The Influence of Political Parties on Policy Coordination

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Despite an increasing interest in party-state relations, the functions political parties as organizations fulfill in the government apparatus are rarely theorized or empirically examined. Instead of focusing on citizen demands toward parties, this article focuses on the demands of government. It argues that party organizational linkages help integrate an increasingly complex government apparatus. To substantiate this claim, it analyzes the impact of party linkages on policy coordination within and across subnational governments in the United States, Canada, and Switzerland. The analysis shows that: (1) the extent to which processes within different policy fields are connected—policy integration—is shaped by the relative strength of party organizational linkages rather than being a mere reflection of institutional divisions and (2) depending on the party configurations predominantly governing at the subnational level, policy integration within subnational governments either facilitates intergovernmental policy coordination or accelerates cross-jurisdictional conflict between them.

Beyond Representation: Political Parties and the Challenges of Modern Government

While a lot has been said about parties' weakening representative functions and, with it, the viability of party government in Western democracies (Mair 2005, 2007), this article is interested in an often overlooked yet nonetheless important issue: the actual role that parties as organized actors play in government. The scope of government activities has considerably increased over the last decades. Accordingly, parties face an intensified need to simultaneously handle a variety of interdependent policies within an internally differentiated government apparatus composed of functionally specific as well as generalist jurisdictions. This development makes it necessary to approach parties as decision-making organizations rather than as vehicles for citizen representation (Blondel 1995, 128–129; Cansino 1995a, 124; Sartori 2005) and to conceptualize

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their role in light of the functional pressures generated by public office to capture what underlies parties' "operational control of government" (Rose 1969, 413).

The article identifies policy integration defined as the capacity to connect processes within and across the various policy fields governments are in charge of as one core function of parties. Party organizational linkages facilitate communication and coordination between the different decision-making arenas each government apparatus is composed of. These linkages are rooted in a shared organizational affiliation between office-holders and are thereby able to cross-cut functional divides. On that basis, this article puts forward two main arguments. First, unlike expert government or candidate-centered politics, party government[1]—through the provision of organizational linkages—helps public office-holders to cope with intensifying coordination pressures by connecting the variety of arenas party representatives have to operate in. Second, the connectedness of arenas as such does not necessarily assure efficient policy coordination between them. Parties might either use the given connections between decision-making arenas to support intergovernmental policy coordination or—for strategic reasons—they might reinforce cross-jurisdictional conflict instead.

Essentially, parties' respective influence on coordination varies with the dimension of political parties we look at. While *party organizational linkages*, in principle, facilitate coordination (by integrating various decision-making arenas), these linkages can (depending on the dominant *party-political dynamics*) become "carriers" of conflict. The latter is prevented in systems, in which these arenas—because of weakly organized parties—remain unconnected in the first place.

To substantiate these two arguments, I theoretically specify how party linkage mechanisms affect the integration of increasingly specialized processes and how policy integration, in turn, affects the efficiency of coordination. After having developed two sets of hypotheses and introduced measurements for the core concepts, the empirical analysis focuses on one particular type of coordination: policy coordination within and between subnational governments in American, Swiss, and Canadian federalism. While federal systems' fragmentation and complexity intensify the pressure toward cross-jurisdictional coordination in general, compared with vertical federal-state relations, horizontal relations are less hierarchical. Consequently, the level of policy integration in this area is likely to vary with the government constellations involved rather than reflecting external constraints or power asymmetries between them. The findings indicate that policy integration is more strongly shaped by party organizational linkages than institutionally driven and that the consequences of policy integration for coordination vary with the dominant cabinet type operating on the subnational level, that is, depend on intragovernmental dynamics.

Defining Party Linkages and Policy Integration

To capture parties' role when engaged in "governing" (rather than "representing" or "legislating"), Lawson conceptualized parties as agencies that set up linkages, a mediating process connecting citizens and policy makers (Lawson 1980, 3). Schwartz further emphasized the importance of linkages between party subunits (Schwartz 2005, 48). Similarly, Peters argued in an article on Belgium that parties are indispensable to establish "cohesion" in this highly fragmented governance system (Peters 2006, 1081). Parties counteract fragmentation and reduce complexity. They *integrate* government processes irrespective of functional divides generated by increasing specialization and functional differentiation, a party function that is often overlooked, although Sjöblom (1987, 176) has emphasized that the capacity to counteract specialization by coordinating across policies is a main function of parties.

Party linkages capture a shared organizational affiliation between office-holders, connections rooted in office-holders' belonging to and common socialization within a membership organization that also operates outside public institutions and thereby creates connections between its office-holding members that cross-cut functional divides. Being forced to run elections across a wider range of issues, party politicians need to adopt a generalist outlook, which in itself, once occupying government posts, facilitates communication and coordination between decision-making arenas. A shared organizational affiliation is expected to support these processes, even at times when actors' opinions on the specific policies at stake differ. Specialists, in contrast, tend to reinforce complexity by emphasizing the commonality of expertise shared by small circles without providing incentives to maintain communication across these circles.

Policy integration is defined as the systematic interconnectedness of processes within and across policy fields (policy fields that one or several governments can be in charge of depending on the type of system we look at). Looking at *integration within the same policy field*, the question is whether and how the political level and the administrative level link and interact (Peters 1998). Looking at *integration across policy fields* instead, it is crucial whether actors operating in a policy field (who might belong to the same or different government units) are informed about, can be affected by, and respond to processes in other policy fields or whether processes in different policy fields evolve in isolation (Metcalfe 1994).

Theoretical Expectations: The Sources and Consequences of Policy Integration

Based on these two definitions, this article argues that *policy integration is organizationally generated by party linkages*. However, it is equally plausible that policy integration merely reflects the given level of intragovernmental fragmentation—thus, is *institutionally generated*.[2] An approach considering

the strength of party linkages as decisive would expect that in political systems, in which party linkages are strong, policy integration should be strong as well (irrespective of the nature of the institutional setting). An approach considering levels of institutional fragmentation as decisive would expect that in an institutionally highly fragmented system, policy integration should be low (irrespective of the strength of party linkages).

