

The Rise of Regionalist Parties in Europe:
Between European and Domestic Factors.



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Abbreviations

- ALDE: Alliance for Liberals and Democrats in Europe
- AC: Autonomous Communities
- CiU: Convergence and Union
- CJEU: Court of Justice of the European Union
- CoR: Committee of the Regions
- E(E)C: European (Economic) Community
- EFA: European Free Alliance
- ERC: Esquerra Republicana Catalunya
- EU: European Union
- EP: European Parliament
- FNP: Frisian Nationalist Party
- HRW: Human Rights Watch
- JxCat: Junts per Catalunya
- MLG: Multilevel Governance
- N-VA: New Flemish Alliance
- NOS: Nederlandse Omroep Stichting
- OECD: The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- IO: International Organisation
- LI: Liberal Intergovernmentalism
- MS: Member State
- SEA: Single European Act
- SNP: Scottish Nationalist Party
- SA: Statute of Autonomy
- TEU: Treaty on European Union
- TFEU: Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
- ToM: Treaty of Maastricht
- QMV: Qualified Majority Voting

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Abstract

The process of European integration has created a multilevel federal polity in which regionalist parties can thrive. The European Union (EU) significantly reduced the cost of autonomy and independence for regions, as it provides a viable alternative to belonging to a central state. Consequently, regionalist parties are more viable in the eyes of the electorate. Moreover, the EU has created a space that Member States cannot fully control. These two factors have thus contributed to the rise of regionalist parties in Europe. However, this cannot account for the discrepancies in electoral success between regionalist parties across Europe. This thesis seeks to account for these discrepancies by analysing the relative importance of domestic factors on the rise of regionalist parties. In that pursuit, this thesis compares Catalonia and Friesland. In Catalonia, domestic factors provided the momentum for the rise of regionalist parties, but European integration made them viable. In Friesland, the opposite holds true. Domestic variables and, in part, European integration itself, inhibited the rise of the Frisian Nationalist Party. European integration is therefore only relevant in relation to domestic factors and vice versa. As such, only an integrated approach can adequately account for the rise of regionalist parties in Europe.

Introduction

On 27 October of 2017, the Catalan regional government unilaterally declared its independence from Spain. Factual independence has remained an unfulfilled promise due to intervention of the Spanish central government. Nonetheless, the past year has made it clear that even though the electorate is split on the issue of independence, there is political will among some leaders in Catalonia to try and establish it despite the consequences (Dowsett). Although Catalonia has dominated the news of late, it is not the only region in Europe vying for more autonomy, or even independence, from their constituent Member State (MS). On the contrary, recent years have seemingly witnessed a rise in calls for increased autonomy by regionalist parties in Europe (Connolly "Secession" 52; Massetti and Schakel 59-60). This is evidenced by examples varying from the 2014 failed Scottish independence referendum, an attempt by the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) to devise a way to attain more autonomy for Flanders, the successful referenda for more autonomy in Lombardy and Veneto, and many others (Cerulus; Povoledo). These regionalist movements have drawn much academic and public interest, but studies generally explain these regionalist movements from "a variety of cultural and political economic factors" (Jolly 33). As such, scant attention is given to the influence of the process of European integration.

That is not unsurprising, international relations theory generally tends towards a state-centric worldview. The primacy of the European states therefore also pervades EU politics. However, the Westphalian nation-state is increasingly challenged from "above and below," with more sovereignty being pooled at the supranational level and more competences being dispersed to the subnational level through decentralisation (Chacha 206; Keating "Multilevel Federation" 626; Tatham and Bauer 1368). The pooling of sovereignty at the supranational level in particular has garnered much attention due to the increased politicisation of the European integration project. MS have transferred competences to the European level in policy areas that we traditionally ascribe to states. The combined effect of this and state decentralisation has therefore given rise to a multilevel European political sphere. In this multilevel system, the EU has become relevant for a host of actors besides the MS, particularly the regions ("Multilevel Federation" 629; Hooghe and Marks *Multi-Level Governance*).

The emergence of a multilevel system has been substantiated by the increased activity of regions at the European level. This "regional mobilisation" is evidenced by the establishment of the Committee of Regions (CoR), the partnership principle in European regional policy, the notion of subsidiarity, and the increase of regional offices in Brussels

(Groenendijk 22; Evans 223). The inclusion of the principle of subsidiarity, which states that political decisions should be taken as closely to the citizens as possible, in particular formed the “intellectual underpinnings” in the 1980s and 1990s of a so-called ‘Europe of the Regions’ (Evans 223-4). Ultimately, this idea has largely been “discredited,” but it is clear that European integration has by-passed mere interstate decision-making (Moore 17). Instead, the subnational, national, and supranational levels have become interconnected (Hooghe and Marks *Multi-Level Governance* 26-7; Connolly "Secession" 79; Moore 17; Christiansen 94).

In light of these concomitant processes: a rise in calls for regional autonomy, deeper European integration, and increased regional mobilisation at the supranational level, Seth Jolly introduced the “viability theory” (Jolly 152-3). This theory posits that European integration has made regions seeking autonomy less dependent on their constituent MS and thus more viable as independent units in Europe (Ibid 150-1). This constitutes a “political opportunity structure” that regionalist parties can use to their advantage, which has “encouraged regionalist mobilisation in the form of regionalist political parties” (Ibid). As such, this theory implies that the effect of European integration on regionalist parties is universal across space and time. However, regionalist party responses to European integration vary substantially between one another. In Catalonia and Scotland regionalist parties have become powerful actors seeking independence, but the same cannot be said for regionalist parties in Friesland and Brittany, where regionalist parties are much weaker and seek more autonomy rather than independence (Webber 101; Ross 3; Dandoy and Schakel 101; Hemminga 141). Furthermore, in other regions, such as the German Länder, scholars argue that European integration has actually consolidated or even “reinforced” the domestic, institutional status quo (Goetz 111-2; Bauer 258-60). This thesis will therefore attempt to account for these variations by asking: *to what extent do domestic cultural, political, and economic factors impact the influence of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties, studied from the Frisian and Catalanian experience?*

In order to answer this question, the first chapter will outline this thesis’ research design. The second chapter will discuss the manner in which this thesis conceptualises the EU. The third chapter will then analyse how European integration has become relevant for the regions by discussing regional mobilisation at the European level. The fourth chapter will expound on this by analysing the reasons why European integration is relevant for regionalist parties in particular and how the EU has responded to the rise of regionalist parties. Chapter five will proceed to examine the domestic factors that may have contributed to the rise of regionalist parties in Friesland and Catalonia, which is then followed by a discussion on how

these factors pertain to the impact of European integration on regionalist parties in chapter six. This thesis hypothesises that the effect of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties is, in part, determined by domestic variables. The effect of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties is therefore best conceived of as a catalyst on pre-existing conditions rather than an explanatory framework in and of itself.

The rise of regionalist parties is in this thesis conceived of as a reflection of the increasing popularity of regionalist aims throughout Europe. Regionalist movements are diverse and are thus a difficult unit of analysis, but regionalist parties are more visible and their success is easier to assess. Besides, regional political parties are the main interface between the central government and the region; they are thus important components of regionalist movements, as regionalist parties can bargain on behalf of the region for more autonomy. The stronger the regionalist party, the stronger the regionalist movement is in face of the central government (Jolly 150). As such, it is assumed that regional desires for autonomy or independence will, generally speaking, translate to the electoral success, or rise, of regionalist parties – though this support is also dependent on other factors, such as the party's political leanings.

This thesis will add to the literature by expanding on Jolly's viability thesis. In doing so, this thesis refines the manner in which European integration contributes to the rise of regionalist parties, as it also takes domestic variables into account. Moreover, by focusing on Catalonia, where there is arguably the strongest desire for independence in Europe at the moment, and Friesland, where the opposite seems true, I hope to further explore the ways in which European integration intersects with regional desires for more autonomy. At a time when the future of Europe is contested and regions are increasingly asserting their desire for increased autonomy or independence, it is critical to gain a better understanding of this process.

Chapter 1: Variables, Methods, and Cases

This thesis seeks to account for the variation in the rise of regionalist parties across space by determining the manner in which domestic factors may have impacted the effect of European integration on regionalist parties. As such, both European integration as well as domestic factors are considered variables that influence the rise of regionalist parties in Europe.

One of the few academics who has written on the manner in which European integration affects regionalist parties is Seth Jolly (for others, see: Nagel; Keating "European Integration"; Saylan; Elias *Minority Nationalist*). In his book: *The European Union and the Rise of Regionalist Parties* Jolly developed the viability theory, which convincingly argues that European integration has led to a rise in regionalist parties in Europe. The viability theory is therefore a critical part of this thesis, as it constitutes an important element of the effect of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties. However, the viability theory is not the only manner in which European integration affects regionalist parties (see: Elias *Minority Nationalist*). Consequently, this thesis will attempt to elaborate on Jolly's theory and incorporate other ways in which European integration may affect regionalist parties as well.

Having said that, as mentioned above, European integration alone cannot account for the differing levels of success of regionalist parties in Europe. This thesis therefore seeks to analyse how domestic factors may have impacted the influence of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties. The academic literature generally explains regionalist movements from cultural, political, and economic perspectives (Jolly 33; Houten 134; Serrano; Kubo; Cox). This is confirmed by the work of Robert Liñeira and Daniel Cetra, who argue that "identity, politics, and the economy are behind the independence claims in Europe" (8). These will therefore be used to determine how domestic variables may have impacted the course of regionalist parties in Europe.

The cultural argument is diverse, but revolves around the distinct identity that is at the root of independence movements and the attitudes belonging to that identity. A group must perceive itself to be distinct from the national identity and potentially have suffered grievances, perceived or real, at the hands of the dominant identity in order to make independence viable (Kubo; Collier and Hoeffler). Political factors concern the political system of a state. The degree of power with which a region is endowed or the nature of the party system can be conducive or inhibitive of calls for independence or increased autonomy (Houten 134; Serrano 540-1). Economic explanations for the rise of regionalist parties have been the most dominant (Cox 191-3). This denotes the "economic precondition" that contributes "to the origins and

spread of (state-challenging) nationalism” (Ibid). Depending on the economic position of a region, regionalists may perceive themselves to have been deprived of “their rightful share of material benefits” and, as such, perceive an “economic advantage” in independence (Cox 199; Collier and Hoeffler 37-9). This thesis will determine how these factors may impact the effect of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties in Friesland and Catalonia.

