527	.691	.891	.734	.33	9
Bulgaria	16.0625	36.71094	1.940962	37.78646	9.884375	31.75	4.448276	16.25	7	0	.5	22.1565	.35	.209	.55	.157	16
Czech Republic	40.375	76.48438	1.89934	36.60036	10.525	24.43125	6.260345	18.16667	6	0	1	47.31179	.342	.132	.55	.248	16
Denmark	28	129.5833	3.519837	42.95555	5.177778	42.58333	5.62023	22	5	0	0	86.91302	.625	.983	.7	.983	3
Estonia	30	66.375	1.879403	36.92123	11.34167	42.19722	4.823333	16.08333	7	0	-.1666667	56.07404	.625	.883	.416	.33	3
Finland	10.16667	109.3958	2.314173	37.56994	13.87778	43.66528	6.28	23.33333	6	0	0	84.59153	.833	.983	.75	.983	6
France	15.73171	100.439	4.965817	35.99268	16.56911	35.9439	4.32	18.6438	7	0	.0001044	66.63133	.728	.314	.834	.33	41
Germany	11.83673	150.9796	3.819153	36.25754	8.077041	33.33687	5.541379	21.36949	6	0	.2543648	71.33325	.639	.174	.6	.184	49
Greece	185.625	68.17188	2.186337	39.32917	12.93333	34.23333	3.155172	13.41667	5	0	1.166667	38.25464	.383	.314	.563	.33	8
Hungary	28.6	64.7	4.836086	37.3675	12.38	31.5	2.816552	15.66667	4.5	-1	-4.666667	43.89838	.398	.85	.416	.33	5
Ireland	17	139.6027	1.888785	44.025	18.625	34.3	3.951172	10.16667	3	0	-1	71.48093	.718	.917	.85	.917	4
Italy	16.82222	94.97778	2.822593	32.32833	13.06	22.43333	3.82	18	7	0	1	36.24911	.633	.209	.8	.33	45
Latvia	69.66667	58.58333	2.779407	34.98988	14.06	29.84722	5.386552	13.83333	6	0	1	39.90983	.82	.33	.734	.33	3
Lithuania	36	63.10417	2.168265	35.00595	11.46806	42.58333	8.9	16.5	7	0	.3333333	39.93389	.621	.9	.3	.9	6
Luxembourg	13	261.75	.97754	43.68333	6.75	34.65	4.250805	17.16667	5	0	0	78.38469	.542	.825	.45	.867	1
Malta	10	87.125	2.05414	36.4	7.466667	17	2.08	10.66667	7	0	0	60.31135	.662	.149	.584	.157	1
Netherlands	10.63636	145.6591	2.917057	38.8439	6.089394	42.66212	6.768276	17.75	4	0	-.1666667	79.10322	.833	.933	.9	.933	11
Poland	8.95	81.55	3.915648	37.89267	20.0325	32.025	3.595862	19.71479	7.000072	.0000319	-.0051106	41.9094	.642	.107	.65	.165	20
Portugal	16.18182	85.32955	2.098059	34.26607	13.89091	26	3.894023	17.83333	6	0	1	55.09023	.546	.544	.65	.723	11
Romania	16.75	54.3125	3.529304	40.97991	11.25	13.8	3.93	14.91667	5	0	.1666667	21.60597	.392	.22	.3	.165	12
Slovakia	14.875	77.29688	1.394874	39.20379	8.970833	28.15	5.63	15	7	0	0	42.85873	.478	.866	.475	.866	8
Slovenia	36	95.0625	1.96013	35.84107	15.5	32.45	5.287241	12.33759	5.499934	-1.000014	.0016097	53.77872	.82	.875	.884	.165	2
Spain	18.58974	93.22436	3.577686	36.5543	21.9312	38.93077	2.79	16.36784	6	0	-.6131523	56.04096	.82	.352	.484	.33	39
Sweden	25	121.0469	2.931855	38.77396	8.06875	43.32083	4.75931	23.66667	5	0	0	82.6497	.875	.983	.95	.983	8
United Kingdom	14.03704	105.1782	4.308241	37.31551	8.106327	36.24074	3.68931	11.52077	5.86359	-.0027227	-.0002605	70.77826	.548	.628	.616	.653	54

4.4 Method

The greatest constraint in carrying out the analysis were the peculiarities of protest event data at subnational level. To begin with, the data collection was focused on obtaining national level totals for 30 countries by coding a vast corpus of newswires obtained from Lexis Nexis. To arrive at a manageable workload, researchers sampled 25%, 50% or 100% of the news wires, depending on the volume of documents available for each country[2]. While this bias was corrected with corresponding weights in the country-level event totals, the subnational level data I relied on inevitably excluded between 50% and 75% of events and their locations in most countries. This implies that both the count of protest events per city as well as the number of cities incurring protest were biased.

The latter eliminates the possibility to consider the whole population of cities in the observed countries, as one cannot differentiate correctly between cities that incurred protest and cities that incurred zero protest events. The exclusion of 50% to 75% of the data sources leads to an unknown number of false zeroes and not enough information is available to distinguish between the false and the real zeros. Analyzing only the cities in which protest occurred is a more acceptable alternative in this case, provided that this study does not generalize beyond the truncated population.

Another constraint that influenced the choice of the analytical approach was the overdispersion of the dependent variable (fig 1). As Table 4 shows, the variance is much greater than the mean, suggesting that the variable does not follow a Poisson distribution.

[2] For Czeck Republic, Germany, Spain, France, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, and Poland researchers coded only 25% of the documents. For Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Norway, Portugal, and Slovakia they coded 50%. For Austria, Bulgaria, Switzerland, Cyprus, Finland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden all the reports were manually annotated (Kriesi et al. 2020, 39).

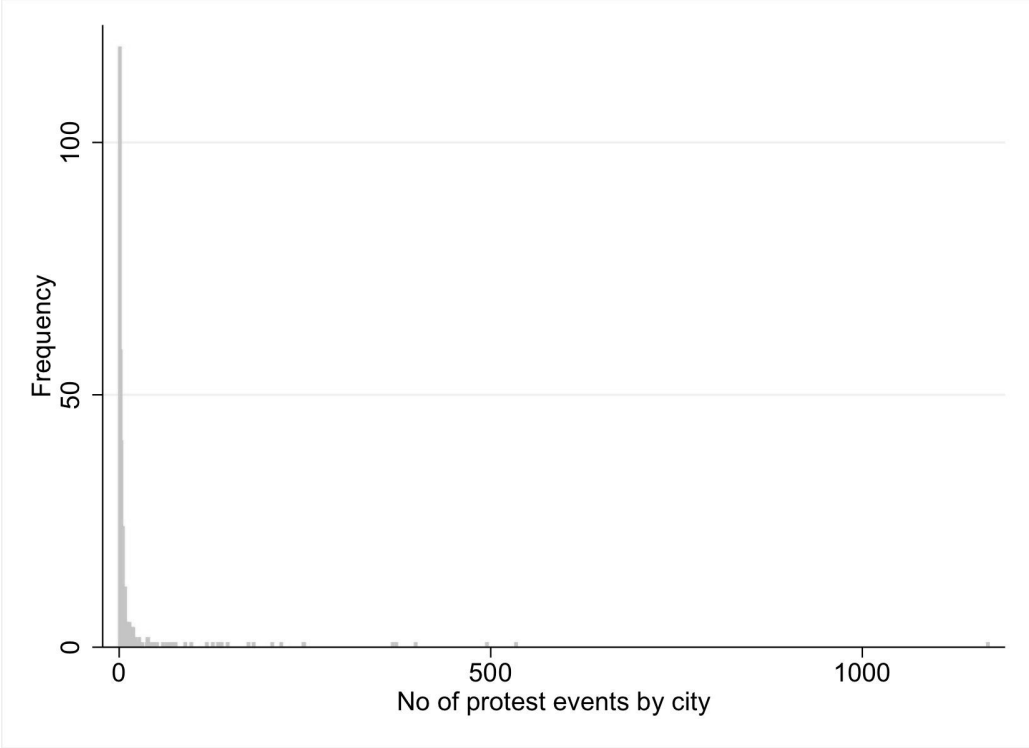

Fig.1 Histogram showing the frequency distribution of the dependent variable

Table 4. Detailed summary of the dependent variable

		No. Of protest events		
	Percentiles	Smallest		
1%	1	1		
5%	1	1		
10%	1	1	Obs	386
25%	1	1	Sum of Wgt.	386
50%	3		Mean	21.40674
		Largest	Std. Dev.	82.78712
75%	8	399		
90%	31	495	Variance	6853.707
95%	97	534	Skewness	8.917181
99%	399	1169	Kurtosis	106.1212

Finally, another important aspect of the overall dataset is its multi-level structure. Protests occurring in cities at the lower level are nested in countries that represent the upper level. Table 2 shows variable distribution by country. This pointed to multilevel models, which make possible the combination of multiple levels of analysis in a single comprehensive model by specifying predictors at different levels. This also enables researchers to account for causal heterogeneity, by examining cross-level interactions to determine whether the causal effect of

lower level predictors is conditioned or moderated by higher level predictors (Steenbergen and Jones 2002).