To examine which of the two approaches holds, we have to identify situations, in which coordination is neither externally imposed nor rooted in strong power asymmetries between the interaction partners. This is the case given "loose coupling" between different decision-making arenas, which refers to processes that are *nonhierarchical*. In such configurations, each government unit involved can resort to unilateralism or engage in close cooperation, if it wishes to do so, while none of them can veto decisions of the other nor impose coordination on them (Benz 2004, 135; see also Schwartz 2005, 44). This is essential because *if coordination is voluntary, policy integration is likely to vary with the characteristics of the actors involved (be those institutional or party-political)*—instead of being a function of externally imposed coordination requirements or constraints.

The study of intergovernmental relations (IGR) in federal systems is particularly suitable. Not only are federal systems characterized by high complexity and fragmentation, which makes coordination pressures (horizontal or vertical) particularly intense (Hooghe and Marks 2003, 239). The constitutional entrenchment of competences gives governments wide leeway to respond to this pressure according to their own preferences. This is particularly the case for *horizontal coordination between subnational governments* (Metcalfe 1997), which represent a particularly clear-cut instance of "loose coupling" (Benz 2004). This is less the case for vertical federal-state relations, which tend to be more hierarchical: think of a federal government using its superior spending power to pressure economically vulnerable, subnational governments into adopting certain policies.[3]

Thus, while policy integration as a concept (as the concept of party linkage) is relevant to processes *within* the same governmental level as well as *across* levels of government,[4] the deliberate focus of the empiric analysis on the *coordination among and within subnational governments operating in federal systems* allows us to pin down the impact of party linkages on policy integration with particular clarity and distinguish this impact more reliably from alternative influences.

Moving on to the impact of policy integration itself, we may not equate *high levels of integration with effective coordination* because integration can be used by actors for different purposes. The dominant goals that drive party actors—who aim at re-election—are influenced by the particular government configuration they are embedded in. This leads to the following expectations: if a system is composed of ideologically distinct, one-party cabinets facing competitive elections and pursuing different policy goals, intergovernmental bodies are likely to become carriers of conflict because

governments will exploit IGR to improve their electoral fortune. Coalition governments, especially oversized ones, face only limited competitive pressure and are less ideologically distinct. In such a constellation, policy integration is likely to support effective coordination.

Indicators: Measuring Party Linkages, Policy Integration, and Their Consequences

To pin down the impact of party linkages on the nature of coordination processes within and across subnational governments more particularly, we need to operationalize the two broad theoretical concepts "party linkage" and "policy integration."

Control over candidate selection is a widely used measure of party organizational strength, which is helpful to capture basic cross-national differences. To capture *party linkages* at work within subnational governments,[5] however, the following interparty and intraparty mechanisms measure them more immediately: (1) meetings between ministers/senior officials affiliated to the different parties constituting a government coalition (be it in the whole cabinet, cabinet committees, or on an informal level), (2) meetings between ministers/senior officials belonging to the same party and office-holders' meetings with party officials, (3) the overlap of personnel in party and public office, and (4) finally, meetings of members of the executive with Members of Parliament (MPs) (e.g., Blondel 1995; Cansino 1995b).

To examine the impact of party linkage mechanisms on the integration of policy fields, it is paramount to find *indicators for policy integration* clearly separate from these mechanisms. This article focuses on how interdependencies across issues and policy fields are addressed in the stage of policy-formulation by subnational governments that operate in the same set of competence areas. The following indicators for *horizontal policy integration* can be derived from Metcalfe's work on the management of interdependent policies across state administrations (Metcalfe 1994, 1997), which specifies procedures of coordination and levels of coordination potential linked to these:

1. The *organizational scope of decision-making arenas* in charge of cross-jurisdictional, horizontal coordination dominant in a system. Arenas can be predominantly issue-specific or sector-wide.[6]
2. The *strength of sector-wide bodies*—following Metcalfe's scale of policy coordination capturing levels of coordination (Metcalfe 1994, 281)—are indicated by their function. They can serve information-exchange, consultation, the avoidance of policy divergences and, moving to more demanding horizontal processes, the development of non-binding and binding agreements (leaving out higher levels on Metcalfe's scale presupposing third party [usually central-level] intervention).

3. The presence of *cross-sectoral arrangements* to assure an overall communication and coordination bridging divides across the full range of functional responsibilities.

These indicators capture policy integration because actors' investments into such infrastructures tend to have long-term effects by favoring certain modes of interaction, and therefore can be expected to reflect the overall rationale along which processes in a system evolve.

Furthermore, if processes within different policy fields are connected, we should observe the regular spillover of dynamics from one policy field to another (irrespective of the scope of structures), which leads us to the fourth indicator:

4. The *responsiveness* of activities and decisions in one policy field to processes and decisions in another. This can mean *strategic maneuvering*: a minister holding up an issue in intergovernmental meetings in order to strengthen a cabinet colleague negotiating in another policy area, for instance. Alternatively, it can lead to the set up of *procedural linkages* between these decision-making arenas (e.g., regular meetings between actors in charge of different policy fields) as captured by Metcalfe (1994, 1997).

These two very different manifestations of cross-sectoral connectedness show that *policy integration may not be equated with effective coordination.* Policy integration as interpreted in this article indicates a flow of communication and mutual feedback but *leaves open toward which goals interaction is directed*. Effective coordination is only one possible outcome of policy integration. Party-political actors might deliberately upset processes in other policy fields—if it is politically beneficial. In IGR, the *successful avoidance of contradictory actions and conflicts across policy fields* (i.e., efficient coordination) becomes most visible in procedures for conflict resolution (e.g., between different intergovernmental bodies).[7] Precise and substantial coordination agreements between subnational governments are able to serve as a proxy for the effectiveness of coordination.

Case Selection

The theoretical expectations imply that to capture the sources and the consequences of policy integration, respectively, we need to contrast (1) two regimes where parties differ in their organizational strength, while governments are similarly fragmented in institutional terms, and (2) two regimes in both of which policy integration is a feature, yet the government types operating on the subnational level are most different.

The USA, Switzerland, and Canada have been selected since, among the OECD countries their subnational governments are strongest in terms of

taxing power (Joumard and Kongsrud 2003) and possess considerable legislative authority (Thorlakson 2003). They have the capacity to engage in policy coordination beyond their own borders but can equally refrain from it. In all three systems, regional parties are stronger on the regional than national level (Thorlakson 2009), which prevents a bias introduced by a focus on subnational interaction. Simultaneously, they allow for two pair-wise comparisons adequate to examine the theoretical claims developed above.