In order to satisfactorily address the research question. This thesis will deploy a within-case coupled with a cross-case analysis, as that allows for an in-depth account of regionalist desires in a particular region as well as a comparison of the cases. In doing so, this thesis will rely on primary and secondary sources in combination with statistical evidence, such as measured support for increased autonomy or independence, voting behaviour over time, and measures of regional self-identification. These sources are complemented with two interviews. These interviews were semi-structured with open-ended questions. This permitted a conversational and in-depth interview, as it allowed me to prompt the interviewee when necessary – which may not have been achieved with a structured interview.

In order to provide sufficient depth in both the within-case and cross-case analysis, this thesis focuses on two cases: Catalonia and Friesland. Both regions have a distinct identity and well-established regionalist parties. However, their respective regionalist parties vary significantly in electoral success. Additionally, the Frisian Nationalist Party (FNP) seeks greater autonomy whereas Catalan regionalist parties, such as Junts per Catalunya (JxCat) and Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya (ERC), seek independence. This comparison can thus provide an interesting insight into the effect of European integration on regionalist parties and the relative importance of domestic factors.

This research design, and the different methods used in it, will allow this thesis to triangulate why regionalist parties may respond differently to the process of European integration. However, despite the merits of this approach, some limitations have to be pointed out. First, the validity of the interviews is limited due to the chosen approach and, more importantly, the number of interviews that were conducted. Although the semi-structured approach allowed for an in-depth, conversational interview, it compromised on the consistency between the interviews. Consequently, the interviews differ from each other in terms of the exact questions asked, which makes it difficult to compare them. Moreover, due to time constraints and scheduling difficulties only two interviews were conducted, which limits the contribution these interviews can make to this thesis. As such, these interviews will only be used in support of evidence found in other sources. Second, although a comparison of two cases may provide a detailed picture of the two regions and provide an explanatory framework

for them, it may not necessarily be applicable to all other regions in Europe. As such, it is difficult to generalise the results of this particular comparison. Third, much more has been written about the Catalonian case compared to the Frisian case. This discrepancy may detract value from the comparison even though it adds to the literature. Fourth, the domestic variables used in this thesis are not exhaustive and may play out differently in different cases, which, again, must be taken into account when proceeding to generalisations.

Chapter 2: A Multilevel Federal Conceptualisation of the EU

The degree to which the European MS have pooled sovereignty at the supranational level has given rise to an entity, the EU, that both supersedes and is a product of the European MS. It is important to understand this complex reality in order to discuss the role of the regions, for the manner in which the EU operates determines the role that regions can play in it. This chapter will therefore briefly discuss the role of the state in European politics and examine the emergence of a multilevel federal polity.

The Role of the State

One of the most profound disagreements in European integration theory is the degree to which the EU is a supranational or intergovernmental actor. This disagreement ultimately comes down to the importance of the state in European politics. It is undeniable that the MS have remained pivotal actors; however, the arena in which they operate has been altered significantly through the process of European integration and the concomitant process of state decentralisation (Hooghe, Marks and Schakel 67; Tatham and Bauer 1368; Marks, Hooghe and Blank 371; Vermeulen 2). Through these two processes a complex, multilevel system has emerged in which the state is no longer the only relevant actor – though they remain the most powerful one (Keating "Multilevel Federation" 621).

This is substantiated by several characteristics of the current European political framework. First, states are no longer entirely successful in fulfilling their role as “gate-keeper” between the supranational and subnational level of government (Piattoni 166; Tatham "With or without You" 77). The subnational and supranational are increasingly able to “by-pass” the state and influence each other directly – though the degree and manner in which they do is contested (Noferini 379; Chacha 209; Keating, Hooghe and Tatham 456). Second, the changed role of the EU institutions. Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) in the Council of the European Union has been extended to include a great number of policy areas and, in these same policy areas, the European Parliament (EP) has been made a co-legislator. As such, the EU has now the ability to act relatively independently – or at least without the consent of each and every MS – in policy areas ranging from trade, to the internal market, to environmental policy. Moreover, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) has, since its inception, been an

important driver of supranationalism, most notably by interpreting EU law as supreme, even though this has not been codified in the Treaties (Stone Sweet 5). Third, regions have increasingly mobilised themselves at the European level through the creation of the Committee of the Regions and the establishment of regional offices. The latter is particularly relevant, as it shows that MS cannot adequately represent their regions' interests in the EU. The next chapter will elaborate further on this regional dimension of European integration. Nonetheless, the EU has become more than just an intergovernmental framework through which its members cooperate; it has become an entity with a degree of agency that the regions themselves also attempt to influence, even though it is a project by and for its MS (Bailer 50).

Although the MS are no longer the only relevant actors in the EU, they are still the most powerful ones, as they have remained firmly in the drivers' seat of European integration. This is exemplified by European treaty-making and the European institutional constellation. The EU is governed through intergovernmental treaty-making, which requires the consent of every participating state. The EU can therefore only act relatively independently in policy areas if the EU MS have agreed beforehand, as its "contracting parties," that it can do so (Preamble *TEU*; Bailer 50-1). This is substantiated by article 5 of the Treaty on European Union (TEU): "the Union shall act only within the limits of the competences conferred upon it by the MS." The EU may therefore be integrated to an unprecedented level and its institutions can to a degree act independently, but that integration has come about on the terms of the MS.

MS have also retained a strong foothold in the European institutional framework. The current European decision-making process may no longer be dominated by the MS, but the MS still exert control over the process through the European Council. Officially, the European Council provides the "general political directions" of the EU, which is not an official legislative function, but its political clout entails that its conclusions cannot be ignored (Puetter 162; Art. 15 *TEU*). Although this importance was only formalised in the Treaty of Lisbon (ToL), it has been strengthened considerably since, mainly because of the Eurozone crisis (Fabbrini and Puetter 488). The nature of this crisis required ad-hoc decision-making in sensitive policy areas, as there were no mechanisms in place at the time to deal with the crisis (Ibid 484). This, coupled with the fact that MS remain in control of treaty-making, shows that they are still vital actors in European politics (Marks, Hooghe and Blank 346). Moreover, it has led some to argue that the state is reasserting itself in EU politics, which is reflected in the academic literature through the 'new intergovernmentalist' turn (Bickerton, Hodson and Puetter; Schimmelfennig "Claims").

In sum, despite increased agency of the EU, due to the strengthened supranational institutions, the role of the MS should not be understated. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the EU MS have created some form of European political arena that they no longer have full control over. This is important when considering the role of the regions in European politics.

A Multilevel Federal System?

European integration theory has long been dominated by neofunctionalism and intergovernmentalism. Although the field has, by and large, moved beyond this divide, state-centric approaches have remained relatively dominant through, most prominently, Liberal Intergovernmentalism (LI) (Pollack 3). The importance of LI is best underlined by Moravcsik and Schimmelfennig themselves, who argue that LI, and its state-centrism, has become a “baseline theory” by which competing theories are measured (Schimmelfennig "Liberal Intergovernmentalism" 179). This section, however, will discuss the conceptualisation of the EU as a multilevel federation. In doing so, it first discusses the increased, academic focus on the role of the regions in European politics, then moves on to multilevel governance as a theory of integration, and concludes with the analytical merits of conceiving of the EU as a multilevel federation.

Since the 1990s a considerable body of academic work has emphasised the “regional dimension” of European politics (Jeffery; Hepburn; Stephenson; Hooghe and Marks *Multi-Level Governance*; Keating, Hooghe and Tatham; Panara and De Becker; Bache and Flinders; Hooghe, Marks and Schakel). The increased importance of regions in European politics gained prominence in the academic debate on European integration in the aftermath of the Treaty of Maastricht (ToM). This treaty seemed to confirm, through the creation of the CoR, the increased emphasis on regional policy, and the introduction of subsidiarity, that European integration and state decentralisation had given way to a less state-centred Europe (Marks, Hooghe and Blank 371; Bailey and Propris 408; Bullmann 12; Commission "The Maastricht Treaty"). A significant number of scholars therefore argued for a reconceptualisation of European integration theory. One of the most extreme and famous forms hereof was the notion of an emergent ‘Europe of the Regions,’ which argued that the power of the nation-state would diminish in favour of that of subnational and supranational entities (Loughlin 150-1). This may sound straightforward, but its proponents, such as Jacques Delors, subnational actors, and

academics, differed significantly on the practical application (Elias "Introduction" 483; Bullmann 16-7). Although time has shown that this idea was “overblown,” it became “one of the most popular metaphors” for the future of European integration and thus inspired a broad body of academic work concerning the regions (Tömmel 52; Keating "A Quarter Century" 635; Elias "Introduction" 485).

This regional emphasis has, through the work of Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks, resulted in the now well established theory of multilevel governance (MLG). According to MLG, power has moved away from the nation-state both horizontally, to nongovernmental actors, as well as vertically, through the “emergence of new territorial levels” above and below the state (Keating "Multilevel Federation" 621; Hooghe and Marks "Unraveling the State" 233-5). It thus describes European policy-making as a consequence of a variety of actors instead of it being centralised at the state-level. This does not undercut the importance of the state; rather, it “addresses the complexity of modern policy-making” and emphasises the various stakeholders that seek to influence it (Keating "Multilevel Federation" 621). This has contributed significantly to our understanding of European politics, as it opened up new units of analysis in examining European decision-making.