Two modelling approaches were considered. In a first case, a zero-truncated negative binomial regression was attempted, including countries as a cluster criterion. This approach is used to model count data for which the value zero cannot occur and when there is evidence of overdispersion. However, when the mean of the truncated count response variable is not very close to zero, truncated models do not necessarily perform better than non-truncated models. In this case, the zero-truncated negative binomial regression did not converge.

Subsequently, a multi-level mixed-effects negative binomial model was fitted to take into account the two-level nature of the data (country and city). This model is useful to correct for the within- country dependence of observations (intra-class correlation) and adjusts both within and between parameter estimates in relation to the clustered nature of the data (Gelman and Hill 2007).

First, H1a and H1b are modeled as the direct effects of decentralization indicators on protest, using the two different measurements of decentralization: averages and positive change as a factor. Second, H2a and H2b are modeled as the direct effects of local institutional access and local government capacity on protest levels, introducing the two measures of local access separately and controlling for decentralization. Finally, H3a, H3b, H3c, H3d are modelled calculating the interactions between decentralization and local level institutional features. The findings are presented in the next chapter.

5. FINDINGS

This chapter presents the detailed results of the multilevel negative binomial regressions. The chapter is structured as follows: I begin by presenting a set of models that test my arguments on the effects of macro-level decentralization on collective action. The next section details the relation between local government features and the dependent variable. In the third section, I examine the interactions between the degree of decentralization and local government openness.

5.1. The political opportunities of a decentralizing state: the effects of macro contexts

To examine the effects of central-level POS on protest, I specify four models reported in Table 5. Model 1 is the empty model, while model 2 includes only the city and country-level control variables. Model 3A introduces the first variables measuring decentralization on its two dimensions: access to central decision making and central policy capacity. The first consists of the average of the interactive (shared) rule annual scores between 2008 and 2014, while the second is the average of the self-rule annual scores over the same time span. Model 3B introduces the second set of state-level decentralization measurements, which capture the change in interactive rule and self-rule indices experienced over the time of study: two factor variables that represent an increase in interactive rule and an increase in self-rule respectively.

As signaled by the reduction in log likelihood, model fit improves with the inclusion of the second set of central POS measures, which capture a positive change in decentralization. There

is also an improvement with the inclusion of the first measures of central POS, which account for the mean scores in decentralization.

Table 5. Decentralization and urban protest levels during the great recession

	(1)	(2)	(3A)	(3B)
Constant	3.094***	-0.958	-0.584	-0.993
	(0.143)	(0.813)	(1.321)	(0.791)
GDP (PPS/inhabitant)		0.004**	0.005**	0.005**
		(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Population		0.152***	0.153***	0.150***
		(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Young population (%)		0.023	0.023	0.024
		(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Unemployment (%)		0.012	0.013	0.018
		(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Population qualified at tertiary level (%)		0.020***	0.020***	0.020***
		(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)
National capital		1.495***	1.472***	1.536***
		(0.242)	(0.244)	(0.238)
No. of parties		-0.000	0.035	-0.025
		(0.079)	(0.088)	(0.073)
Eurozone membership		0.194	0.105	-0.102
		(0.351)	(0.361)	(0.341)
Recent democracy		0.486	0.318	0.505
		(0.365)	(0.410)	(0.331)
Interactive-rule (mean)			0.058	
			(0.139)	
Self-rule (mean)			-0.047	
			(0.048)	
Interactive-rule (change)				-1.054**
				(0.517)
Self-rule (change)				0.505*
				(0.268)
lnalpha	0.878***	-0.244***	-0.246***	-0.247***
	(0.062)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
Var. cons. country	0.248**	0.320***	0.311***	0.221**
	(0.123)	(0.122)	(0.118)	(0.088)
N obs.	386	386	386	386
N groups				
Log likelihood	-1411.456	-1165.114	-1164.627	-1161.520

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors in parentheses. Multilevel binomial regression models

Model 2 including all the local and national controls shows that most city-level predictors perform as expected. GDP, population, the share of population with tertiary education and

being a national capital have positive and significant effects across models, in line with the resources theory (Edwards and McCarthy 2004). However, there is no significant effect of young population or unemployment on participation, although both have positive coefficient signs as predicted. As far as national-level controls, none seem to have a significant effect. The number of parties variable has a negative sign in the first and third model, but changes sign when the self-rule and interactive rule mean scores are introduced, although the correlation between them is not high (Appendix 3). The same happens for the Eurozone membership variable, which changes signs when the factor indicating positive change in self-rule and interactive rule. Being a recent democracy has a positive, albeit not significant effect on protest levels across all models.

Introducing the mean interactive rule and the mean self-rule measurements that capture average decentralization levels over the span of the great recession in Model 3A results in no statistically significant effects on protest activity. Their coefficients have opposing signs, positive for interactive rule and negative for self-rule. Fig. 2 shows these coefficients with confidence intervals.

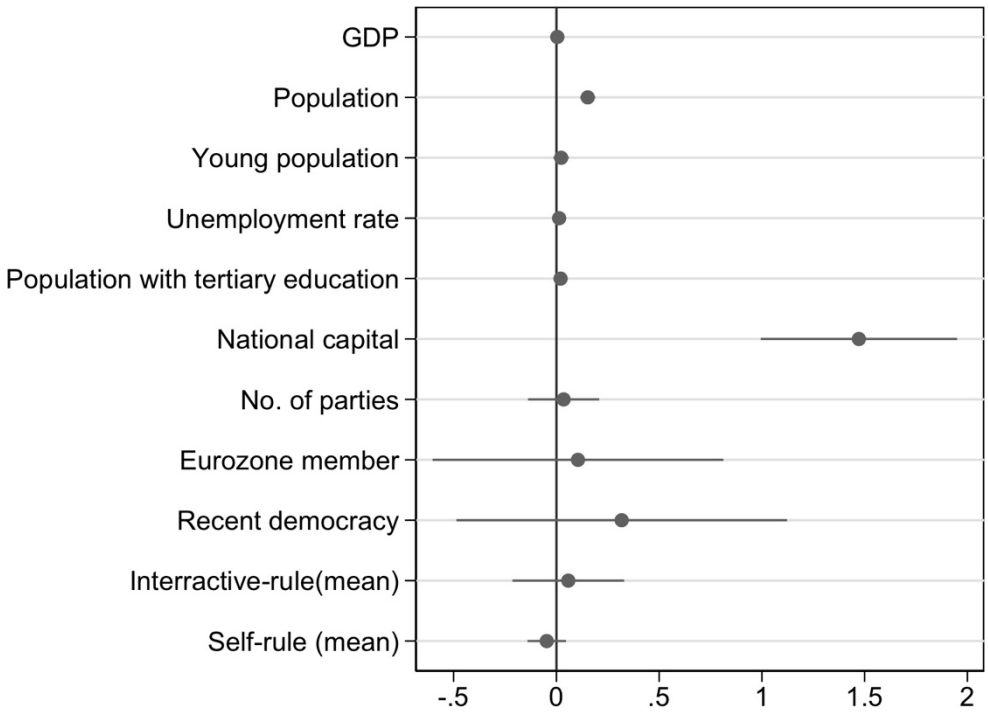

Fig. 2 Illustration of Model 3A coefficients. Bars denote 0.5 (inner) resp. 0.95 (outer) confidence intervals.

Model 3B, on the other hand, shows that both an increase in interactive rule and an increase in self-rule have statistically significant effects on the number of protest events in cities. The two measurements yield opposite signs comparative to what averages of decentralization measurements had in the previous model.

Like in the previous model, the coefficients of these variables have opposite signs, indicating that the two decentralization dimensions measured – access to political decision making and policy capacity – are distinct. This is in line with decentralization literature (Schneider 2003), as well as with prior findings (Brown 2009), which highlight the diverging effects of different decentralization components and warn against the perils of aggregate measurements.