Why to Expect Policy Integration in Switzerland, Not in the USA

The comparison of *Switzerland* and the *USA* is directed toward exploring the sources of policy integration. Both are nonparliamentary polities that are characterized by a high degree of institutional fragmentation within subnational governments: Their executives are elected directly, which institutionally separates them from their legislatures. In Switzerland, each cantonal minister is elected separately, which leads to a high degree of intraexecutive fragmentation often labeled as "departmentalism" (Vatter 2002). In the American states, the governor, the head of the executive, is directly elected. Yet at the same time, agency heads are often elected as well or appointed by independent boards (Dye 1985; Esman 1984, 29; O'Toole 2000). Thus, in addition to an executive-legislative divide, the institutional fragmentation of the cantons and the American states shows also within their executives.

Simultaneously, American parties are organizationally much weaker than Swiss parties being unable to control candidate selection. Before running for state election, candidates have to succeed in a primary contest. Candidates are selected by ordinary voters, not by a party leadership (Jewell and Morehouse 2000). Swiss parties, in contrast, are involved in the nomination and appointment of candidates (Blondel 1995, 134; Vatter 2002). While the U.S. literature highlights the relative differences in the strength of state parties reflecting the type of primary adopted[8] (Jewell and Morehouse 2000, 3–5), scholars simultaneously recognize that "... the differences among types of primaries are much less important than the fact that our parties have primaries at all" (Janda, Berry, and Goldman 2006, 265). Because of their presence, even relatively strong state parties are organizationally weak when compared with similarly decentralized parties in other long-lived federal systems (Thorlakson 2009), a general weakness that will be dealt with in detail in the case study below.

Focusing on the fundamental cross-national difference, if party organizational linkages affect policy integration, processes should be integrated across policy fields in Switzerland but not in the USA. If institutional fragmentation is the more important factor, patterns of policy integration should be very similar.

Why to Expect Effective Coordination in Switzerland, Not in Canada

The comparison of *Switzerland* and *Canada* allows us to assess the impact of policy integration. In both systems, parties as organizations are engaged in the nomination and appointment of parliamentary and executive actors (Carty 1991; Vatter 2002). Unlike in the USA, in both systems, parties can be expected to integrate policy fields. Naturally, the tightness of the executive-legislative link is greater in the Canadian provinces characterized by one-party governments. The party leader is selected by his or her party and becomes the premier once a legislative majority is reached. Policy integration is easier to maintain because a low level of institutional fragmentation and highly disciplined legislative parties go together as will be specified in the case study below (Carty 1991; Carty and Stewart 1996).

Yet, while policy integration might be present in both cases, the government configurations are most different, which is crucial to examine whether intergovernmental actors use the linkages across issues and sectors differently because of these configurations. Looking at the nature of subnational governments more closely, Vatter shows that in 1980–1996, all cantons (except the canton Appenzell-Innerhoden) were governed by coalition governments, predominantly oversized ones (Vatter 2002, 79, 87). In 1980–2003, only 3% of Swiss governments were one-party governments, while 100% of the Canadian provincial governments consisted of one party only (Bolleyer 2009, 57). Carty and Stewart show that in 1965–1995, most provincial governments were driven by two-party competition and characterized by single-party dominance (Carty and Stewart 1996, 72–3). Reflecting these configurations, over the last two decades, party incongruence across provincial governments (within a group of six long-lived federations) has been the highest in Canada and the lowest in Switzerland.[9] If the theoretical expectations hold, policy integration should support effective coordination only in Switzerland, where competitive pressure as well as party incongruence are low.

Note that the inclusion of Canada also indicates that *country size* (similar in Canada and the USA) does not shape the level of policy integration, which, according to this approach, is expected to vary across these countries. Nor is the *number of subnational governments* (reducing transaction costs) crucial for policy integration or for how the latter shapes subnational coordination. If it was, policy coordination should be the most effective in Canada, being composed of the fewest subunits, an expectation challenged by the given approach.

Methods

To substantiate the arguments put forward, qualitative methods are most appropriate. In line with the measurements developed above, the analysis is based on a variety of primary documents (e.g., statutes regulating

intergovernmental meetings, position papers, binding and nonbinding intergovernmental agreements) to capture the nature and scope of intergovernmental structures indicating the degree of policy integration and the nature of coordination outcomes.

A second major source consists of in-depth interviews with intergovernmental actors able to capture process dynamics within and between different policy fields. In the period of 2005–2007, 79 semistructured interviews were conducted with intergovernmental actors. Questions addressed the following two core themes: (1) the scope, the actual working and dominant function of intergovernmental structures, the identification of predominant patterns of communication, and the (problem-oriented or strategic) coupling of processes within and across policy fields (policy integration), and (2) the role of partisan and institutional linkage mechanisms in these coordination processes.[10]

Three types of intergovernmental actors were covered: first, subnational officials responsible for the overall coordination of intergovernmental relations their government engages (e.g., working in the IGR unit of the core executive). Their perspective is cross-sectoral, they look at IGR from a party-political viewpoint, and they are in charge of all policy issues that fall in the realm of "high politics." They also monitor (and potentially intervene into) policy-specific intergovernmental processes within the individual line departments. The second group represents officials in charge of IGR within these line departments. They are more strongly oriented toward problem-solving than their colleagues in the core executives. Both groups look at intragovernmental and intergovernmental coordination from "within government." The third group consists of employees of intergovernmental arrangements set up outside individual governments who function as a neutral support structure for coordination. The triangulation of generalist versus policy-specific and political versus problem-oriented perspectives allows the gathering of reliably information. All interviewees were intensely involved in the day-to-day management of horizontal intergovernmental processes yet can be expected to evaluate the effects of party-political affiliations and dynamics in a more neutral and less biased fashion than politicians do.[11]

Findings: Party Linkages, Policy Integration, and Horizontal Coordination in Three Federal Systems

The following case studies explore horizontal coordination across eight policy fields: fiscal policy, economic policy, transportation, justice and crime control, education, environmental policy, health, and social policy. It is important that, in all of them, subnational governments have their own (mostly legislative) competences: although the absence of formal competences does not preclude intergovernmental coordination, coordination pressures are comparatively limited. Simultaneously, the policy fields vary in their fiscal intensity and the degree to which they invite redistributive

conflicts. If we find—while observing cross-national differences—similar effects across policy fields within each of the three systems, these effects are not likely to reflect the particular nature of individual policy fields.