However, as an ontological conceptualisation of the EU, MLG is lacking. This is due to its focus on governance, which is a rather “loose” concept (Keating "Multilevel Federation" 621). Consequently, it neglects territoriality, power relations, and the way in which the various actors view each other within the European political system (Stephenson 831-3; Keating "Multilevel Federation" 621-2). This thesis will therefore instead employ the conceptualisation of the EU as a multilevel federation, as developed by Michael Keating. It is important to note here that the federalism used in this thesis is a purely analytical tool, not a constitutional feature of, or a desired future for, European integration. Multilevel federalism combines the multilevel, complex political system visible in the EU today with an understanding of power sharing through shared rule or self-rule across various territorial levels of government (Keating "Multilevel Federation" 622). This “draws attention away from a strictly statist ontology [of the EU] and towards the multilevel interest articulation, social compromise, and policy resolution” that we see in the EU today (Ibid 629). Moreover, it articulates a vision of Europe that is not only comprised of “organisations in interaction [with each other] but of political communities [with] greater or lesser cohesion and as governments resting on popular consent” (Ibid). Such a view of the EU aids our understanding of the interaction between the disparate regions and the supranational EU. In addition, it captures the context in which this interaction occurs as one in which all entities struggle for territoriality and power. In other words, it

describes a Europe in which policies are enacted and contested by various levels of government who act either in concert or competition with each other, depending on the national or regional political system. The federalist lens aids in such an analysis due to its focus on power sharing across the levels of government and the multilevel aspect draws in the disparate, regional actors in addition to the state and European level. This provides an explanatory framework through which we can conceptualise the EU.

Essentially, the role of the state in European politics has been significantly challenged since the ToM. This is the consequence of two concomitant processes: European integration and state decentralisation. Rather than denying the importance of the role of the state in the EU, concluding that powers have flowed from the state to supranational and subnational actors simply entails that a state-centred approach to EU politics no longer entirely reflects reality (Huwyler, Tatham and Blatter 772). The emergence and salience of MLG underlines this. However, as a concept, MLG is ontologically static and lacks normative foundations (Keating "Multilevel Federation" 621). As such, this thesis argues that we should conceptualise the EU as a multilevel federation in which all levels of government cooperate or compete with each other in the process of European policy-making.

The role that regions and regionalist parties can play in the European political arena is in part determined by the nature of the polity in which they operate. By using a multilevel federalist understanding of EU politics, it becomes possible to analyse how regionalist parties are affected by European integration or how they seek to use it for their own aims.

Chapter 3: Regional Mobilisation in the EU

This chapter seeks to demonstrate that the multilevel federation described in the previous chapter has come about. In order to do so, this chapter will analyse how regions have become active at the European level and expound on their position in the European framework through the notion of regional mobilisation, which denotes the process of increased regional involvement in European decision-making (Hooghe 175; Groenendijk 21-2; Tatham "With or without You" 85; Marks et al.). This is a critical part of this thesis, because the process of regional mobilisation is evidence of the changing European political structure, as described in the previous chapter, that, in turn, has influenced the rise of regionalist parties. Although the regions have not been pivotal in the process of European integration in the same way the EP has been, there has been a steady increase of regional mobilisation in Brussels since the 1980s (Panara and De Becker 342; Tatham "Going Solo" 493). This has been propelled to greater importance by the ToM and has been consolidated by the ToL. The manners in which regional mobilisation has manifested itself in the EU is discussed below.

The first, and perhaps plainest, manner in which regions have been mobilised at the European level is through the creation of the CoR. This committee was created in 1994 to give regions a voice in European decision-making. By involving the regions in the European decision-making process, the EU sought to enhance its democratic legitimacy, as it brought European decisions closer to the citizens (Cole 49-51; Dinan 311; Regions). However, the CoR was also established in light of the EU's expanding competences. As the EU's competences increased, they clashed more and more with those of subnational authorities, particularly those of the regions. Consequently, regional authorities had to implement European policies without having the ability to scrutinise them (Jeffery and Rowe 381-2). At the national level, the competences of the regions are enshrined in the respective national constitutions, mechanisms thus already existed for the regions to influence policy-making. However, these mechanisms were severely limited at the European level (CVCE). As such, the regions, together with the EP and Commission, pressed for a regional platform in the EU (Jeffery and Rowe 381-2; CVCE). Although the type of policy that regions want to influence is markedly diverse, due to the varying nature of powers that the different regions have under their respective constitutions, regional policy is undoubtedly high on the list of priorities for most (Panara and De Becker 306). As of today, it covers nearly a third of the entire EU budget and it exists to bridge persisting economic disparities between regions and to create sustainable growth by investing in policy areas that are in line with the EU's priorities: supporting "job creation, business

competitiveness, economic growth, (...) and improving citizens' quality of life" (Commission "The EU"). Moreover, since the 1988 reform of the structural funds, "subnational governments" are "entitled" to help make these policies through the partnership principle (Bailey and Propriis 408). This, coupled with the increasing competences of the EU, made it clear to the regions, who did not want to be "wholly controlled by their national governments," that there was a need to influence European policy-making directly (Nugent 231). The combination of these factors culminated in the creation of the CoR.

The CoR is a consultative body in the European institutional constellation and is comprised of local and regional representatives (Cooper 539). Although the CoR provides subnational actors with a forum in Brussels, its relevance and ability to shape policy has been hotly debated and has therefore often been downplayed (Hönnige and Panke 452). While some argue that the CoR is inconsequential and contributes little to the EU, others stipulate that it has, under certain circumstances, been able to assert itself and successfully influence policy-making, despite its advisory role (ALDE 8; Carroll 353). The CoR's powers have been consistently strengthened over the years, now including mandatory consultation in specific policy areas and the ability to defend their prerogatives at the CJEU (Thies 52; Colom 240). The latter has effectively transformed the CoR into a "subsidiarity watchdog," which is further discussed below (Jeffery and Rowe 378-82).

Although the relevance of the CoR is up for debate, its creation has had an important consequence: it opened up a sanctioned space for subnational actors to influence European policy-making directly and without involvement of their constituent MS. Many regions and municipalities have therefore established their own representation in Brussels to do so unilaterally, which is evidenced by the rise in subnational offices in Brussels from 54 in 1993 to 338 in 2013 (Tatham and Thau 257; Panara 68). This is particularly noteworthy because it signifies that regions prefer to represent themselves rather than being represented by their MS. With their own offices, subnational governments can lobby for their respective policy goals, which may diverge from those of their constituent MS. Regions have thus been provided with a distinct, albeit limited, voice in European policy-making, which substantiates the multilevel federal conceptualisation of the EU (Tatham "Going Solo" 511).

Secondly, regions have also increasingly been involved with the European decision-making process at a slightly less institutionalised level: through the notion of subsidiarity. Subsidiarity was introduced with the ToM to enhance the Union's democratic legitimacy. According to this principle the Union "shall act only if (...) the objectives of the proposed action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the MS, either at central level or at regional and local

level,” thus bringing decisions closer to the citizens (Art. 5(3) *TEU*). This is a “guiding principle” in all European policy-making, but is most often associated with the division of competences between the MS and the EU (Nuffel 78-9; Nugent 56). However, it is also highly relevant for the regions – particularly since the ToL, which introduced the regional and local element – because it essentially states that the most legitimate policy is devised at the lowest governmental level. This inference has powerful consequences for interpreting the nature of European integration and formed the “intellectual underpinnings” of the ‘Europe of the Regions’ (Evans 223-4). Even Lega Nord, a notoriously eurosceptic party, uses subsidiarity to bolster its regionalist aims (Lega Nord 20-1). It is no surprise, therefore, that regions often look to the EU “as an ally” in their attempt to attain more autonomy – even though the Catalanian independence referendum has shown that the EU is not keen to support them (Chacha 208-9). Furthermore, with the CoR being able to defend its prerogatives in front of the CJEU, subsidiarity is increasingly stretched further than just the relationship between the MS and the EU, also encompassing the regions (Jeffery and Rowe 391-3; Moens and Trone 100-1; Ricci 124-6). It must be noted, however, that improving the CoR’s legal standing has not changed the legal status of individual regions, which puts severe limits on the CoR’s ability to defend the principle of subsidiarity in individual cases (Thies 52). Nonetheless, subsidiarity remains another manner in which regions have been involved with the European decision-making process.

Lastly, another way in which regions, or, more specifically, regionalist parties, have been involved in European decision-making is through their cooperation in the European Free Alliance (EFA). It was founded in 1981 by six regionalist parties, including the FNP, and today encompasses forty regionalist parties vying for more autonomy within their own state. The EFA represents these regionalist parties at the EU level and advocates “the promotion of the right of self-determination of peoples” (EFA). The number of member parties has grown significantly since the ToM and some of these members are currently represented in the EP. Although this number is limited, it does provide regionalist parties with a voice in one of the EU’s most important institutions. The EFA is therefore a platform through which regionalist parties from across Europe can communicate, share best practices, and, to a degree, influence European policy-making. The EFA allows regionalist parties to learn from each other and discover the possibilities that are out there in the pursuit of enhancing their position vis-à-vis their MS. Moreover, the mere fact that these regionalist parties are able to cooperate on the European level to advance their regionalist agenda shows that the scope for regional participation in the EU has increased.

In brief, the regions have become entrenched in the European political machinery through the CoR, regional policy, the establishment of regional offices, the principle of subsidiarity, and the EFA. This happened in part in an attempt to bring European decision-making closer to the citizens, but also because European competences increasingly clashed with those of regions. As such, the regions wanted to be able to influence these policies more directly without the interference of their constituent MS (Nugent 231-2; Huwlyer, Tatham and Blatter). Although their importance has not been elevated to that of the EP, their involvement in the European decision-making process has become more consequential. Increasingly, regions bypass their constituent MS to influence European policy-making and vice versa, to the extent that state-centric views of European integration have been challenged by it (Huwlyer, Tatham and Blatter). The process of regional mobilisation has reinforced the notion of the interconnected nature of European politics and the competing, entrenched interests of these actors. European integration has thus had an important impact on the regions, as they have become actively involved with the European decision-making process in a variety of ways.