Undergoing a process that consolidates the access of local jurisdictions to decision making has a statistically significant and negative effect on protest. The presence of this factor leads to a difference in the logs of expected counts of protest events of -1.054, given the other predictor variables in the model are held constant. This represents an incidence rate ratio of protest of only 0.35 times the incident rate for cities that did not gain more access or lost some of the access to central decision making. Substantially, it indicates that allowing cities a greater say in the national-level policy-making process appears to reduce mobilization to a great extent. This finding goes against the predictions of POS theories, which see state openness as a general opportunity for protest by facilitating access, and also by raising the costs of inaction by providing access to unwanted policy proposals and political threats (Kriesi et al. 1995). Instead, it shows that a greater level of access to central political decision-making reduces, in fact, the manifestations of contention, which is more in line with the thesis that very broad opportunities to participate institutionally may temperate protest levels (Kitschelt 1986).

In contrast, an increase in self-rule over the period of study has a positive and statistically significant effect on the levels of urban protest, leading to a difference in the logs of expected counts of protest events of 0.505, all other predictor variables constant. Thus, undergoing a process that consolidates the autonomy of local jurisdictions, and consequently weakens the central state, results in an increase in protest activity by 66% This provides confirming evidence for Hypothesis 1b—lower policy capacity of the central state will lead to higher levels of protest. Fig. 3 illustrates the variable coefficients of this model with confidence intervals.

Surprisingly, the coefficients of the mean interactive and self-rule variables are exactly opposite to those of the variables indicating change in interactive rule and self-rule. One way

that we could interpret this finding is that political opportunity structures pass through the conversion of the latter into motivational factors for claim makers, as proposed by Kriesi et al. (1995). Structural and conjunctural POS translate either into means, such as facilitation or repression, or to ends, such as the success chance and the possibility of reform or threat. In this respect, stable institutional features – the status quo - may be perceived differently by claim makers as opposed to their sudden change, such as the changes in territorial decentralization that occurred during the great recession. For example, cities in weak states with a higher level of local self-rule may have lower levels of protest as the cost of collective action is not justified compared to the high number of more practical institutional access, but a spike in local self-rule may be perceived either as an opportunity for reform by the groups dissatisfied with the status quo or as a threat by groups aligned with central politics.

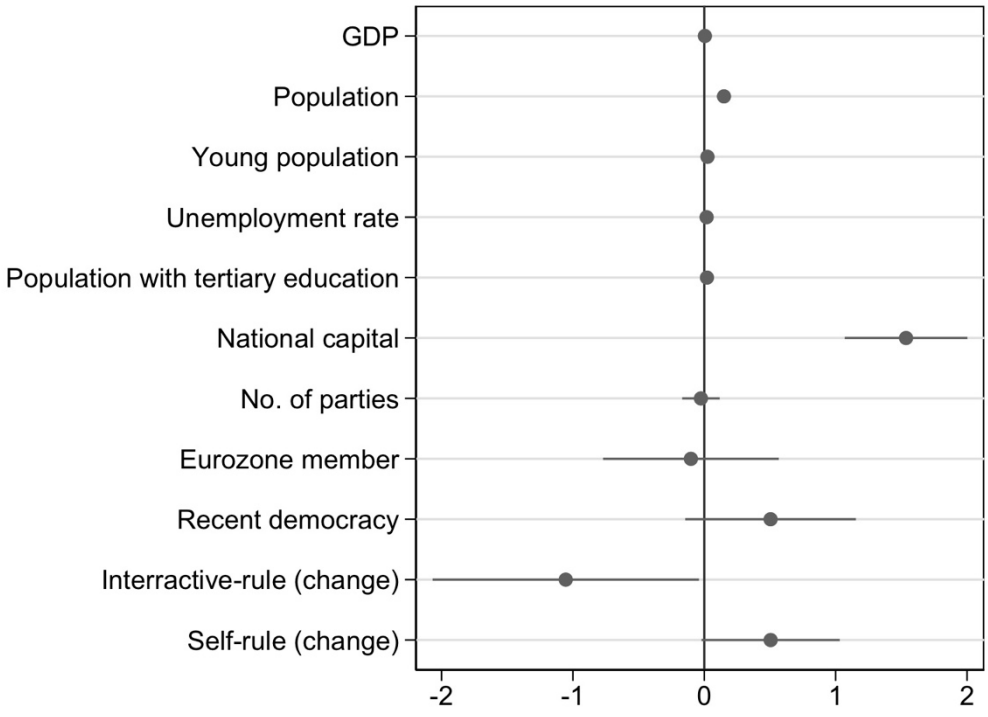

Fig. 3 Illustration of Model 3B coefficients. Bars denote 0.5 (inner) resp. 0.95 (outer) confidence intervals.

5.2. The political opportunities of a decentralizing state: the effects of local contexts

What happens when the local institutional factors are added? In order to test the effects of local institutional factors on protest activity, I specify an additional three models reported in Table 6, which retain only the operationalization of country-level POS as factors capturing an increase in policy access and capacity. The local institutional variables are introduced gradually as the degree of correlation between franchise and quality of government is high, and so is the correlation between voting and candidacy rights for non-citizen residents (Appendix 3).

Model 4 and Model 5 include all variables of Model 3B and also introduce the two alternative measures of institutional policy access at the local level: first voting and subsequently candidacy rights in local elections. Model 6 includes all variables of Model 3B and the measurement of local government capacity. As indicated by the progressive reduction in log likelihood, model fit improves with the addition of the quality of government variable as well as with the inclusion of access variables, particularly candidacy rights.

Table 6. Local institutions and urban protest levels during the great recession

	(4)	(5)	(6)
Constant	-0.497	-1.041	0.005
	(0.935)	(0.948)	(0.940)
GDP (PPS/inhabitant)	0.005**	0.005**	0.005***
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Population	0.147***	0.148***	0.145***
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Young population (%)	0.023	0.026	0.026
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)
Unemployment (%)	0.020	0.018	0.017
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Population qualified at tertiary level (%)	0.022***	0.021***	0.021***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.007)
National capital	1.588***	1.561***	1.574***
	(0.242)	(0.239)	(0.237)
No. of parties	0.014	-0.011	0.033
	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.075)
Eurozone membership	-0.018	-0.158	-0.145
	(0.335)	(0.345)	(0.317)
Recent democracy	0.375	0.449	-0.068
	(0.337)	(0.382)	(0.432)

Interactive-rule (change)	-1.103**	-1.154**	-0.967**
	(0.527)	(0.526)	(0.482)
Self-rule (change)	0.315	0.483*	0.276
	(0.294)	(0.271)	(0.275)
Voting access for resident citizens	-0.707		
	(0.877)		
Voting access for non-citizen residents	-0.397		
	(0.447)		
Candidature access for resident citizens		0.258	
		(0.798)	
Candidature access for non-citizen residents		-0.387	
		(0.441)	
Quality of government			-0.019*
			(0.010)
lnalpha	-0.247***	-0.249***	-0.249***
	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
Var. cons. country	0.194**	0.216**	0.175**
	(0.082)	(0.086)	(0.076)
N obs.	386	386	386
N groups	26	26	26
Log likelihood	-1160.7305	--1161.0943	-1159.9264

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors in parentheses. Multilevel binomial regression models

Model 4 and 5 add the two measurements of policy access at the local level: voting and candidacy rights in local elections, respectively. These variables are introduced separately as they are highly correlated. None of them has a statistically significant effect on the levels of protest in cities, which prompts me to reject Hypothesis 2a. The presence of the voting rights variables makes the significance of the self-rule change disappear, only to be restored with the introduction of candidacy rights. The coefficients of voting rights for resident citizens, voting rights for non-citizen residents and candidature rights for non-citizen residents all have a negative sign, reiterating the inverse relationship of access to political decision making previously found in the macro POS model (Model 3B). The coefficient of candidature rights for resident citizens, on the other hand, has a positive sign.

The last local context variable – quality of government, introduced in Model 6 - has a negative and statistically significant effect at the 10 percent level on protest levels. Cities with greater policy responsiveness and capacity were less likely to muster protest during the crisis years: one unit increase in government capacity as measured by the quality of government index leads to a 2 percent decrease in protest. This is in line with POS theory assertions that increased

government capacity reduces the need for protest, lending support to Hypothesis 2b - lower policy capacity of local governments will lead to higher levels of protest.

Moreover, we note that, upon the introduction of this variable, the significance of the self-rule change disappears again and the coefficient decreases. This could indicate an underlying mediation or interaction relationship between the two factors. A mediating relation could mean that a positive change in self-rule would result in more protest because it would lead to a lower local government capacity, for example by allocating a greater policy scope to local governments while not adequately providing the means for financing these policies. This scenario was enacted for example in the Netherlands as well as the United Kingdom during the crisis years (CEMR 2013). The possibility of moderation will be examined in the next section as part of testing Hypothesis 3b. Of these last three models, the one that includes both the quality of government and candidacy rights performs better. Fig. 4 illustrates its coefficients with confidence intervals.