Table 1 sums up the overall patterns of party organizational linkages identified in the three case studies.

In Switzerland and the USA, policy integration varies with party strength despite similar levels of institutional fragmentation. Moving to the second pair, the multiparty constellation in Swiss cantonal executives as compared to the much more cohesive one-party cabinets in the Canadian provinces loosens the constraints of party linkages on individual ministers and administrators. Nonetheless, in both systems, processes across policy fields are connected and are driven by an overall executive rationale visible in the presence of cross-jurisdictional bodies linking sector-specific processes. Simultaneously, policy integration generates very different coordination patterns depending on the dominant intragovernmental constellation: Canadian IGR is highly politicized, and cross-sectoral policy integration is strategically used by governments to improve their position in horizontal negotiations, while in Switzerland, it facilitates substantial policy coordination.

Before entering the individual case studies, the nature of nonbinding agreements in 2004–2005 as analyzed by Bolleyer (2009, Chapter 7) can illustrate the nature of coordination outputs in each system. The analysis included all agreements officially endorsed within 15 intergovernmental bodies set up in five policy fields in the USA, Switzerland, and Canada in 2004–2005. The criteria for assessment were precision, their substantial depth, and most importantly, their function—whether they aimed at policy coordination or not. The findings relevant here are the following: While in the USA, more agreements were endorsed than in Swiss or Canadian arrangements, agreements hardly aimed at coordination (a picture substantiated by the limited use of formal interstate compacts also available to solve coordination problems as detailed below). In turn, while both Swiss and Canadian bodies were more involved in coordination—supported by a higher level of policy integration as indicated by the case studies—Swiss bodies did so more. Furthermore, in contrast to Swiss coordination agreements, in Canada, they were often imprecise and not very substantial. This is linked to individual governments' endeavors to maintain room for maneuver, a tendency rooted in party political dynamics as detailed below. The share of horizontal agreements further varied across policy fields: in all three cases agreements were particularly difficult in areas inviting redistributive conflict such as finance. In the two multilingual federations areas concerning cultural matters proved similarly problematic. Finally, unlike the mode of legislative competence distribution (shared vs. exclusive), the presence of legislative (not only implementation) competences on the subnational level in a policy field functioned as a crucial trigger for horizontal coordination activities. Yet despite these *cross-sectoral differences within each system*, Switzerland

TABLE 1
Party Linkage Mechanisms, Policy Integration, and the Nature of Horizontal Coordination in Three Federal Systems

	Party Linkage Mechanisms		Policy Integration			Nature of Coordination			
	Inter-Branch Linkages	Cross-Sectoral Linkages	Political Constraints on Administration (Intra-governmental)	Dominant Scope and Level of Coordination of Inter-governmental Bodies	Cross-Sectoral Differences	Nature of Spillover	Institutional Linkages Between Bodies	Nature of Inter-governmental Agreements	Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution
United States	*Intraparty:* – Party conferences	*Intraparty:* – Meetings between department heads of the same party – Meetings between governor and state party chairman/state committee	Loose	*Scope:* issue specific in most areas *Level of coordination:* information exchange and consultation or binding coordination (compacts/ interstate commissions)	Sector-wide bodies only in: education, environment (main function: information exchange) *Level of coordination:* binding coordination: – weak in fiscal policy, social policy, health – intense in environment, transport, justice/crime control	–	–	Binding agreement mechanisms available yet infrequently used	No

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TABLE 1
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	Party Linkage Mechanisms		Policy Integration			Nature of Coordination			
	Inter-Branch Linkages	Cross-Sectoral Linkages	Political Constraints on Administration (Intra-governmental)	Dominant Scope and Level of Coordination of Inter-governmental Bodies	Cross-Sectoral Differences	Nature of Spillover	Institutional Linkages Between Bodies	Nature of Inter-governmental Agreements	Mechanisms of Conflict Resolution
Switzerland	*Intraparty:* – Meetings of individual ministers with their legislative faction – Party conferences – Office-holders' membership in party executives *Interparty:* – Meetings of ministers and legislators to defend executive agreements	*Intraparty:* – Control over candidate selection – Meetings of ministers belonging to same party with their party officials/their legislators – Office-holders' membership in party executives/ overlap public and party offices – Policy-specific, intraparty committees (*Fachkommissionen*) (involving office-holders and party members) *Interparty:* – Cabinet meetings (rotating chairmanship)	Medium	*Scope:* sector-wide (bridged by cross-sectoral) bodies in all areas *Level of coordination:* drafting of nonbinding and binding agreements	All sector-wide bodies have staffed secretariats, most resources in education, least in finance and in economic policy *Level of coordination:* drafting of agreements – weak in finance, economic policy, environment and transport[a] – most intense in education, justice/ crime control	Cooperative	Strong	Precise, problem-oriented; both nonbinding or binding mechanisms used, governments usually compliant	Yes (regular meetings of inter-governmental secretaries, *Interkantonale Rahmenver-einbarung*)

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Canada	*Intraparty:* – MPs – Party conferences/ conventions – Office-holders' membership in party executives	*Intraparty:* – Control over candidate selection – Cabinet meetings (premier = party leader) – Party conferences/ conventions – Office-holders' membership in party executive/ overlap public and party offices – Candidate selection meeting (candidate/MP with on constituency party)	Tight	*Scope:* sectoral (bridged by cross-sectoral) bodies in all areas *Level of coordination:* consultation; drafting of nonbinding agreements	Only transport, environment, and education council have staffed secretariats *Level of coordination:* – weak in finance, economic policy – most intense in justice/crime control	Strategic	Weak	Vague, nonbinding agreements; regularly used yet frequent noncompliance of participating governments	No

Sources: Categorizations of levels of horizontal coordination derived from Metcalfe's scale of policy coordination (Metcalfe 1994); on political constraints on administration based on Peters (1998).
Data: Own data, secondary literature as referred to in main text.
[a]In environment and transport, the cantons lack—unlike the subnational governments in the other two systems—own legislative powers.
MPs, members of parliament.

consistently produced a *relatively higher share of coordination agreements* than Canada across areas, which, in turn, fared better than the USA.