Chapter 4: Regionalist Parties and the EU

The changing dynamics of European politics through the emergence of a multilevel polity, as evidenced by the process of regional mobilisation, has been accompanied by a rise of regionalist parties throughout Europe (Jolly). Although it may seem evident that these two processes are connected, from the fact that regionalist parties view European integration generally quite positively, they are often not treated as such (Ibid 33; SNP; FNP; ERC). This chapter will therefore analyse why increased European integration may have contributed to the rise of regionalist parties and how the EU has responded to this.

Regionalist Parties and the EU: An Opportunity

Over the years, the EU has come to play an important role for the realisation of the aims of regionalist parties in Europe. Although it is difficult to assess when this started to be the case, the ToM was instrumental. Up until the ToM, European integration had by and large been the prerogative of the state. That is not to say that regional actors were not engaged with the EU prior to this, as is evidenced by the 1988 reform of the structural funds and the increasingly intersecting competences of the EU and subnational governments, particularly since the Single European Act (Bailey and Propris 408; Rowe 4; Jeffery and Rowe 381-2). However, these gradual changes were confirmed and consolidated by the ToM, as it completed the internal market, introduced a single currency, established subsidiarity and co-decision, doubled the budget for regional policy, and created means for the regions to influence European policy-making. In implementing these changes, the European MS effectively created another territorial level for regional actors to act in and be effected by, which also impacted the relations between the various domestic levels of government (Carter and Pasquier 141; Fleurke and Willemsse 85). It is important to note here, that although European integration is a uniform process, regional actors may be affected differently by it depending on the specific constitutional arrangement in which they operate (Bache and Jones 1). Nonetheless, the effect of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties is twofold.

Firstly, and most importantly, European integration has made smaller states more viable as an economic and political unit. The completion of the internal market, the introduction of a single currency, the implementation of the four freedoms, and intergovernmental cooperation

in the pursuit of foreign and security policy, have created a quasi-European state. Prior to the process of European integration, the MS and their regions had a relationship of dependency. It was beneficial for a region to be a part of a large state such as Germany, as it provided a large internal market, a more widely used currency, economies of scale, defence, and was thus beneficial to the regions (Jolly 3). With this in mind, seceding from such a structure would severely impact the economic and political prospects of a region, which made it more acceptable a region to remain a part of a state it felt it did not belong to.

The process of European integration has diminished these advantages, as the MS transferred many of the above mentioned, state competences to the European level. This “lowered the costs of secession,” because, as Mark Leonard notes, regions know they “do not have to be fully autonomous and free-standing” post-secession (Bach; Erlanger). European integration therefore increased the benefits of secession, but it did nothing to reduce the drawbacks of being a part of a state (Jolly 3). As such, European integration created a new “opportunity structure” that influences the “strategic behaviour” of regionalist parties, as they can now address the drawbacks of being a part of a larger state without suffering the economic and political consequences (Ibid 150-1). The EU thus made the desire for increased autonomy, or independence, more viable. Regionalist parties are therefore likely to be pro-European, which seems to hold true when looking at the various regionalist parties in Europe – barring exceptions such as Lega Nord (Ibid 152; ERC 62; FNP 8; SNP 29; Ålands Framtid; Ruch Autônômije Ślůnska).

To demonstrate the validity of his viability theory, Jolly relies heavily on the example of the Scottish National Party (SNP). He shows that the SNP “place[d] the EU at the heart of its independence policy (...) to reduce fears” of the repercussions of an independent Scotland (Ibid 152). This is substantiated by a statement from Alex Salmond, the former leader of the SNP:

"People say, 'What's a wee country like this going to do for an army?' (...) 'Who's going to do food and drug testing?' 'Who will issue the patents?' [Besides] 'We'll have a Scottish currency that nobody wants and a central bank that nobody listens to.' [but] the whole debate on independence has been changed by a single idea (...) and that is the EU." (Reid)

This shows, that the EU has contributed to the successes of regionalist parties in Europe by creating a situation in which these parties are allowed to thrive, as it reduced the dependency of a region on their constituent state, thus reducing the cost of increased autonomy or independence. As such, European integration has made regionalist claims more viable in the eyes of the electorate, contributing to the rise of regionalist parties.

Secondly, regionalist parties have also been affected by European integration because of the creation of a European political space, which means that their aims are no longer necessarily constrained by what is possible domestically (Višeslav 54). MS are often thought of as “gatekeepers” in domestic interest representation at the supranational level, which would imply that subnational interests are confined to the national sphere. However, European integration entails that subnational actors now have the capacity to “bypass” the MS and achieve their own goals independent of their constituent MS (Piattoni 166; Keating, Hooghe and Tatham). This is evidenced by the work of Huywler, Tatham, and Blatter, who showed that regional actors prefer to circumvent their MS when possible in the pursuit of their own aims (768). This is particularly important for regionalist parties, as they can now articulate their regionalist aims at a platform that will, by virtue of its existence, be more receptive to their aims, as the supranational political space is, in part, independent of individual MS. The EU even has a degree of control over the MS that the regions do not. As such, regionalist parties can now advocate their aims more freely at the EU level.

This is exemplified by the fact that regionalist parties have established numerous ways in which they attempt to achieve their goals at the European level. For instance, regionalist politicians mobilise like-minded politicians from different nationalities in important EU institutions, such as the EP, to achieve the changes they seek. The EFA is instrumental in this pursuit. Moreover, through the creation of this European space regionalist parties have also been able to advance a common agenda and learn from each other’s best practices. The effect of the Scottish referendum on other regionalist parties is an example hereof. Although Scotland rejected independence, other regionalist parties sent delegations and now actually call for “a Scottish-style solution” to their own regionalist case (O’Gallagher; Volkskrant; Tremosa; Appendix B). This is also emphasised by Sybren Posthumus, FNP representative of the Provincial Council of Friesland, who stated in an interview that he has regular contact with other regionalist politicians, in person or through the EFA; he even stated that he perceives European politicians affiliated to the EFA “[his] own, direct, representatives” in Brussels (Posthumus; Appendix A).¹ Although this cannot be verified and has to be taken lightly, the fact that this contact exists and is perceived to be meaningful, shows that the ability of the MS to act as a gatekeeper is not complete. Regional actors can and do attempt to achieve their aims beyond the borders of the state, particularly regionalist parties. The EU has opened up new possibilities and has become a venue to achieve goals regionalist parties cannot achieve in their

¹ Translation: “wij beschouwen de Europarlementariërs uit Wales en Corsica en uit Catalonië als onze eigen directe vertegenwoordigers”

own state. As such, the EU provides a platform to promote their cause and learn from like-minded politicians elsewhere in Europe.

The EU and Regionalist Parties: A Complicated Relationship

European integration has clearly presented an opportunity for regionalist parties and the appeal is an obvious one. The EU ostensibly represents Europeans and its laws and regulations supersede those of the MS. To regionalist parties seeking independence from a MS, the EU presents an opportunity, for those regions simply seeking more autonomy, it is a space where their desires or grievances are more likely to be recognised. However, where regionalist parties see opportunity, the opposite holds true for the EU, for whom regionalist desires are a thorny issue at best.

On the one hand, the EU sets out to respect and promote “national and regional diversity” but on the other, the EU only exists by virtue of its MS and safeguards their “territorial integrity” (Art. 2, 4 *TEU*; Art. 167 *TFEU*; Art. 22 *Charter of Fundamental Rights*). The EU thus has two contradicting responsibilities when it comes to regionalist aims: to uphold democratic values or to represent the interests of its MS. The EU’s supranational responsibilities with regard to regionalist parties include “respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and respect for (...) the rights of persons belonging to minorities” (Art. 2 *TEU*). However, they have to safeguard these values while also respecting “essential State functions, including ensuring the territorial integrity of the State” (Art. 4 *TEU*). Provided that a majority in a region is in favour of independence, which has not (yet) occurred unequivocally since the ToM, the EU cannot both represent the interest of the state and the interest of the people demanding independence or increased autonomy. Moreover, it is not even in the EU’s interest to be in favour of regionalist parties, because, as Jean-Claude Juncker noted, the EU is not equipped to absorb more smaller states, as that would further complicate the decision-making process (Reuters). This is aggravated by the fact that most regionalist parties are pro-European in a time of increasing Euroscepticism, the EU may therefore be unwilling to dash their hopes entirely for fear of losing their support (Jolly 121-2). The EU is therefore ambivalent, at best, towards regionalist parties.

This is emphasised by both the Catalanian call for independence in October of last year and the Scottish referendum in 2014. Although the legality of the Catalanian independence

referendum can be called into question, as well as its results, the EU actively tried to distance itself from the situation. The EU refused a mediation role, for instance, because the Spanish government had not requested it, which is a requirement for the EU to take up such a role. Moreover, in spite of evidence showing that the Spanish government used “excessive force” against “largely peaceful protesters,” EU leaders from Donald Tusk, to Emmanuel Macron, to the Commission continued to refer to the crisis as “an internal matter” that was not “on the agenda” (BBC “Catalan Crisis”; Tisdall). However, the use of force did not comply with the human rights the EU purportedly represents, which ought to have made it more than just an internal matter (HRW; BBC “Catalan Crisis”; Barber). This shows that the EU has difficulty balancing its responsibility to protect human rights with its other responsibility: representing the MS and their respective legal orders. When it comes down to it, the EU is more likely to represent its MS rather than its values, which speaks volumes as to the nature of the EU. Although the Scottish bid for independence was completely different from the one in Catalonia, if only because it was legal, the reaction of the EU was relatively similar. This is substantiated by then Commission president, Jose Manuel Barroso, and his successor, Jean-Claude Juncker, who both stated that Scottish membership of the EU would not be automatic nor likely if Scotland chose independence (BBC “Scottish Independence”; Ross).