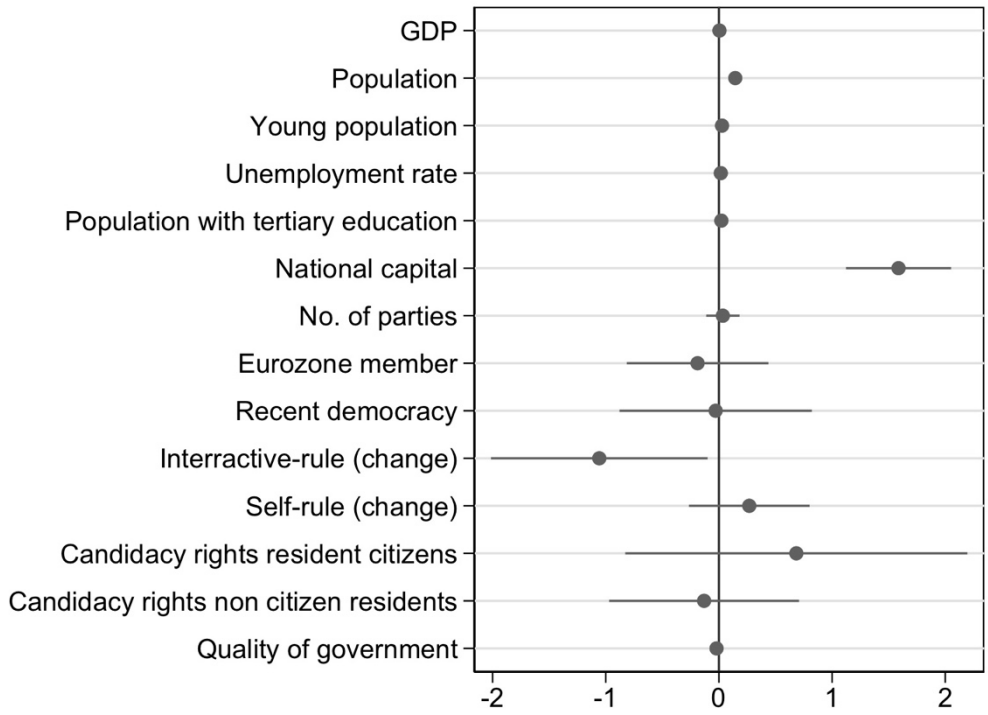

Fig. 4 Illustration of Model 6 coefficients. Bars denote 0.5 (inner) resp. 0.95 (outer) confidence intervals.

Next, I run the same models replacing the interactive-rule change factor and the self-rule change factor with my other measurement of decentralization introduced in model 3A, which reflects the mean values of the same institutional features over the period of the recession. A

summary of these results is presented in Table 7. As in Model 3A, these measurements of decentralization appear statistically non-significant. The sign of the self-rule variable coefficient goes against the POS predictions, as they essentially suggest that during the crisis, if we assume the degree of decentralization to be stable, the lack of capacity of central government measured by local self-rule reduces protest. The sign of the interactive rule variable on the other hand is positive as expected. Voting and candidature rights also remain non-significant as in models 5 and 5, but the previously positive sign of the candidature rights for resident citizens turns negative, aligning with the other coefficients of access variables that seem to indicate that a more open local government leads to less protest. The quality of government variable, measuring local government capacity, is statistically significant here too – this time at the 5 percent level, and with a slightly higher coefficient indicating a plunge in protest levels by 3 percent with a unit increase of the index. Again, this result confirms Hypothesis 2b.

Table 7. Local governments and urban protest levels during the great recession

	(4bis)	(5bis)	(6bis)
Constant	0.219	-0.378	0.539
	(1.340)	(1.424)	(1.311)
GDP (PPS/inhabitant)	0.005**	0.004**	0.005**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Population	0.149***	0.151***	0.146***
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)
Young population (%)	0.021	0.024	0.025
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Unemployment (%)	0.017	0.013	0.013
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)
Population qualified at tertiary level (%)	0.023***	0.021***	0.021***
	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
National capital	1.532***	1.492***	1.536***
	(0.247)	(0.245)	(0.243)
No. of parties	0.076	0.053	0.088
	(0.089)	(0.091)	(0.083)
Eurozone membership	0.143	0.058	-0.037
	(0.337)	(0.366)	(0.326)
Recent democracy	0.150	0.215	-0.343
	(0.392)	(0.450)	(0.458)
Interactive rule (mean)	0.016	0.043	0.003
	(0.140)	(0.139)	(0.126)
Self-rule(mean)	-0.035	-0.045	-0.018
	(0.045)	(0.048)	(0.044)
Voting access for resident citizens	-1.211		
	(0.913)		
Voting access for non-citizen residents	-0.389		
	(0.480)		
Candidature access for resident citizens		-0.058	

		(0.898)	
Candidature access for non-citizen residents		-0.353	
		(0.489)	
Quality of government			-0.024**
			(0.010)
lnalpha	-0.245***	-0.247***	-0.248***
	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
Var. cons. country	0.253**	0.304***	0.227**
	(0.103)	(0.116)	(0.095)
N obs.	386	386	386
N groups	26	26	26
Log likelihood	-1163.1631	-1164.3675	-1162.1383

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors in parentheses. Multilevel binomial regression models

5.3. Interactions

As mentioned above, political process and decentralization literatures have emphasized expectations that it could increase levels of participation by enhancing the relevance of local institutions. The last four hypotheses of this study summarize the argument that the effects of local governments on protest are moderated by decentralization.

To test these interactions, only the mean interactive rule and mean self-rule are used, as it would be difficult to envision that a change in decentralization over the 7-year period between 2008 and 2014 had an effect on local government capacity as it was evaluated in 2010. Table 8 presents the results of the interaction models. Each model introduces two interactions terms between one local institution and the dimensions of decentralization: self-rule and interactive rule. Model 7 presents local government quality interactions; Model 8 the interactions of citizen voting rights; Model 9 the interactions of non-citizen residents voting rights; Model 10 introduces interactions of candidature access for citizens; and Model 11 estimates the interactions of candidature access for non-citizens.

The self-rule variable leads to statistically significant interaction coefficients with every single attribute of local institutions except voting access for resident citizens in local elections, while the interactive rule has a significant interaction only with voting access for non-citizen residents. These results confirm hypotheses 3b and 3d: the policy capacity of central governments does moderate the effects of local government access and capacity on protest.

Table 7. Interactions between central and local institutional effects on urban protest levels during the great recession

	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
Constant	9.682***	7.496*	6.000***	7.690	3.164
	(3.153)	(4.339)	(2.127)	(4.756)	(2.050)
GDP (PPS/inhabitant)	0.006***	0.005**	0.005***	0.005**	0.005**
	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)	(0.002)
Population	0.147***	0.150***	0.149***	0.151***	0.152***
	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.018)	(0.019)
Young population (%)	0.018	0.017	0.019	0.020	0.024
	(0.019)	(0.019)	(0.018)	(0.019)	(0.019)
Unemployment (%)	0.020	0.018	0.018	0.018	0.015
	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.014)	(0.015)	(0.014)
Population qualified at tertiary level (%)	0.022***	0.023***	0.023***	0.023***	0.020***
	(0.007)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)	(0.008)
National capital	1.448***	1.528***	1.458***	1.478***	1.410***
	(0.244)	(0.245)	(0.246)	(0.243)	(0.248)
No. of parties	0.126	0.091	0.099	0.076	0.075
	(0.077)	(0.083)	(0.076)	(0.095)	(0.089)
Eurozone membership	-0.086	0.297	0.369	0.332	0.192
	(0.286)	(0.327)	(0.305)	(0.370)	(0.341)
Recent democracy	-0.435	0.360	0.476	0.544	0.217
	(0.402)	(0.394)	(0.348)	(0.431)	(0.392)
Interactive rule (mean)	-0.312	-0.528	-0.417	-0.362	-0.004
	(0.385)	(0.515)	(0.277)	(0.520)	(0.253)
Self-rule(mean)	-0.452**	-0.297	-0.267**	-0.425*	-0.247**
	(0.189)	(0.205)	(0.109)	(0.229)	(0.110)
Quality of government	-0.169***				
	(0.047)				
Quality of government*Interactive rule	0.007				
	(0.006)				
Quality of government*Self-rule	0.006**				
	(0.003)				
Voting access for resident citizens		-13.041**			
		(6.461)			
Voting access for resident citizens*Interactive rule		0.893			
		(0.762)			
Voting access for resident citizens*Self-rule		0.385			
		(0.290)			
Voting access for non-citizen residents			-10.104***		
			(2.796)		
Voting access for non-citizen residents*Interactive rule			0.596*		
			(0.360)		
Voting access for non-citizen residents*Self-rule			0.327**		
			(0.141)		