In addition to this first observation on coordination outputs, Table 1 sums up the scope, nature, and functions of intergovernmental bodies in the various sectors as well as of cross-sectoral bodies in each system. It further provides information on modes of conflict resolution and the nature of cross-sectoral spillover effects. The interplay of these various features is explored in detail in the following three case studies.

The USA: The Weakness of Party Linkages and the Consequences of Policy Fragmentation

While we find notable differences between state parties and their organizational capacities when focusing on fundamental cross-national differences, it is fair to say that U.S. parties as such have a comparatively limited potential to control the behavior of the various subsets of office-holders affiliated to them. Due to the presence of primaries as highlighted earlier, American parties cannot impose requirements on or expel disloyal members (Katz and Kolodny 1994, 31). Accordingly, it is problematic to speak of a "party membership organization" through which parties usually shape (depending on their level of selectivity) the degree of member loyalty, members who, in turn, constitute the pool of candidates. While some state parties attempt to influence candidate nominations via pre-primary endorsement (which in some states is legally prohibited), in the 1980s and 1990s only half of endorsees won contested primaries (Jewell and Morehouse 2000).

Mirroring the executive-legislative divide, the national committees of the Democratic and the Republican party (which correspond to the national executives of European parties) are only the national committees of the presidential parties. In addition, there are the two caucuses that are not only parliamentary wings but autonomous organizations that perform most of the functions associated with parties: policy formulation, fund raising, organizing campaigns, etc. (Katz and Kolodny 1994, 28, 31). Similarly, while the Democratic Governors' Association aids gubernatorial candidates, the Democratic Legislative Committee supports state legislative campaigns. Neither association controls selection processes (Thorlakson 2009).

Interviews confirm that parties parallel the structure of state governments instead of controlling it. While parties might be organized in both the electorate and in public office, the two remain separate. Public officials have full-time positions (e.g., salaries, office space, and employees), and in case of conflict, they have considerable advantages over party officials. Even if state chairmen and governors come from the same party, the governor tends to be in the stronger position. Office holders often show little interest in "their" state party altogether (Jewell and Muchmore 2000; Jewell and Olson 1978, 54–55, 66–67). In sum, American parties neither

control access to public office nor material resources (such as public sector jobs[12])—and have been declining further (Dalton and Wattenberg 2002; Fiorina 2002, 94; Wattenberg 1998).

American party organization cannot assure control or provide stable channels of communication across functional or territorial divides. Processes are hardly connected across policy fields in the USA, neither within nor across state departments. There is no core executive or cabinet tied together by a shared party affiliation that steers or systematically links processes of coalition formation among policy specialists and the interaction between ministers and bureaucrats in their area of responsibility. Nor can the governor as individual actor play this role (Beyle and Muchmore 1983; Wright 1982). There is no counterweight to the loyalties that develop within specialist communities (Esman 1984, 29; Hoornbeek 2004), leading to the dominant portrayal of American IGR as intergovernmental management run by administrators (Agranoff and McGuire 2001; O'Toole 2000).

The lack of policy integration becomes structurally manifest in the limited scope of intergovernmental bodies. With few exceptions, they are not sector-wide but are disaggregated along issue lines. Education and environment stand out as the two areas where we find sector-wide interstate commissions, which are, however, restricted to support information exchange and the dissemination of best practices. Moving one level higher, we find several cross-sectoral bodies that do not represent the "state governments" but institutional or administrative subunits (e.g., the governors, particular types of public officials, the legislatures). The National Governors Association (NGA) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL), for instance, represent the state executives and legislatures separately. Each association drafts detailed positions on federal legislation (as a multitude of issue-specific public interest groups do) without engaging in horizontal policy coordination. Neither executive nor legislative actors could commit members of the other branch "at home" to intergovernmental agreements. In Metcalfe's terms (Metcalfe 1994, 281), both the few sector-wide bodies as well as the generalist bodies operate on a low level of coordination and are little involved in substantial policy coordination.

None of the arrangements is able to represent "the states" as coherent units or the state level of government as a whole because each individual state is disaggregated (it is noteworthy that the NGA and NCSL were once part of the Council of State Governments (CSG) but split from it because the branches did not feel adequately represented in their particular institutional interests). Even if state governments are unified along partisan lines (thus the executive and the two houses are dominated by the same party), which has been the case 43% of the time in 1980–2003 (Bolleyer 2009, 57), constitutional divisions are felt irrespectively. While interviewees identified partisan divides as important forces in American IGR, institutional fragmentation was considered the stronger force.

Mirroring the division between "party actors" operating inside and outside public office in interstate commissions (e.g., established in education), internal divisions occur along functional lines between the actors affiliated to different branches. The connection is rooted in the roles people occupy, who know people with the same specialization in other states better than people at home in charge of different matters. Consequently, state officials operating in intergovernmental bodies coming from the same state do not defend the same interest.

This does not mean that coordination efforts in U.S. IGR are absent. The CSG runs the Center for Interstate Compacts, which supports the development of formally binding, horizontal interstate compacts between individual states in areas of state jurisdiction. These compacts partially enforce uniform law across state borders, in part they create interstate authorities with regulatory power that engage in cross-jurisdictional problem solving. But these regulatory compact commissions tend to deal with very narrow policy issues and operate widely isolated from each other, reflecting the lack of intrasectoral or cross-sectoral integration (see Table 1).

This leads us back to interbranch divides. Because state executives are institutionally separate from their legislatures, they tend to prioritize the increase of federal funds over protecting legislative state authority. Legislatures are much more eager to protect their legislative autonomy and are less willing to give it up—a divide that in governments such as in the Swiss cantons or the Canadian provinces is bridged by party ties. Because interstate compacts formally restrict legislative autonomy, enactment often fails when it comes to legislative ratification,[13] a barrier that is much less pronounced in Switzerland where cantonal parliaments feel that executives consider their interests to some extent and conflicts of interests can be partially reconciled through party organizational channels. Even basic channels of communication and coordination between the branches are lacking, as interviewees emphasized.

These institutionally rooted difficulties should not imply that horizontal coordination is not affected by differences between different types of policies. In fact, sector and issue independence implies that policy characteristics have a stronger impact than they otherwise would have if administrative processes were embedded within an integrated government structure unified by a generalist "party-political" rather than an issue-specific "functional" rationale. Subject matter specialists are free to form coalitions with their counterparts in other states or on the federal level, while the flow of communication does not cross-cut narrow specialist circles within individual sectors because processes are not linked by any overarching priorities as defined by a core executive.