In sum, European integration has had a significant impact on regionalist parties. First, because the creation of the EU has made the claims of regionalist parties more viable in the eyes of the electorate. Regions are no longer dependent, politically or economically, on their MS due to European integration. As such, the cost of independence, or increased autonomy, has decreased, making regionalist parties more viable. In addition, the European MS have created a supranational space that they cannot fully control. This has provided regionalist parties with a platform that will, by virtue of its existence, be more receptive to their ideas. Moreover, it is a place where they can cooperate with, and learn from, like-minded politicians to achieve their goals. These two outcomes of European integration have contributed to the rise of regionalist parties in Europe. Consequently, many regionalist parties are pro-European and look to the EU “as an ally” (Chacha 208-9). However, this sentiment may not be reciprocated by the EU, as it remains apprehensive of these regionalist parties, despite the fact that its existence is in part attributable to the rise of regionalist parties.

Chapter 5: A Tale of Two Regions

The previous chapter clearly shows that European integration has played an important role in the rise of regionalist parties. This is demonstrated by the SNP and Catalanian regionalist parties, such as JxCat and ERC, who successfully deployed the EU in making their case for independence viable (SNP 29; Birnbaum; ERC 62; Jolly 121). Although using European integration as an explanatory framework for the rise of regionalist parties has contributed significantly to our understanding of this phenomenon, such an approach does leave a theoretical gap, as European integration does not seem to account for certain variations (Nagel 73-4). This is evidenced by two observations.

First, the successes of regionalist parties vary to a considerable extent. The Occitan Party in southern France is one example among many that has only attained negligible electoral successes in its own region (Miodownik and Cartrite 61-7; Nagel 73-4). This is in stark contrast to the successful regionalist parties in Catalonia, Flanders, and Scotland. European integration cannot explain why regions such as Flanders and Catalonia are more successful in asserting regionalist claims than others, such as Brittany or Friesland (Houten 110-11). Second, Jolly argues that, as a rule, regionalist parties are pro-European. Consequently, he treats contradicting examples, such as Lega Nord's and Vlaams Belang's position on the EU, as exceptions to that rule (Jolly 105, 24, 52). However, if the EU has created favourable conditions for regionalist parties to thrive, it should follow that they, at least tacitly, support the EU. This, however, is not reflected in their political views. Here, again, the effects of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties falls short as an explanatory framework. This suggests that other, domestic factors compound or perhaps inhibit the effects of European integration on regionalist parties. As such, this chapter will compare the regionalist parties of two regions: Catalonia and Friesland and determine how domestic variables impacted the course of their respective regionalist parties.

Catalonia

The Catalanian regionalist movement is perhaps the most well-known in Europe, particularly following the events that led up to the independence referendum of October 2017 (Bourne 95). As such, a great deal has been written on the topic (Bourne; Burg; Connolly "Independence"; Greer; Guibernau "Secessionism"; Keating *Nations against the State*;

Moreno; Muro and Vlaskamp; Patrick; Rico and Liñeira; Serrano; Smith). This section will attempt to condense this literature by discussing how cultural, political, and economic variables may have affected Catalanian desires for increased autonomy and independence.

A Brief Overview of the Catalanian Case

Before going into the variables themselves, it is important to situate them into the Catalanian regionalist movement and, particularly, the events that led up to the independence referendum of October 2017.

The Catalanian cause for independence has dominated the news for the past eight years, but the struggle for independence is relatively recent (Rico and Liñeira 257-8). Post-Franco Catalanian politics has been shaped, in large part, by the distinct Catalanian identity and a relatively high support for increased autonomy, as is evidenced by figure 1 and 2. However, for most of this time, the focus was on increased autonomy, not independence. This is underscored by Catalonia's largest party from 1980 until it dissolved in 2015: Convergence and Union (CiU). The CiU publicly opposed independence but was in favour of more autonomy. In the words of Jordi Pujol, the CiU's leader in the 1980s and 1990s, "the Catalan national option must exist within the unity of Spain" (Burg 291; Keating *Nations against the State* 128). This changed radically in the run-up to the 2012 elections, when the CiU started to advocate for Catalanian independence. This shift in preference, from autonomy to independence, is also visible among the voters, whose desire for independence increased exponentially from 2006 onwards (see fig. 3).

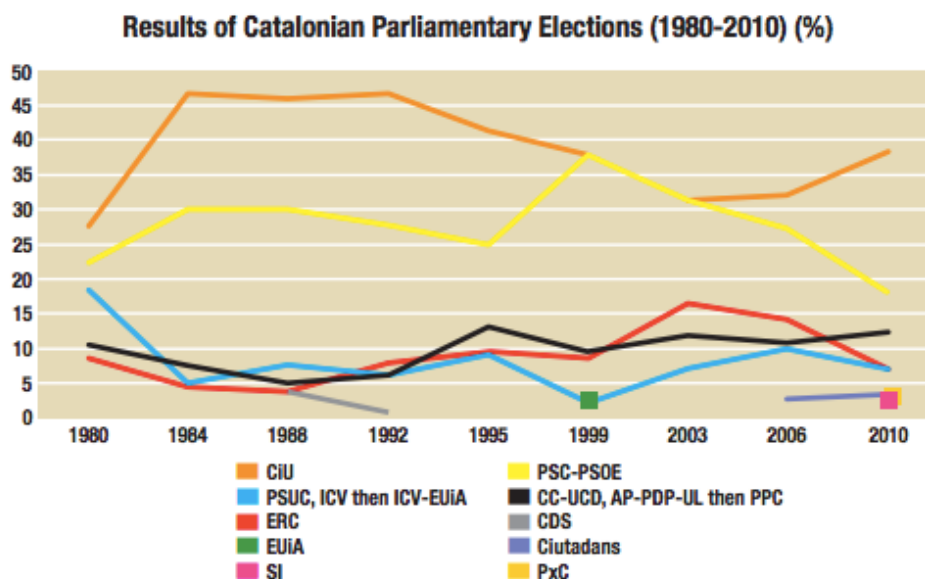


Fig. 1. Results in Percentages of Catalan Parliamentary Elections (1980-2010) from: Petithomme, Mathieu, and Alicia Fernández Garcia. "Catalonian Nationalism in Spain's Time of Crisis: From Asymmetrical Federalism to Independence?" *The Federal Idea: A Quebec Think Tank on Federalism* (2013). Print.

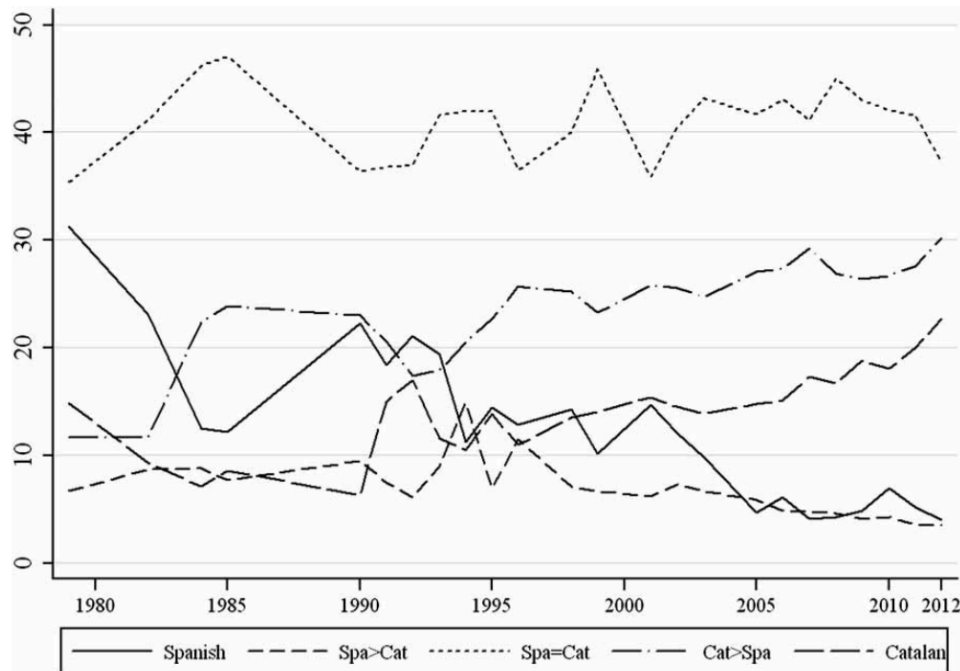


Fig. 2. Evolution of national identification in Catalonia 1979–2011 from: Serrano, Ivan. "Just a Matter of Identity? Support for Independence in Catalonia." *Regional & Federal Studies* 23.5 (2013): 523-45. Print.

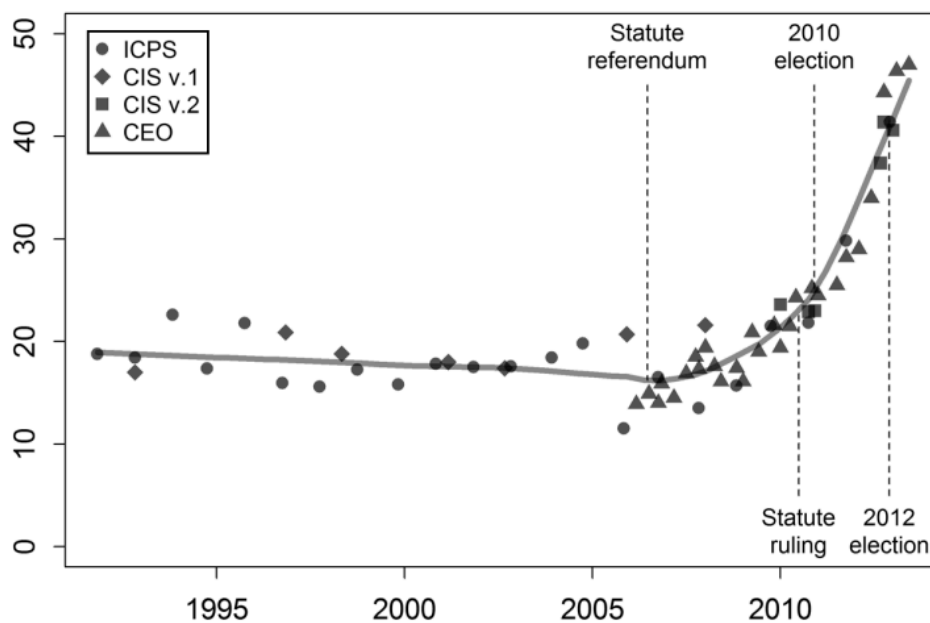


Fig. 3. Support for Independence in Percentages over Time from: Rico, Guillem, and Robert Liñeira. "Bringing Secessionism into the Mainstream: The 2012 Regional Election in Catalonia." *South European Society and Politics* 19.2 (2014): 257-80. Print.