Candidature access for resident citizens				-11.823*	
				(6.592)	
Candidature access for resident citizens *Interactive rule				0.576	
				(0.732)	
Candidature access for resident citizens *Self-rule				0.508*	
				(0.307)	
Candidature access for non-citizen residents					-6.457**
					(2.826)
Candidature access for non-citizen residents*Interactive rule					0.154
					(0.386)
Candidature access for non-citizen residents*Self-rule					0.291**
					(0.139)
lnalpha	-0.252***	-0.242***	-0.245***	-0.246***	-0.243***
	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)	(0.081)
Var. cons. country	0.143**	0.210**	0.153**	0.261**	0.216**
	(0.066)	(0.093)	(0.073)	(0.103)	(0.092)
N	386	386	386	386	386
N groups	26	26	26	26	26
Log likelihood	-1157.800	-1161.976	-1159.252	-1163.033	-1161.856

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Standard errors in parentheses. Multilevel binomial regression models

In Appendix 4 I illustrate the interactions terms in each model, using as factors the minimum and maximum integer values of the variables interacted. Fig. 5 shows that that the minimum values of self-rule in the sample interact with low quality of government scores very steeply to decrease the marginal predicted mean effect on protest. Cities with low local government quality incur much higher levels of protest than cities with high local government quality, but as their level of self-rule grows, the two curves approach and end up intersecting. Cities in countries with self-rule scores higher than 22 (75th percentile and above) behave exactly the opposite: they protest more if they have a high-quality government than if they have a low capacity one. Hence the demobilizing effect of local government capacity is reduced by an increase in self-rule (which signifies a decrease in central government capacity), eventually wringing it into a mobilizing effect at very high levels of self-rule. In substantive terms, in higher levels of decentralization, lower local government capacity leads to more protest. In very high levels of decentralization, however, this relation is reversed.

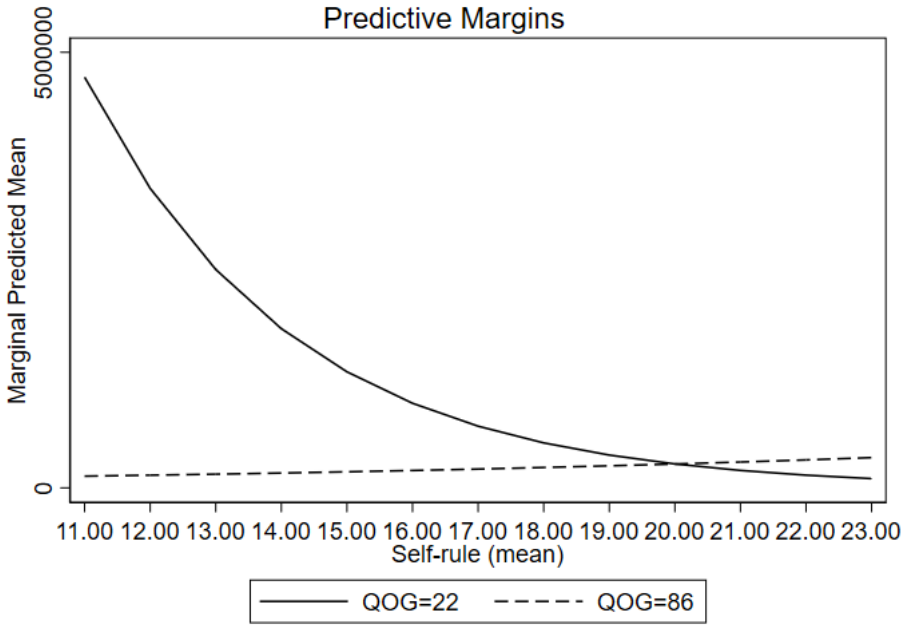

Fig. 5 Impact of local government quality by self-rule on protest levels

In the case of candidature rights (Fig 6 and 7), we are presented with very similar pictures, except the inversion of effects occurs earlier. In low levels of decentralization, low candidature rights for citizens lead to more protest, but in medium to very high levels of decentralization, it is the higher access to candidature that increases mobilization. This suggests that competitiveness and saliency of local elections are linked to protest levels. In the case of non-citizen local residents, the switching threshold of decentralization is higher, but the predicted curves respect the same patterns.

These results allow me to accept Hypothesis 3B, if access to local governments is measured as candidature rights and not voting rights. Thus, the calming effects on protest triggered by the opportunities to participate through elections in local politics is turned into a political opportunity structure for protest by more local self-rule – and hence by a weaker central state. Interactive rule, on the other hand, appears to moderate only the effects of voting access for non-citizen residents, which is not enough to accept the hypotheses on any moderation effects of interactive rule, or access to central state.

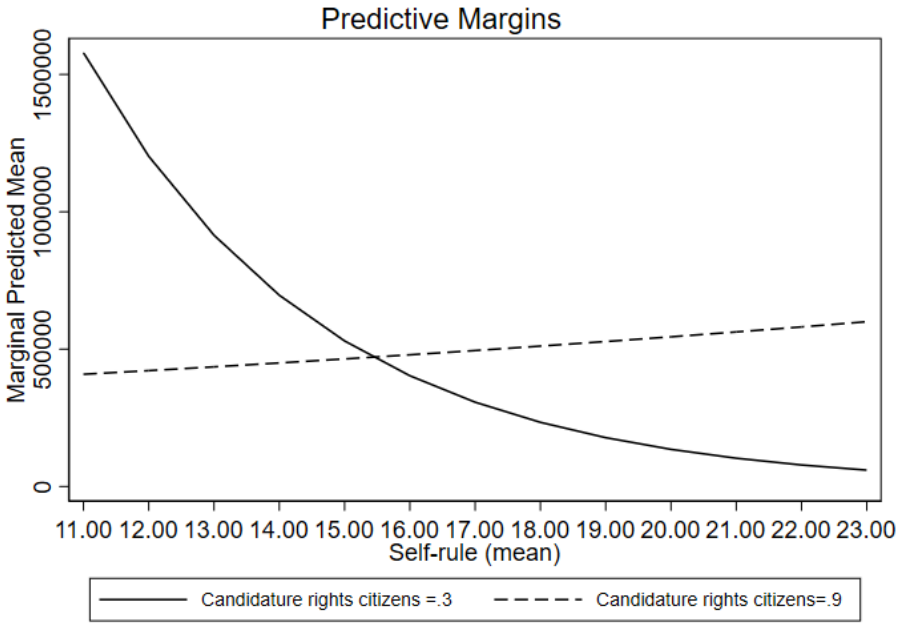

Fig. 6 Impact of citizen candidature rights by self-rule on protest levels

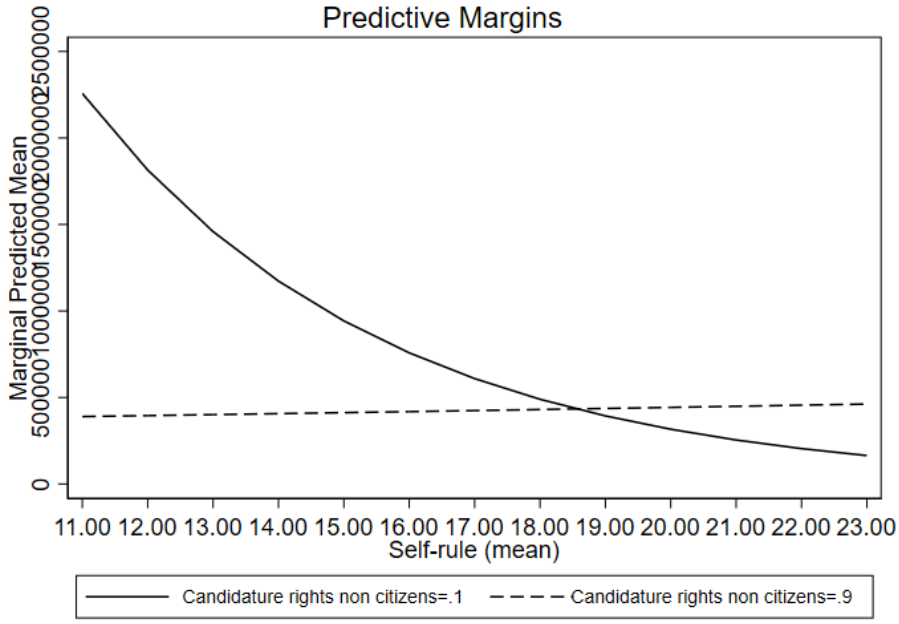

Fig. 7 Impact of non-citizen candidature rights by self-rule on protest levels

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Aiming to explore if and how decentralization influences the levels of protest across European cities in times of crisis, this study developed a multilevel, bi-dimensional model of political opportunity structures that encompass the features of both the decentralizing and of the local levels government. Starting from propositions developed by political process theory primarily in the context of movements of affluence that occur in the absence of major crisis, I tested a number of arguments using data on the levels of protest that occurred in a substantially different context, the great economic recession of 2008-2015. First, I seeked to see if, in the presence of resources, increased access to government institutions and decreased government capacity increase the levels of protest, and if this theory is valid across levels of government. A second objective was to understand if the effects of the two levels of government interact, namely if decentralization moderates the way protest responds to local institutional factors.