More particularly, a strong spatial dimension (environment, transport, and justice and crime control) intensifies horizontal coordination visible in a higher number of interstate compacts and compact commissions. High levels of interstate competition (economic policy; finance policy) as well as a focus on policy implementation on the state level (health; social policy)

reduce the intensity of horizontal coordination.[14] It is telling that the presence of a sector-based interstate commission in environment (the only one apart from education) has not changed the issue-driven mode along which coordination demands are addressed in this sector.

Thus, while these differences generated by policy characteristics are important, they evolve within the context of institutionally generated tensions undermining policy integration and, with it, complicating horizontal coordination as such. The issue-specific nature of intergovernmental structures and the inefficient use of formal coordination mechanisms are rooted in intragovernmental and interbranch divides, divides that party organizational linkages are too weak to bridge.

Switzerland: Party Linkages, Policy Integration, and the Spill-over of Cooperation

Despite the strong institutional divisions within the Swiss cantons, policy-specific intergovernmental structures are organized along sectors in the form of councils composed of cantonal ministers. Education is the most developed area, even in the context of Swiss intergovernmental arrangements where all sector-wide bodies have their own resources and are predominantly organized through staffed secretariats. Followed by the areas of justice/crime control, education is the most active area in the drafting of agreements, a function which nearly all sectoral councils are occupied with. The coordination of cantonal policies can take the form of formally binding concordats (Konkordate) or nonbinding recommendations (Empfehlungen), which the ministers politically commit themselves to. The latter are used more frequently because they do not require parliamentary ratification. Yet, despite their political character, they tend to be specific documents that can be and are used as a working basis for cantonal legislation. Accordingly, the coordination capacity of the majority of sectoral bodies is considerable. In finance as well as economic policy coordination is less intense: accordingly, these sectoral councils have comparatively few resources.[15] While cantons have little own say in economic policy, fiscal powers (especially in tax policy) are pronounced. Reflecting the area's redistributive implications, however, technical issues are shifted to the administrative level. The actual conference of finance ministers focuses on issuing collective positions on federal policies, that is, deals little with the coordination of cantonal policies.

Moving one level up, the connectedness of intergovernmental processes across sectors becomes most visible in efforts to link the policy-specific intergovernmental arrangements organizationally. The secretaries of ministerial conferences meet regularly. Furthermore, a framework agreement was drafted as a mechanism to avoid and settle conflict between different ministerial conferences,[16] while cantons agreed upon the "House of Cantons" initiative, which moved the different policy-specific secretariats into one building in the capital Berne. Finally, intraexecutive integration

not only finds reflection in strong policy-specific bodies that are closely tied together but also in a body—the Conference of Cantonal Executives—that focuses on the overarching cross-sectoral issues (Trees 2005). In sum, horizontal coordination processes are structurally integrated within and across sectors.

Institutional divisions within the cantons as well as the federal system are similar to the U.S. situation, yet party linkages support policy integration. While cantonal ministers avoid interfering in their colleagues' subject matter, decisions in sectoral ministerial councils need still to be acceptable to other cabinet members at home (both party colleagues as well as members of rival parties). This is the case whether agreements are nonbinding, so-called recommendations, or binding concordats (which next to being acceptable to the executive as a whole, require formal approval by parliament or referendum) (Abderhalden 1999).

To some extent, the need for interparty compromise within one's own executive and within intergovernmental structures can serve as a justification for individual ministers to deviate from their party line defended by their legislative faction in parliament. Yet, as soon as important issues are at stake, intraparty linkages constrain ministerial action. First, regular meetings of cantonal ministers and legislators belonging to the same party assure a flow of communication between the governmental branches and allow different positions to be reconciled, a link that gives ministers a platform to defend compromises but equally keeps them responsible to their parties. Second, mechanisms such as arbitration tribunals are in place to handle disputes within the same party organization (Thorlakson 2009). Finally, we find linkages between office-holders and their external party organization through policy-specific committees (Fachkommissionen), which deal with particular policy issues and can be intracantonal or intergovernmental.

These intraparty mechanisms help to bridge interbranch and interdepartmental divisions by making ministers responsive to a party program linking a wide range of issues and cross-cutting various policy fields, which has an integrative effect with regard to intracantonal processes. The latter feeds into IGR through the pressure to find interparty compromise within the multiparty executives governing the cantons. This need moderates cantonal positions and facilitates intergovernmental negotiations but simultaneously forces ministers to convince his or her ministerial colleagues of intergovernmental agreements drafted in intergovernmental meetings.

Vice versa, this spillover of cooperation from multiparty executives to sectoral conferences can be replaced by tensions between conferences and individual cantonal governments as well as between different conferences, when intergovernmental conferences are dominated by members of the same party. Cantonal ministries of health or social policy are often occupied by social democrats, while fiscal policy tends to be dominated by conservative ministers. This creates frictions, whenever a ministerial con-

ference agrees on the implementation of costly policies, potentially leading to noncompliance of a range of cantons, that is, coordination failure. Similar alienation occurred when the (supposedly) overly conservative Conference of Cantonal Executives (together with the finance ministers) were (unlike other ministerial councils) strongly involved in the negotiation of the last federalism reform.[17] While this involvement was reasonable given the expertise of the two bodies, their party-political lean was still considered problematic.

Although ministers have considerable leeway in the formulation of intergovernmental agreements, once moving beyond technical issues, they remain responsible to their multiparty cabinets. Individual party ideology is less important here than coalition constraints. While the "partyness" of Swiss cantonal governments in an ideological-programmatic sense is low given three to four parties in each government (e.g., Blondel 1995; Katz 1987), parties play an important role to support policy integration as organizations (as they complicate coordination whenever sector-wide conferences are party-politically "too homogenous"). Party linkages make each minister responsible to his or her party (and its respective program), which reduces the disaggregation of cantonal executives despite their internal "departmentalism" that grants leeway for ministerial action. Processes within individual sectors remain connected through an overarching political rationale, which gives Swiss IGR its executive-centered character more similar to Canada than the USA (to which it is institutionally more similar).