This shift was both politically as well as economically motivated. The former finds its roots in the Spanish constitutional court's verdict in 2010 on the 2006 statute of autonomy (SA) (Rico and Liñeira 261). After the death of Franco in 1975, Spain set-up 17 autonomous regions that each had their own SA with the Spanish state – a “regional charter governing all aspects of political life” (Rico and Liñeira 261). The original Catalanian statute went into effect in 1979 and, by the mid-1990s, all powers designated to Catalonia had been devolved. This, coupled with a perceived increase in nationalist tendencies from the Spanish government and reduced fears of prosecution due to the successful implementation of a democratic system, sparked a debate in Catalonia on achieving more autonomy (Ibid). However, the CiU's modest attempts at achieving further autonomy were considered insufficient. (Burg 291). As such, the CiU was forced into the opposition in 2003 and a new left-wing Catalanian government started to develop a revised SA, which would redefine Catalonia's regional, institutional set-up, granting it more autonomy (Sturcke; Rico and Liñeira 261). However, this revision was not received favourably by the ruling Spanish Popular Party at the time, but the opposition leader, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero, of the Spanish Socialist party “voiced his support” (Burg 291; Sturcke). This helped the Socialist party to a “surprise” victory in the 2004 national election and thus secured backing from the Spanish central state for a revised SA (Sturcke). Despite this, the statute Catalonia eventually proposed still experienced fierce opposition from Madrid, not only from Spanish Conservatives, who feared it would jeopardise the integrity of Spain, but also from within José Zapatero's own party (Burg 291; Sturcke). Consequently, only a watered-down version of the statute was passed by the Spanish legislature, which Catalonia ratified in a referendum in 2006 (Rico and Liñeira 261; Calamur; Sturcke). Although this increased Catalonia's autonomy, it caused a regional political crisis and sowed the seeds for future discontent (Sturcke).

The Spanish Conservatives remained dissatisfied, however, and proceeded to challenge the watered-down SA in the Spanish constitutional court, which struck some of its most important articles down in 2010 (Guibernau "Secessionism" 381-2). Among these were the articles that put the “Catalan language above Spanish (...), ruled as unconstitutional regional powers over courts and judges,” and argued that “the interpretation of the references to ‘Catalonia as a nation’ (...) [had] no legal effect” (Calamur). This dealt a serious political blow

to the Catalan regionalist parties, as it convinced them that their desires for autonomy were not feasible for as long as they remained a part of Spain. This was exacerbated by the economic crisis of 2008, as the crisis intensified perceived economic grievances between Catalonia and Spain, which will be elaborated on below (Burg 293; Colomer 952; Guibernau "Secessionism" 283; Appendix B). The combined effect of these political and economic crises instilled in many Catalonians a sense that Catalonia was, and would continue to be, treated unfairly by Spain. This perception facilitated the shift of Catalan regionalist parties from seeking increased autonomy to seeking outright independence (Rico and Liñeira 258).

Cultural Factors

The history of Catalan-Spanish relations has been long and complex and is marked by periods of suppression and relative autonomy (Breen et al. 2). Although this history is important, the manner in which regionalists in Catalonia remember it, is perhaps even more so. The narrative, whether true or not, helps construct the Catalan identity and makes Catalonia distinct from Spain. The Catalan desire for independence can be roughly traced back to the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714), which created Spain as we know it today and subsumed Catalonia into it (Kamen 278-9). The importance of this moment is emphasised by the National Day of Catalonia, which takes place every 11 September and commemorates the fall of Barcelona in 1714. Over the last few years, this event has transformed from a commemoration into a moment to rally behind Catalan independence with marches being organised. This has imbued the moment with significance (Jones "One Million Catalans"). Moreover, the War of the Spanish Succession is actively deployed to promote Catalan distinctiveness. This is exemplified by the fact that pro-independence Catalonians sometimes "insult" the Spanish by calling them "botiflers," meaning "allies of Philip V" and that the siege of Barcelona is compared to sieges at "Sarajevo" and "Leningrad" (Sapiens 1-63; Breen et al. 10; Erickson). The use of these comparisons are relevant, as they are drawn from more recent European history and evoke a particular emotion of resistance against a violent oppressor. The continued commemoration of these events therefore upholds Catalan distinctiveness. This unites Catalonia as a single unit in face of those who want to take their autonomy away, as happened on multiple occasions in the past (Guibernau "Images of Catalonia" 108).

This is best exemplified by the Spanish Civil War (1937-1939). The Second Spanish Republic (1931-1939) had significantly increased Catalonia's autonomy, but when Francisco

Franco won the Civil War after conquering Catalonia in 1939 – the last stronghold of the republic – a period of severe suppression followed. Franco’s regime (1939-1975) banned the Catalan language, eradicated Catalan political institutions, and prohibited “all symbolic elements of Catalan identity” (Guibernau "Prospects" 10). This has had a great impact on the Catalonian psyche – as is evidenced by the Catalonian response to Spanish state violence following the referendum in October – and instilled the notion in Catalonians that their culture had to be preserved (Jones "Catalan Leader"). Consequently, the first regional government after the death of Franco, headed by the CiU, actively engaged in an attempt to revive Catalonian culture without upsetting the Spanish government in the process (Guibernau "Images of Catalonia" 109). One of the most prominent areas in which this occurred was language. Catalan has become more prevalent since the 1980s and exposure to the language has been satisfactorily linked to the development of “Catalan feelings” and “political preference” (Clots- Figueras and Masella). This has resulted in a general rise of Catalonian self-identification, which, in turn, led to the conviction that the Catalonian claim to nationhood was legitimate in a democratic state (see fig. 2; Guibernau "Images of Catalonia" 109; Guibernau "Prospects" 22). The fact that Spain remains “unsympathetic” to this and wants to maintain the status quo, has created feelings of “resentment” that have contributed to the rise of regionalist parties based on lines of self-identification (Guibernau "Prospects" 21-2).

Political Factors

There are several ways in which political factors can inhibit or facilitate the rise of regionalist movements. One of these is the nature of the national political system in which regional actors operate, whether it is decentralised, centralised, or federal for instance. Although there seems to be consensus that this has an effect on regionalist parties, whether it inhibits or contributes to the rise of regionalist parties, has not been answered satisfactorily (Serrano 525; Martínez- Herrera 421-2). Decentralisation can, for example, enhance support for regionalist desires, because it could allow for regional culture to flourish, which could attract more support at the expense of the state identity (Martínez- Herrera 446-8). However, a central government’s “recognition of cultural diversity” could also make a region’s culture feel “respected” and thus enhance both state and regional identity (Ibid).

The Spanish state is unitary, in the sense that the constitution stipulates it is “indivisible,” but, simultaneously, it is highly decentralised –the OECD calls it a “quasi-federal” state (Jones "Can Catalonia"; OECD *Spain*). Nonetheless, this particular political system allows for "competition among political parties and territorial governments,” which creates “incentives” for regionalist parties to take root (Colomer 1990). As fig. 2 shows, the decentralisation of Spain, following the death of Francisco Franco, coincides with an increase in Catalanian self-identification. Moreover, the percentage of Catalanian citizens preferring a Spanish centralised state has dropped from 33 percent in 1976, to 7 percent in 1998 (Ibid 440; see fig. 4). This suggests that the Spanish political system does seem to enhance regional desires for increased autonomy – though such a conclusion is tentative. Particularly because the recent increase in public support for Catalanian independence is tightly coupled with Spanish challenges to Catalanian attempts to achieve more autonomy (Appendix C).

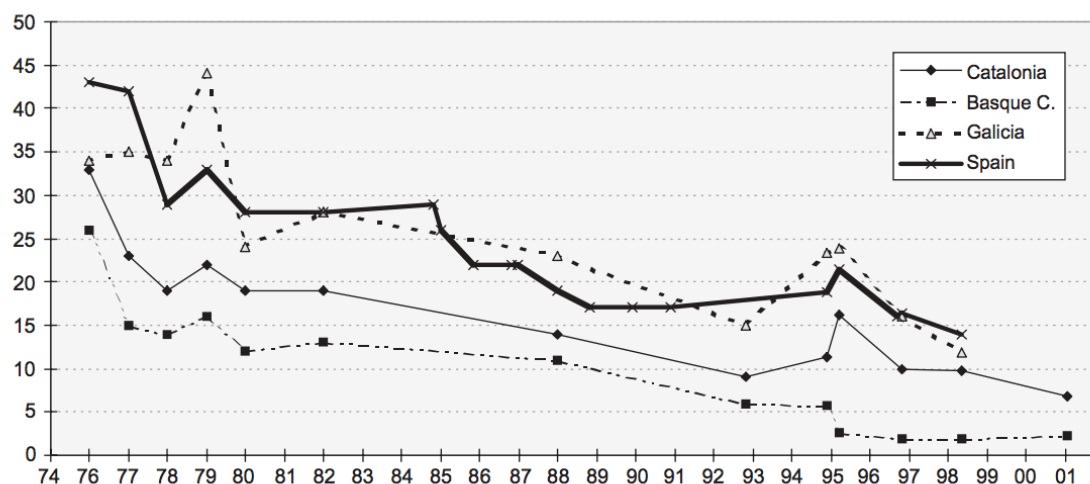


Fig. 4. Preference for a Centralised State in Percentages over Time from Martínez-Herrera, Enric. "From Nation-Building to Building Identification with Political Communities: Consequences of Political Decentralisation in Spain, the Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia, 1978–2001." *European Journal of Political Research* 41.4 (2003): 421-53. Print.