I found that differences in decentralization levels measured as a stable system feature (by calculating the average over the period observed) do not have statistically significant effects on collective action. Conversely, process measurements - both an increase in national institutional access and in government capacity during the crisis - have significant but diverging effects on collective action. This is consistent with conceptualizations of decentralization that emphasize its dynamic, evolving nature, whether that process is transparent and institutionalized or silent, triggered by quiet adjustments to policy scope and resource ratio, for example, or by supranational policies or investment that allow local jurisdictions to exercise further independence from the central government (Schneider 2003).

Only a dip in central government capacity, as reflected by a rise in local self-rule, results in increased protest in cities. A spike in vertical access to central government policymaking

during the crisis years appears consistently to have a reducing effect of protest levels. While this finding goes against POS predictions, it could be that in the crisis context this factor operated through different mechanisms. For example, the increased chance to have a say in national politics might have sheltered cities from budget cuts or loss of autonomy, reducing grievances. In his analysis of regional protest, Brown (2009) also found that access to upper levels of decision-making took the edge off upheaval.

Surprisingly, the coefficients of the variables that measure decentralization as a stable feature are exactly opposite to those of the variables indicating change in interactive rule and self-rule. A possible interpretation is that stable institutional features – the status quo - may be perceived differently by claim makers as opposed to their sudden change, such as the changes in territorial decentralization that occurred during the great recession. For example, cities in weak states may have lower levels of protest as the cost of collective action is not justified compared to the high number of more practical institutional access, but a spike in local self-rule may be perceived either as an opportunity for reform by the groups dissatisfied with the status quo or as a threat by groups aligned with central politics.

Once the local institutional factors were added to the analysis, the mobilizing effect of decreasing or stagnant central government capacity disappeared, rendered non-significant by the stronger mobilizing effect of decreasing local government capacity. Many authors have claimed that local institutions, by being closer to individuals, may lead to more participation, as they are more closely monitored and held accountable by residents (Kriesi et al. 2020, Kriesi et al. 1995, Crook and Manor 1998, Schneider 2003, Treisman 2002). A special emphasis is placed on the implications of financial decentralization, such as the collection of local revenues from local taxes, which offers taxpayers a strong incentive to monitor the performance of local elected officials. If political opportunity structures act through the mechanisms of perception (Kriesi et al. 1995), then changes in the performance of local governments are likely easier to grasp and seize as a political opportunity structure.

Furthermore, examining the interactions between the two levels of government showed that they were statistically significant. For the most part, decreasing central government capacity and low local government capacity bring each other's mobilizing effects down. This goes against my prediction about their interaction. Very low central government capacity, however, brings mobilization driven by local lack of capacity down so much that it is surpassed by

mobilization encouraged by high government capacity, which suggests that in highly decentralized countries more local government capacity results in more protest.

High levels of decentralization also twist the relation of local elections and protest, turning increased rights to candidature from deterrents into opportunities for more contentious action. Overall, high levels of decentralization reverse the sense of the effects of local institutions on protest, and it is not always in the expected direction. This suggests that applying theory across various levels of government should be done carefully. Exploring partial mediation effects of local institutions could also help clarify the multi-level political opportunity structure.

This research extends the current literature on decentralization and protest by exploring how local political institutions fit into the political opportunity structures of decentralized states. While previous research has focused on decentralization to regions, this study looks at a level of government that is touted to be more relevant to political participation, as it is closer to individuals. Moreover, by adopting a meso-level perspective on protest it focuses on collective action instead of individual participation, which is a rarer undertake in the extant literature. Among the limitations of this undertake were the availability of data and the use of sources that might have a considerable bias, such as subnational counts of protest events during the economic crisis.

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APPENDIX 1

Local Autonomy Index coding scheme

Self-rule Index

Institutional depth	*The extent to which local government is formally autonomous and can choose the tasks they want to perform* Additional coding instructions: Whether a municipality is responsible for, the different tasks and/or has the financial resources is not the question here. Indeed, the coding has to comply with the legal framework in the respective countries. This means that the coding refers to the status of local government according to the constitution and other relevant legislation; if there are deeply contradictory regulations, this should be reflected in the coding and also mentioned in the notes.	**0-3**	0 local authorities can only perform mandated tasks 1 local authorities can choose from a very narrow, predefined scope of tasks 2 local authorities are explicitly autonomous and can choose from a wide scope of predefined tasks 3 local authorities are free to take on any new tasks (residual competencies) not assigned to other levels of government
Policy scope*	*Range of functions (tasks) where local government is effectively involved in the delivery of the services (be it through their own financial resources and/or through their own staff)* Additional coding instructions: Here we want to know whether the municipalities are involved in the provision of these tasks and services. How much they can decide is part of the next question. Half points (0.5) can be used if local government is only partly involved (i.e. below).	**0-4**	Not at all; partly; fully responsible: Education (0-2) Social assistance (0-2) Health (0-2) Land-use (0-2) Public transport (0-1) Housing (0-1) Police (0-1) Caring functions (0-1)
Effective political discretion*	*The extent to which local government has real influence (can decide on service aspects) over these functions* Additional coding instructions: half points (0.5) can be used if local government can only partly decide (i.e. below).	**0-4**	No, some, or real authoritative decision-making in: Education (0-2) Social assistance (0-2) Health (0-2) Land-use (0-2) Public transport (0-1) Housing (0-1) Police (0-1) Caring functions (0-1)

Fiscal autonomy	*The extent to which local government can independently tax its population* Additional coding instructions: For this dimension the level of contribution of the tax for local authorities (how much the tax actually yields) has to be clarified in the explanations.	**0-4**	0 local authorities do not set base and rate of any tax 1 local authorities set base or rate of minor taxes 2 local authorities set rate of one major tax (personal income, corporate, value added, property or sales tax) under restrictions stipulated by higher levels of government 3 local authorities set rate of one major tax (personal income, corporate, value added, property or sales tax) with few or no restrictions 4 local authorities set base and rate of more than one major tax (personal income, corporate, value added, property or sales tax)
Financial transfer system	*The proportion of unconditional financial transfers to total financial transfers received by the local government*	**0-3**	0 conditional transfers are dominant (unconditional = 0-40% of total transfers) 1 there is largely a balance between conditional and unconditional financial transfers (unconditional = 40-60%) 2 unconditional financial transfers are dominant (unconditional = 60-80%) 3 nearly all transfers are unconditional (unconditional = 80-100%)
Financial self-reliance	*The proportion of local government revenues derived from own/local sources (taxes, fees, charges)* Additional coding instructions: A shared tax collected by central government and over which local government has no influence, has to be regarded as financial transfer. Please, make a note in your country report if this is the case.	**0-3**	0 own sources yield less than 10% of total revenues 1 own sources yield 10-25% 2 own sources yield 25-50% 3 own sources yield more than 50%
Borrowing autonomy	*The extent to which local government can borrow*	**0-3**	0 local authorities cannot borrow 1 local authorities may borrow under prior authorization by higher-level governments and with one or more of the following restrictions: a. golden rule (e. g. no borrowing to cover current account deficits) b. no foreign borrowing or borrowing from the regional or central bank only c. no borrowing above a ceiling, absolute level of subnational indebtedness, maximum debt-service ratio for new borrowing or debt brake mechanism d. borrowing is limited to specific purposes 2 local authorities may borrow without prior authorization and under one or more of a), b), c) or d) 3 local authorities may borrow without restriction imposed by higher-level authorities
Organisational autonomy	*The extent to which local government is free to decide about its own organisation and electoral system*	**0-4**	Local Executive and election system: 0 local executives are appointed by higher-level authorities and local authorities cannot determine core elements of their political systems (electoral districts, number of seats, electoral system)