Canada: Tight Party Linkages, Policy Integration, and the Spill-over of Conflict

Canadian federalism is characterized by the interaction of unicameral parliamentary governments dominated by one-party executives. Due to the given institutional makeup and parties' organizational strength, policy integration is pronounced. Looking at the connectedness of government departments in the Canadian provinces, ministers belong to the same provincial party and define themselves as part of their cabinet, while the prime minister decides whether and how particular issues fit into the picture of government policies as a whole. This hierarchy inevitably shapes IGR: Policy issues are discussed within the context of sectoral ministerial meetings. Similar to Switzerland, we find a ministerial council in each field. Reflecting the strong internal discipline, however, these policy-specific exchanges are shaped to a much wider extent by prime ministerial agendas cutting across sectors, restrictions that are equally felt by officials on the working level. The direct feedback of intraexecutive hierarchies into IGR is generated by disciplined provincial parties[18] and the double hat of prime ministers as heads of government and leaders of their party. Since the 1960s, provincial party leaders are selected by a convention (instead of the parliamentary party) and enjoy the support of

the extraparliamentary party. Once in office, they are rarely replaced (Carty, Erickson, and Blake 1992, 4–6, 25–30), indicating the tight fusion between the two.

Ministers are much more constrained in intergovernmental negotiations than their Swiss counterparts. They need approval by their cabinet whenever proposals change during negotiations, which reduces the potential to develop a problem-oriented outlook and to move away from hard individualist bargaining. This impact of intraexecutive patterns on IGR is structurally visible. A province's intergovernmental affairs department takes issues out of the respective line departments whenever they become too "political." Furthermore, big, important departments, such as health, often have their own intergovernmental unit. While provincial governments themselves (like intergovernmental conferences) reflect a functional allocation of competences structured along sectors, any sensitive issue that becomes politically salient can be transferred "upward"—internally from a line department to the strategically oriented intergovernmental unit, in IGR from a ministerial meeting to a prime ministerial one.

Different from Swiss IGR, sectoral divisions and the infrastructure related to them do not constitute a stable division of labor. This becomes most visible in cost-intensive and strongly redistributive areas: After its foundation by provincial prime ministers in 2003, the Council of the Federation first took over health negotiations and then moved on to education. Sectoral conferences do not "own issues." This is visible in their structural weakness: Most conferences have neither their own staff nor their own resources. Finance meetings are, as in the other two systems, most difficult. Only few advisors are allowed to participate in these meetings next to the finance ministers themselves and unlike all the other conferences, ministers do not issue collective communiqués. Interestingly, unlike in the comparatively depoliticized Swiss IGR where in better resourced sectors staff are more actively involved in negotiations, in Canada, the strongest sectoral bodies (only transport, environment, and education have staffed intergovernmental secretariats) are widely restricted to information provision. Underlining the missing link between structural resources and political involvement, most agreements in 2004–2005 were generated in the area of justice/crime control (Bolleyer 2009, 195).

Horizontal negotiations are easier when the same parties are in office. While third parties governing at the provincial level such as the New Democratic Party tend to correspond to the more integrated mass party model, the provincial arms of the two biggest parties (Liberals and Conservatives) formulate their own policies (Carty 1991, 30–33; Thorlakson 2009). Nonetheless, interviewees point out that a basic familiarity among politicians makes coordination between subnational governments ruled by parties with the same label easier. Vice versa, if different parties are in office, intergovernmental processes tend to be more complicated and high levels of incongruence have been the norm over the last two decades, as cross-national studies have shown.[19]

In a similar vain, party alternation in government and the resulting discontinuity in government personnel and priorities often offset past achievements. Because intergovernmental agreements are purely political, as soon as a new party enters government, it might withdraw from major agreements entered by its predecessor. Accordingly, they are very unreliable mechanisms for coordinating policy horizontally (see O'Reilly, Inwood, and Johns 2006; Skogstad 2000). Noncompliance is frequent and legitimized by the changing priorities of individual governments.

Although we find policy fields integrated within and across sectors in Canadian IGR, the efficiency of horizontal policy coordination remains limited. Even more, ministers use existing ties strategically. One-party governments are the norm that facilitates a tight interdepartmental integration which, in turn, leads to a spillover of political conflict from one ministerial meeting to the other. Interaction processes between ministers responsible for one policy field cannot be separated from interaction processes in another policy field. Ministers exploit this: To improve their positions in intergovernmental negotiations they threaten to hold up negotiations in other ministerial meetings. This spillover of conflict tends to travel from core areas such as health—in which ministers (and their governments) try to improve their position—to low key areas such as environment, a dynamic reinforced when elections come up that further intensify the salience of particular policy areas. Functional interdependencies of policy fields do not play a role here, because this linking of arenas is purely strategic, rooted in the close ties between ministers belonging to the same party who help each other out. The substantial nature of their responsibilities is of secondary importance, as are the implications for governments' horizontal problem-solving capacities.

Conclusion: Parties, Policy Integration, and the Challenge of Coordination

This article has argued that political parties as organized actors play an important role in modern democracies: They help to bridge jurisdictional divisions and to integrate a complex government apparatus. Having analyzed horizontal policy coordination across three federal systems, that is, nonhierarchical processes in which the impact of party linkages shows with particular clarity, the finding that government processes are more fragmented in the USA than in Switzerland might not be too surprising. Nonetheless, it is important that in Switzerland—despite similar levels of institutional fragmentation—parties as organizations establish an overall cross-sectoral rationale in intragovernmental and intergovernmental processes, while American parties fail to do so. Suffice to say that policy coordination on the U.S. state level suffers within state governments as well as between them. Processes are marked by incoherence across different issue areas as well as from interbranch divides insufficiently bridged by party ties.

This pattern shows although policy-specific features systematically affect horizontal coordination in the different sectors studied (see Table 1): Strong redistributive implications (e.g., in finance) complicate coordination, while policies with a pronounced spatial (e.g., in environment, transport) intensify coordination efforts, if subnational governments engage in legislating, not only implementation. Yet, as the case studies indicate, these relative differences across sectors do not alter the cross-national picture: Policy coordination reflects functional divides and is therefore more issue-driven in the USA than both in Switzerland and in Canada, while the sectoral and cross-sectoral integration of IGR supports horizontal policy coordination among subnational governments in the former, while being used by them for strategic political maneuvering in the latter context.