Economic Factors

As aforementioned, economic factors have long been considered crucial in explaining the rise of regionalist parties (Collier and Hoeffler; Liñeira and Cetrà; Serrano 532). The literature postulates that “regions (...) that are better off than the rest of the country will have a higher likelihood of demanding secession, since they often subsidise poorer regions” (Liñeira and Cetrà 4-5). If a region is a net-contributor to the central state, which the Catalanian

government is, it cannot spend the money it sends to the central state on welfare in their own region, for instance (Ibid; Serrano 532). As Catalonia is one of the wealthiest regions in Spain, it is no surprise that economic factors are important for Catalonia to seek further autonomy or even independence (Harris). Catalanian politicians, and increasingly the public as well, perceive that they pay more to the central state than they get back in services, which is exemplified by the central state's fiscal deficit with Catalonia (Tremlett; El National; Guibernau "Secessionism" 380-83). This discontent with the economic status quo has "intensified" as a consequence of the economic crisis, as the recession hit Catalonia and Spain hard. Many Catalonians therefore perceive that their money would be better spend in their own region rather than elsewhere in Spain (Burg 293; Guibernau "Secessionism" 383). This has created the feeling that Catalonians are treated unfairly by the Spanish central state on a fiscal as well as political level, which, in turn, fuels regionalist parties seeking increased autonomy and independence (Muñoz and Tormos; Liñeira and Cetrà 4-5; Serrano 534)

Friesland

In contrast to Catalonia, Scotland, and Flanders, the Frisian regionalist movement has not received much attention in the academic literature (Hemminga; Hakkers; Penrose; Feitsma; van der Zwet "European Integration"; van der Zwet "To See Ourselves"; Duijvendak). Although they have a distinct culture and language, increased autonomy for Friesland has never been a subject of great debate, as evidenced by the electoral success of the FNP (see fig. 5). Moreover, the FNP advocates for increased autonomy, there is no political party that advocates an independent Friesland (de Mik). Nonetheless, there is a clear Frisian identity and a well-established regionalist party that seeks to preserve that identity and achieve greater autonomy for Friesland (Hakkers; FNP). This section will therefore delve deeper into the Frisian case and analyse how cultural, political, and economic factors have influenced Frisian desires for increased autonomy.



Fig. 5. FNP Results in Provincial Elections over Time in Percentages (1982-2015) from Kiesraad. "Databank Verkiezingsuitslagen." Web. May 22 2018.

A Brief Overview of the Frisian Case

Before discussing why the FNP does not attain similar electoral successes as regionalist parties elsewhere in Europe, despite their similarities and that all regionalist parties have been exposed to the same effects of European integration, it is important to first expand briefly on the FNP and the Frisian regionalist movement more generally. Little has been written on the Frisian regionalist movement thus far (van der Zwet "To See Ourselves" 1244). This is in part due to the fact that there has been no sustained, popular regionalist party or movement that is likely to gain more autonomy or independence from the Dutch state. Nonetheless, the Frisian regionalist movement can roughly be traced back to the 19th century (Hemminga 144). Up until Napoleon's invasion of the then Dutch Republic, Friesland had been a relatively autonomous political unit. When Napoleon was defeated, the Netherlands was reinstated as a monarchy with a far more centralised state, borrowing from the French experience (Ibid 143; Penrose 433-35). Despite the fact that Friesland wanted to retain a degree of autonomy, "nascent Frisian nationalism" did not "take on political tone[s]" and remained a predominantly cultural movement (Penrose 435; Feitsma 148). With the exception of minor politicisation in the early 20th century, this remained the case until the end of the Second World War, which briefly witnessed several calls for increased decentralisation (Hemminga 145).

However, these calls were quickly forgotten until the mid 1960s when the FNP first entered the political stage to advocate for a greater focus on Frisian culture and a more federalised Dutch state (Ibid 149; van der Zwet "To See Ourselves" 1244). Although the former has never been more than an idealised vision, the latter is an important regional political issue. A major component of the Frisian identity, its language, is under threat, despite the fact that politicians across the political spectrum value and speak Frisian, that it is recognised as an official minority language, and that it is also valued by Frisians themselves (Driessen; Hakkers; Nicolassen). The FNP is, of course, particularly concerned with these issues, but, over time, they have developed a well-established, broad political agenda. However, as they only really act on the regional level, these non-cultural goals are severely limited (Hemminga 157). As such, the Frisian regionalist movement has maintained its cultural focus, but it has also been characterised by dissatisfaction with the centre-periphery cleavage between the Frisian province and Dutch state – something that cultural inequalities help uphold (Ibid; Penrose 436). The FNP has attempted to politicise this issue as they seek to federalise the Netherlands, but it has not gained much traction either in The Hague or among the Frisian voters.

In addition, it must be noted that it is difficult to attribute the FNP's electoral gains to an increased regionalist sentiment in Friesland. Throughout the Netherlands, local parties are making significant electoral gains – also in regions and municipalities that do not have regionalist aspirations. In the 2018 municipal elections in the Netherlands thirty-three percent of the vote went to local rather than national parties (Boogers and Voerman; Otjes; NOS). That being said, the FNP has evolved into a steady actor in regional and municipal politics with notable electoral gains (see fig. 5; Hemminga 147).

Cultural Factors

Where Catalan distinctiveness is, at least in part, created in juxtaposition to the Spanish identity and as a consequence of centuries of grievances with the central state, the same does not hold true for Friesland. Although there has been dissatisfaction with the marginalisation of Frisian and the power relations between Dutch speaking areas of the Netherlands and Friesland, these grievances have never materialised as part of the Frisian identity, as the culture itself has always been tacitly accepted as a part of the Netherlands (Penrose; Hakkers; FNP 9; de Mik). Consequently, Frisian culture has never been suppressed.

This of course is in stark contrast to Catalonia, which has a history of, at times, severe suppression dating back to the 18th century, as outlined above.

Moreover, although a vast majority of Frisians acknowledge the existence of a Frisian identity, only a third identifies as predominantly Frisian, a majority feels equally Dutch as Frisian, and around thirty percent identifies as predominantly Dutch (Hakkers). This is marginal when compared to Catalonia, where about fifty percent identifies as predominantly Catalanian and around ten percent identify as predominantly Spanish (see fig. 2). To add to that, the most salient aspect of Frisian culture has been its language. Frisian has been awarded second-language status in the Netherlands and the Dutch government seeks to strengthen its use, most notably in 2013 (Van den Berg). As such, there is little perceived, cultural grievance or distinctiveness to mobilise for regionalist parties, such as the FNP, in support of increased autonomy, despite the fact that the Frisian language is in decline. Most Frisians simply want to preserve the Frisian culture, but prefer to do so in cooperation with the Netherlands rather than in opposition to it.

Political Factors

Although on paper the Netherlands has a similar political system to that of Spain, a unitary, decentralised system, it is in fact much more centralised in character, as the competences of the Dutch provinces and municipalities are severely limited (OECD *The Netherlands*; Hulst 100-01). This is exemplified by the educational inspection service, which is, among other things, required to determine whether agreements on Frisian language education are implemented. The inspection in Friesland is conducted by a national agency even though it directly touches upon regional interests and desires (de Mik). In Catalonia the opposite holds true, the regional government is in charge of education.

To add to that, in the Dutch political system provincial elections serve a dual purpose, they elect provincial representatives who, in turn, elect the national senate. This limits provincial political positioning and underlines the degree of centralisation in Dutch politics, as provincial issues are in part determined by national political currents. This, coupled with the limited competences of the provincial level, detracts from the public's awareness of regional politics, which is evidenced by the fact that voter turn-out in provincial elections in Friesland has decreased over the years and currently hovers around the low fifty percent mark (Kiesraad). Catalonia's regional elections are not linked to national politics and turnout has, on average,

been higher than in Friesland, particularly since 2006 (Politico). As such, provincial elections in Friesland are often regarded as “second order” elections and are in part determined by national events (Hemminga 157). This has undercut the message of the FNP, as the FNP is barely active at the national level, which does not allow them to effect the change they seek – as they do not have the competences to achieve them. The fact that the FNP is curtailed in its aims by the way in which the Dutch state is set-up of course has the potential to foster regionalist sentiments, but, as Frisians also identify with the Dutch identity, it only serves to inhibit the FNP.

Economic Factors

Although independence is, as aforementioned, not an issue in Frisian politics, it does seem that Friesland could make independence work if it wanted achieve it, according to speculations of ING economists (Beeten; Kijk-redactie). This is the consequence of the strong agricultural sector, which exports milk and potatoes across the globe. However, such independence would mean a significant welfare drop for Frisians as a whole, as Friesland is a net-receiver from the Dutch central government (Ibid; Es). This is underscored by the Dutch Institute for Social Research, which found in 2014 that the highest concentration of municipalities with an “above average” poverty rate is in the north of the Netherlands: Friesland, Groningen, and Drenthe (Goderis). This is in stark contrast with Catalonia, which is a net-contributor to the Spanish state. If a region benefits from the arrangement it has with the central state, it is unlikely that it will want to achieve independence due to the potential losses such independence entails, which is the case in Friesland. However, if a region perceives that it contributes more to the central state than it gets back, as is the case with Catalonia, there is an economic incentive to achieve independence (Cox 199; Collier and Hoeffler 37-9). Frisian regionalists want more autonomy over how they spend the money they earn and they believe they should receive more money from the central state, but there are no complaints about unfair fiscal arrangements (FNP 9). This, in addition to the previous points, helps constrain Frisian desires for increased autonomy and thus inhibits the rise of regionalist parties.