			1 executives are elected by the municipal council or directly by citizens 2 executives are elected by the citizens or the council and the municipality may decide some elements of the electoral system Staff and local structures: Local authorities: Hire their own staff (0-0.5) — Fix the salary of their employees (0-0.5) Choose their organisational structure (0-0.5) — Establish legal entities and municipal enterprises (0-0.5)
Self-rule		**0-28**	The overall self-rule enjoyed by local government in X country (the sum of all the indicators above)

Interactive rule Index

Legal protection	*Existence of constitutional or legal means to assert local autonomy* This dimension is related to the § 4.1 and 11 in the European Charter of Local Self-Government	**0-3**	0 no legal remedy for the protection of local autonomy exists 1 constitutional clauses or other statutory regulations protect local self-government 2 local authorities have recourse to the judicial system to settle disputes with higher authorities (e.g. through constitutional courts, administrative courts or tribunals, or ordinary courts) 3 remedies of types 1 and 2 above, plus other means that protect local autonomy such as e.g. listing of all municipalities in the constitution or the impossibility to force them to merge
Administrative supervision	*Unobtrusive administrative supervision of local government* This dimension is related to the § 8 in the European Charter of Local Self-Government	**0-3**	0 administrative supervision reviews legality as well as merits/expediency of municipal decisions 1 administrative supervision covers details of accounts and spending priorities 2 administrative supervision only aims at ensuring compliance with law (legality of local decisions) 3 there is very limited administrative supervision
Central or regional access	*To what extent local authorities are consulted to influence higher level governments' policy-making*	**0-3**	0 local authorities are never consulted by higher level governments and there are no formal mechanisms of representation 1 local authorities are consulted and/or have access to higher-level decision-making through formal representation but influence is limited 2 local authorities are regularly consulted through permanent consultation channels and have substantial influence 3 local authorities are either consulted or have access to higher-level decision-making through formal representation; and substantial influence
Interactive rule		**0-9**	The overall interactiverule enjoyed by local government in X country (the sum of all the three indicators above)

APPENDIX 2

Summary of data sources

Variable	Source	Spatial coverage	Time coverage
Protest events Number of political parties	POLCON	27 EU states Iceland, Norway Switzerland	2000-2015
Decentralization (Self rule and shared rule indexes of local autonomy)	LAI Dataset	28 EU states Iceland Norway Liechtenstein Switzerland Albania Macedonia, Moldova Georgia, Serbia, Turkey Ukraine	1990-2014
Access to local decision making (local electoral rights for citizen and non-citizen residents)	ELECLAW 5.1 Dataset	28 EU states	2013, 2015
Local policy capacity (government quality index)	European QoG Index – EQI	27 EU states 24 EU states	2010, 2013
Availability and distribution of resources	Eurostat - Urban Audit Database	27 EU states Norway Switzerland Turkey	1991-present
Economic development (GDP p.c., PPS)	Eurostat	All countries	2000-2018

APPENDIX 3

Correlation of city level variables

	pps	pop	unemp	youth	tertiar	capital
pps	1.0000					
pop	0.3738* 0.0000	1.0000				
unemp	-0.3880* 0.0000	-0.0456 0.3714	1.0000			
youth	0.1858* 0.0002	0.1371* 0.0070	-0.0522 0.3068	1.0000		
tertiar	0.3758* 0.0000	0.2300* 0.0000	-0.1866* 0.0002	0.3794* 0.0000	1.0000	
capital	0.3458* 0.0000	0.5138* 0.0000	-0.1070* 0.0355	0.2169* 0.0000	0.2033* 0.0001	1.0000

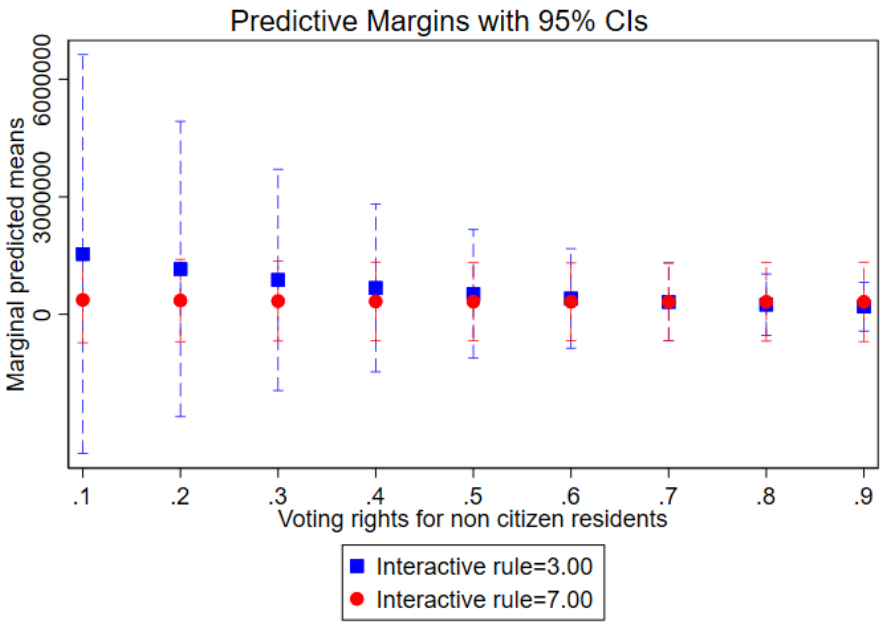
Correlation of country level variables

	gol_enep	eurozone	postcom	srm	irm	src	irc
gol_enep	1.0000						
eurozone	0.0610 0.2315	1.0000					
postcom	0.1407* 0.0056	-0.5862* 0.0000	1.0000				
srm	0.3337* 0.0000	0.4003* 0.0000	-0.0489 0.3375	1.0000			
irm	-0.3218* 0.0000	0.0288 0.5727	0.1647* 0.0012	0.1384* 0.0065	1.0000		
src	0.3389*	0.0184	0.0319	0.1407*	0.3123*	1.0000	

	0.0000	0.7186	0.5319	0.0056	0.0000		
irc	0.0552	0.1022*	-0.2377*	0.0409	0.1923*	0.4227*	1.0000
	0.2791	0.0449	0.0000	0.4227	0.0001	0.0000	
srpc	0.0949	0.5328*	-0.1806*	0.3400*	0.5047*	0.5562*	0.1441*
	0.0626	0.0001	0.0004	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0046
irpc	-0.1647*	-0.2840*	0.4050*	0.1601*	0.2402*	0.0523	0.1062*
	0.0012	0.0001	0.0000	0.0016	0.0000	0.3057	0.0371
vrclo	-0.0085	0.5292*	-0.5411*	0.3652*	-0.0374	-0.2929*	0.0987
	0.8676	0.0001	0.0000	0.0000	0.4643	0.0000	0.0527
crclo	0.0989	0.3516*	-0.4715*	0.2838*	0.0857	0.4013*	0.0734
	0.0522	0.0001	0.0000	0.0000	0.0929	0.0000	0.1502
vnclo	0.3056*	-0.1542*	-0.1178*	-0.2748*	-0.5196*	-0.1706*	-0.2216*
	0.0000	0.0025	0.0206	0.0000	0.0000	0.0008	0.0000
cnclo	0.1498*	-0.1397*	-0.2293*	-0.2605*	-0.3253*	0.0272	0.0464
	0.0032	0.0061	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.5947	0.3636
qog_100	0.2292*	0.1801*	-0.6236*	0.1246*	-0.3751*	-0.1669*	0.0768
	0.0000	0.0005	0.0000	0.0143	0.0000	0.0010	0.1320

	1.0000		vrclo	crclo	vnclo	cnclo	qog_100
srpc	1.0000						
irpc	-0.2133*	1.0000					
	0.0000						
vrclo	-0.0767	0.0248	1.0000				
	0.1327	0.6278					
crclo	0.2567*	-0.0018	0.4759*	1.0000			
	0.0000	0.9723	0.0000				
vnclo	-0.4258*	-0.2628*	0.1768*	0.0822	1.0000		
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0005	0.1070			
cnclo	-0.3059*	0.2351*	0.1593*	0.1801*	0.8646*	1.0000	
	0.0000	0.0000	0.0017	0.0004	0.0000		
qog_100	-0.1906*	-0.1945*	0.5154*	0.3511*	0.4364*	0.4304*	1.0000
	0.0002	0.0001	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	0.0000	