Linking these findings to the more general debate on party government, to recognize parties' organizational contribution to governing might not necessarily compensate for their declining representative capacity in terms of legitimacy. Citizens might not be satisfied with a functional underpinning of party government alone. But this does not imply that candidate-centered politics and expert government provide workable alternatives to party government that (at least) assures policy integration and thereby supports cross-jurisdictional coordination. Clearly, the implications of these alternative models for the functioning of government need to be examined further, just as the role of party linkages needs examination beyond the specific area—horizontal IGR—targeted here.

This becomes obvious when looking to the differences between horizontal coordination in Switzerland and Canada, two systems that both assure policy integration through party linkages. Policy integration—when it comes to *inter*governmental coordination—facilitates efficient coordination only under certain conditions and with regard to particular functions. While party linkages integrate different departments in Switzerland, *intra*governmental integration is tightest in Canada where parties are most disciplined. Moving on to intergovernmental policy coordination, however, the irony of the Swiss case is that party integration facilitates coordination because party ideological differences are muted through interparty compromise struck in oversized cantonal executives, while in Canada, policy integration facilitates the channeling of conflict between majoritarian one-party governments that weakens coordination.

This brings us back to one conceptual starting point: that policy integration generated by party linkages may not be equated with a clear party mandate. The latter presupposes the capacity of a party to implement those policies promised in its manifesto and thereby to effectively represent citizen preferences, which is usually considered as the essence of party government (Katz 1987). Due to the constant need for interparty compromises the match between individual party programs and government action is likely to be limited in Switzerland. The integration of policy across sectors and issues (as a functional demand in government to which party organization responds) is unrelated to this standard. Accordingly,

future work on party functions needs to go beyond parties' role as citizen representatives and the "mandate theory" underpinning it.

Party functions directed toward representation and toward governing need to be analytically distinguished because they refer to different perspectives on parties, to parties as vehicles for citizen demands or as decision-making organizations (Blondel 1995, 128–9; Cansino 1995a, 124). In Switzerland, parties tend to be more effective as decision-making organizations when it comes to intergovernmental coordination because executives rest on ideological compromises and the immediate link to citizens is weak. In Canadian one-party governments, policy integration and partyness seem more in line. Yet, while this constellation tightly integrates intragovernmental processes and facilitates internal coordination, it complicates IGR. It is often assumed in the literature that parties' political and organizational dimension reinforce each other. Yet when operating in complex environments addressing multiple functions, they might equally conflict. While this article is only a modest step toward disentangling the different roles political parties play in modern democracies, it clearly indicates that we know too little about these roles and their interplay to announce the end of party government.

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Notes

1. Party government is defined following Rose as the capacity of parties to translate the possession of the highest formal offices of a political regime into operational control of government (Rose 1969, 413).
2. The literature on presidentialism has much debated this question, namely, in how far institutional divides between the branches can be effectively bridged by party ties (Mainwaring and Shugart 1997).
3. Federal pre-emption as practiced in the USA would be a particularly coercive mode of vertical coordination.
4. Existing comparative studies on the vertical dimension of federal systems show that an integrated party system is an important factor shaping coordination across governmental levels (Thorlakson 2009).
5. Note that vertical relations across governmental levels are not targeted. For an insightful study on this dimension, see Thorlakson 2009.
6. For instance, we might find intergovernmental ministerial meetings dealing with health to which more issue-specific meetings dealing with drug availability are subordinated. Alternatively, a range of issue-specific arrangements might simply exist next to each other without any systematic structural connection.
7. Again, we find a link to Metcalfe's scale of coordination (Metcalfe 1994), which refers to arbitration as one (higher) level of coordination. The proce-

dures here, however, do not presuppose third party (i.e., central) intervention that is able to enforce collective solutions.

8. Closed and open primaries form the ends of the spectrum, with the latter undermining party control the most severely.
9. The other cases were Germany, Austria, Australia, and the USA (Bolleyer and Bytzek 2009).
10. Questions targeted what intergovernmental bodies interviewees considered to be most important (issue-specific, sectoral, or cross-sectoral): how these bodies work internally, what they do primarily, and how they relate to other bodies in the same system (e.g., the level of insulation of issue-specific/sector-specific processes, the interaction between different sector-wide bodies/between sector-wide and cross-sectoral bodies, and the nature of this interaction). Questions explored the sources of conflict in the day-to-day management of horizontal relations between subnational governments as compared with sources of conflict in negotiations taking place in ministerial or prime ministerial intergovernmental bodies. Interviewees were asked to specify the interaction between the administrative and political level in horizontal coordination (e.g., How strongly is the intergovernmental day-to-day management affected/constrained by activities/conflict in intergovernmental bodies [ministerial or higher]? How strongly do political changes within individual governments [e.g., party alternation] affect the day-to-day management/intergovernmental negotiations?). Interviewees were asked to identify factors that facilitate coordination and to evaluate the (positive and/or negative) impacts of party linkages, both ideologically and organizationally, on horizontal coordination processes.
11. The interviews were conducted either face to face or on the phone (field work was done in each country). Of the 79 interviews, 22 were conducted in Canada, 27 in the USA, and 30 in Switzerland. To avoid regional biases, the interviews have been conducted with representatives of big, small, economically strong and weak governments, and covered the different language groups.
12. Governors have quite extensive appointment rights, but as pointed out above, they are not controlled by a party organization.
13. Interviewees pointed out that the process to set up a compact takes on average 18–24 months, which explains why compacts as coordination mechanisms are considered of minor importance.
14. According to the National Center of Interstate Compacts, in 1998, we find 58 interstate compacts in environment, 19 in justice/crime control, 8 in transport, 3 in social policy, 2 in heath, 1 in finance, and none in economic policy.
15. While the education conference has more than 30 full-time staff, finance has only one.
16. Rahmenvereinbarung für die interkantonale Zusammenarbeit mit Lastenausgleich, 24. Juni 2005.
17. This reform (*Neuer Finanzausgleich*) was passed in 2007.
18. This refers less to the organizational infrastructure on the local level than to the behavior of party office-holders (see Carty 1991).
19. Incongruence between subnational governments in Canada has been consistently higher than in Austria, Switzerland, Germany, USA, and Australia (Bolleyer and Bytzek 2009).

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