APPENDIX 4


Predictive Margins with 95% CIs
Marginal predicted means
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6000000
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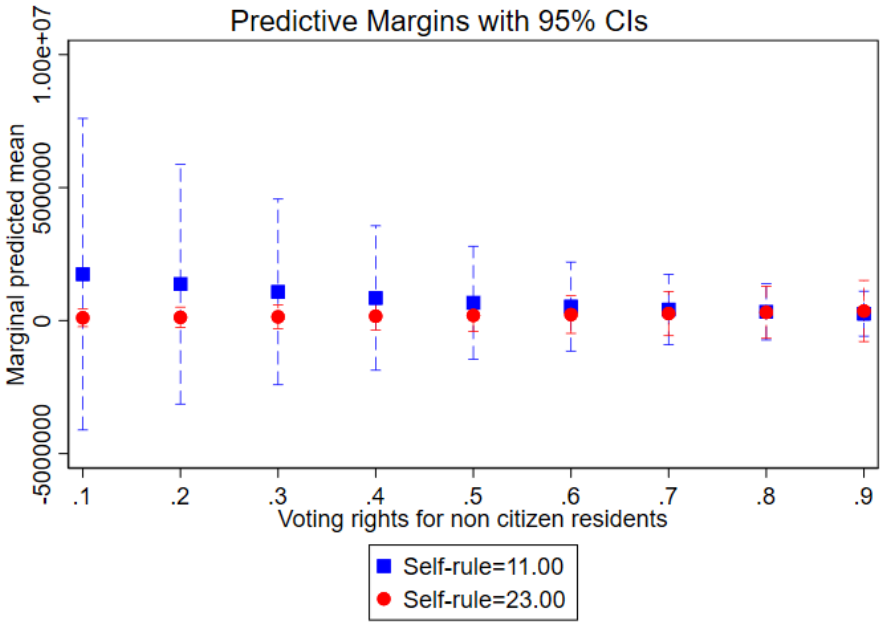
.2
.3
.4
.5
.6
.7
.8
.9
Voting rights for non citizen residents
Interactive rule=3.00
Interactive rule=7.00


Predictive Margins with 95% CIs
Marginal predicted mean
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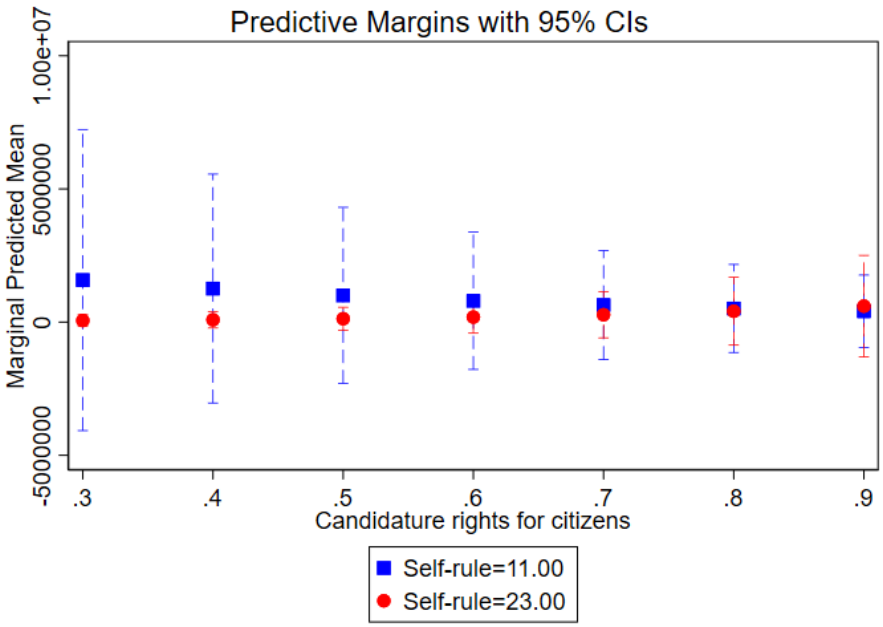
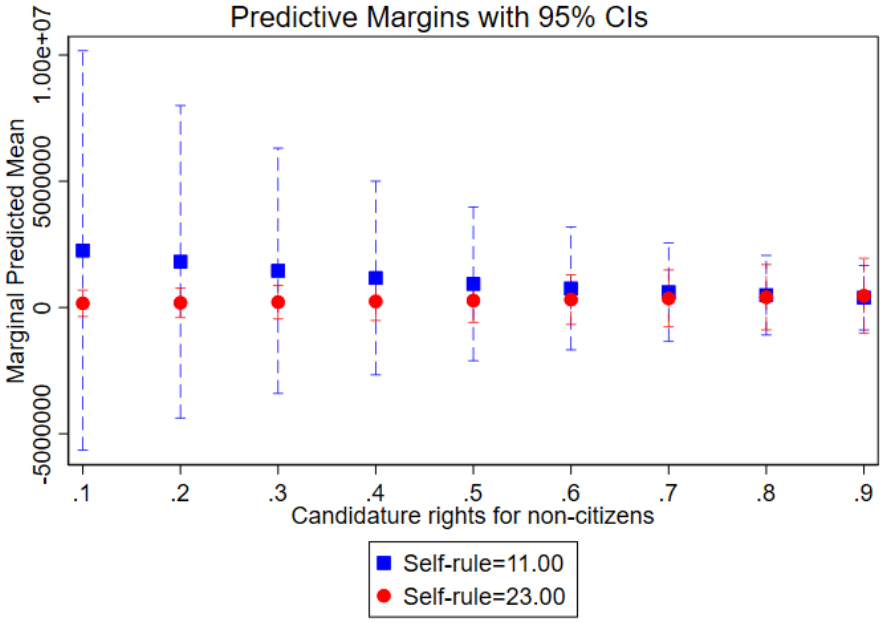
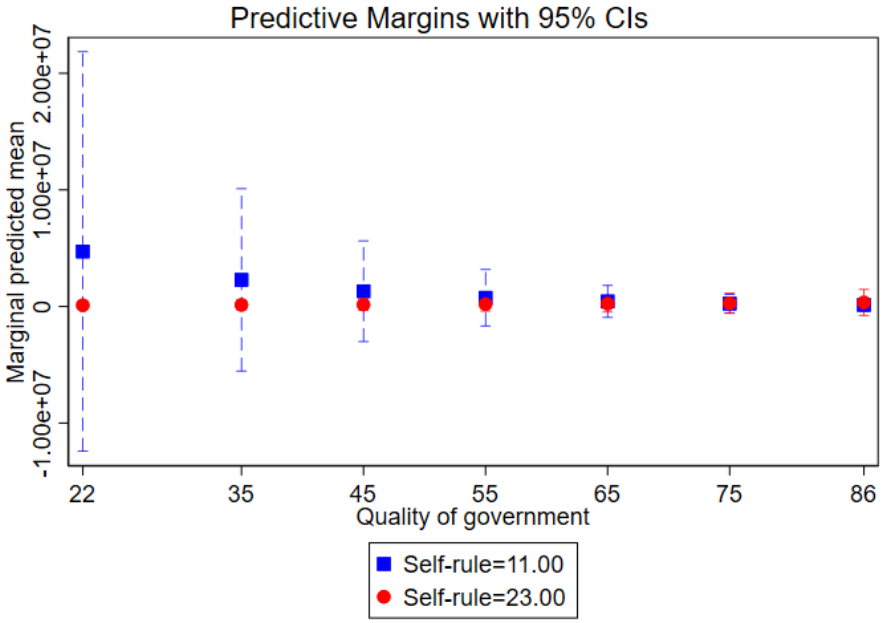
0
5000000
1.00e+07
.1
.2
.3
.4
.5
.6
.7
.8
.9
Voting rights for non citizen residents
Self-rule=11.00
Self-rule=23.00


Predictive Margins with 95% CIs
Marginal Predicted Mean
-5000000
0
5000000
1.00e+07
.3
.4
.5
.6
.7
.8
.9
Candidature rights for citizens
Self-rule=11.00
Self-rule=23.00


Predictive Margins with 95% CIs
Marginal Predicted Mean
-5000000
0
5000000
1.00e+07
.1
.2
.3
.4
.5
.6
.7
.8
.9
Candidature rights for non-citizens
Self-rule=11.00
Self-rule=23.00


Predictive Margins with 95% CIs
Marginal predicted mean
-1.00e+07
0
1.00e+07
2.00e+07
22
35
45
55
65
75
86
Quality of government
Self-rule=11.00
Self-rule=23.00