In short, the effect of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties provides an incomplete picture, as it cannot account for variations between regionalist parties across space. Take the cases expounded on in this chapter, both Catalonia as well as Friesland have distinct

identities, well-established regionalist parties, and were both exposed to the same process of European integration. However, despite these similarities, the successes of their respective regionalist parties could not be more different. As such, this chapter sought to analyse the rise of regionalist parties from cultural, political, and economic variables to see how those variables affected the respective regionalist parties. The relative importance of these factors vis-à-vis that of European integration will be expounded on further in the next chapter. However, it can already be stated that where in Catalonia the cultural, political and economic factors bolster regionalist parties, as they are perceived to perpetuate unfair Spanish treatment of Catalonia, this is not the case in Friesland. Frisian identity is less entrenched and not as antagonistic towards the central state, its political structure does not allow for regionalist parties to flourish, and Friesland is more dependent economically on the Netherlands than Catalonia is on Spain.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter will discuss how the effect of European integration on regionalist parties pertains to the domestic variables discussed above. In doing so, this chapter will argue that European integration should not be regarded as an explanatory framework for the rise of regionalist parties in and of itself. European integration has created conditions in which regionalist parties can thrive, but the ways in which regionalist parties interact with these conditions is dependent on domestic factors. As such, this thesis does not seek to contradict that European integration has an effect on the rise of regionalist parties. Rather, domestic variables must be considered in order to account for variations that European integration alone cannot capture.

There are three lessons that can be drawn from the relatively sudden shift from autonomy to independence in Catalonia and the absence of the same in Friesland. First, European integration on its own cannot account for the rise of regionalist parties. The EU has not changed radically since the ToM but support for Catalonian independence has. As such, European integration cannot be solely responsible for the rise of regionalist parties. Moreover, if European integration would have been responsible for the surge in support for independence, a steady increase over time would be expected; instead, the current figures show a sudden increase very recently (see fig. 3). This indicates other factors play an important role as well, which is substantiated by the fact that there is a clear connection between the support for Catalonian independence and two other events: the disappointments over the revised SA in 2006 and 2010 and the outbreak of the economic crisis (Ibid). The FNP, however, does show a steady increase in electoral support since the ToM (see fig. 5). Support for the FNP overall has remained relatively low and local parties have gained electoral ground throughout the Netherlands during this time. It is therefore difficult to attribute this electoral rise of the FNP to the process of European integration (Boogers and Voerman; Otjes; Appendix D).

Second, a sudden shift in regionalist preference, as happened in Catalonia and as remains absent in Friesland, must rely, at least in part, on latent regionalist sentiments amongst a large proportion of the population. Otherwise, such a surge in support for independence would be unlikely. In Catalonia this is evidenced by the fact that Catalonian identity has been on the rise at the expense of Spanish identity since the 1990s (see fig. 2). Unfortunately, there is no data for the rise or decline of Frisian identity since the ToM, but as the Frisian language is in decline and self-identification with Frisian identity is much lower than self-identification with Catalonian identity, there does not seem to be latent regionalist sentiments among a large

proportion of the Frisian population (Hakkers; Van den Berg). Consequently, a sudden surge in favour of independence is unlikely in Friesland, despite the process of European integration.

Third, European integration affects regionalist parties in different ways. The relative readiness, of politicians in particular, to accept independence as a viable alternative in Catalonia, illustrates the importance of European integration. Cultural, political, and economic factors may have provided momentum for the rise of regionalist parties in Catalonia, but the readiness suggests that there was a perceived, viable alternative to the current situation: the EU. European integration has created conditions that have reduced the cost of independence, which makes the claims of regionalist parties more viable, facilitating this rapid shift towards independence in Catalonia. In Friesland, on the other hand, European integration may actually, to an extent, hinder the rise of the FNP. The EU and the Netherlands provide limited, but for the moment sufficient, ways to achieve Frisian regionalist aims: protection of the Frisian culture and language. This effectively curbs potential grievances Friesland could have with the Dutch state. Moreover, cultural, political, and economic variables have not provided momentum for a rise of the FNP, on the contrary, they may actually inhibit it. As such, there are no strong regionalist sentiments for the EU to facilitate, as it did in Catalonia.

In Catalonia, political and economic factors set the wheels of the regionalist movement in motion, but the presence of a viable alternative to belonging to Spain helped bring this movement into the mainstream. After the most important aspects of the 2006 SA had been turned down, Catalonians started to believe that they would not be able to achieve greater autonomy within the Spanish state. Economic factors compounded this, as Catalonians, generally speaking, felt unfairly treated due to the fiscal arrangement with the Spanish central state. This feeling was intensified by the economic crisis, which saw the fiscal deficit with the Spanish government grow while the region, together with the rest of Spain, was hit hard by the crisis. Both these factors are powerful explanations of the rise of Catalan regionalist parties, but what makes them important, is that these grievances were but the latest in a long line that stretches back hundreds of years. Catalan identity has, in part, formed around these grievances, which, therefore, helped cement the notion that greater autonomy could not be achieved within the confines of the Spanish state. This sheds light on the reasons for Catalonia's regionalist parties to shift from autonomy to independence, but it does not satisfactorily explain their readiness to do so now. This is where European integration becomes relevant.

For Catalonia, the EU provides many of the benefits of belonging to the Spanish state without the perceived grievances suffered at the hands of the Spanish, which has made

Catalonia viable as an independent unit to politicians as well as a large part of the population. Prior to the existence of the EU, achieving Catalonian independence would have cost significantly more. Politically, independence could only have been achieved in violent opposition to the Spanish central government and, economically, Catalonia needed the Spanish market to thrive. Due to European integration this is no longer entirely the case. As such, cultural, political, and economic factors created a situation where regionalist parties in Catalonia started to consider alternatives to membership of the Spanish state. However, the EU made these sentiments viable alternatives and provided them with credibility, which helped catapult the existing regionalist sentiments into the mainstream.

Friesland only has limited desires for more autonomy, let alone independence. Most Frisians want their culture to be preserved, but prefer to do so in concert with the Netherlands rather than in opposition to it. Moreover, the political and economic factors that bolster Catalonian regionalist parties actually seem to work against the FNP's desires for increased autonomy. Politically, the Dutch state is far more centralised than the Spanish state. This centralised attitude is evident throughout the political system: provincial elections, for instance, are tied to the election of the Dutch senate. Besides, in economic terms Friesland is far more dependent on the Dutch state than Catalonia is on Spain, making it unlikely that Friesland will ever want independence from the Netherlands. Furthermore, where the Catalonian identity is in part rooted in past grievances with the Spanish state, the Frisian identity is not (Hakkers). Consequently, regionalist sentiments are only bolstered to a very limited extent in Friesland. Basically, the existence of the distinct Frisian identity and language is what breathes life into the FNP, but, as this identity does not seem to be created in opposition to a Dutch identity, its effects on the rise of the FNP is limited. The FNP is therefore not able to take root as a regionalist party in Friesland in the same way that regionalist parties in Catalonia have done.

This also means that the EU cannot make Frisian independence viable, as the necessary preconditions to do so are not (yet) present in Friesland. The effect of European integration on the FNP is limited to providing it with a voice in European institutions and learning from other regionalist parties in the EFA. This has had an effect on the FNP; they have called for a referendum on increased autonomy in particular policy areas, which is a consequence of the Scottish experience; desire an independent Frisian election district in European elections; and generally seek to bolster the regional dimension of the EU (FNP; Toering). Nonetheless, this does not suddenly make Frisian regionalist sentiments viable. It only seeks to consolidate Friesland as being culturally distinct from the Netherlands. Having said that, further research

will have to point out the exact way in which these informal channels of involvement with the European decision-making process affect the direction of regionalist parties such as the FNP.

To conclude, these two cases have shown that European integration does have an important effect on the rise of regionalist parties in Europe, but that it affects regions differently depending on their respective domestic status quo. In Catalonia, European integration was able to catapult the idea of independence into the mainstream by making the alternatives to existing grievances more viable. Without the EU, the political and economic cost of Catalanian secession would be much higher and thus more difficult to accept for the general population. As such, the EU contributed to the rise in regionalist parties in Catalonia by making desires for a change in the status quo more viable. In Friesland, however, the process of European integration has had relatively little effect on the rise of regionalist parties. There are no significant cultural, political, and economic grievances to justify the EU as an alternative to membership of the Dutch state. This explains why the FNP is far less successful than its Catalanian counterparts even though it has been exposed to the same process of European integration.

These conclusions are not surprising and may perhaps be somewhat obvious. However, no author has so far sought to combine domestic explanatory factors for the rise of regionalist parties with the effect of European integration. Authors tend to either treat regions in isolation or take a macro-perspective and focus on European integration to the exclusion of all other factors. However, I argue that these approaches lead to incomplete answers. This thesis therefore proposes a more integrated approach, combining the effect of European integration on regionalist parties in Friesland and Catalonia with the impact of pre-existing, domestic factors.

Although the Comparison of Catalonia and Friesland is limited, in the sense that it only covers two regions, it is possible to apply the approach to other cases. The N-VA's reticence towards the EU could, for instance, be explained from their particular experience within the Belgium federal system, in which it is currently a net-contributor (N-VA). The N-VA wants to reform the Belgium system to provide themselves with more autonomy. However, it does not want to cede that newly found autonomy to a federal EU, despite the viability factor the EU provides (Ibid). As such, the manner in which European integration affects regionalist parties is dependent on the domestic status quo. Consequently, each case has to be studied from their individual, domestic perspective, as European integration does not have a uniform effect on regionalist parties across space. Having said that, as the case of Catalonia and Scotland has

shown, European integration does have the power to facilitate calls for independence and make them more viable, but it acts as a catalyst rather than an explanatory framework.

Conclusion

Over the past three decades, regionalist parties have gained in prominence throughout Europe. Scotland, Flanders, and Catalonia are the most famous of a host of regions that currently seek greater autonomy, or independence, within their constituent state. These regionalist movements have often been explained through a variety of domestic factors. However, other than a select group of authors, few consider the effect of European integration on regionalist parties (Jolly 33; Nagel; Keating "European Integration"; Saylan; Elias *Minority Nationalist*). European integration, together with the concomitant process of state decentralisation, has increasingly challenged the role of the state in European politics. States have remained pivotal actors, but these processes have given way to a more complex, multilevel political system that has also become relevant for a host of other actors. This is evidenced by the degree to which subnational and supranational actors are currently able and willing to by-pass the central government through the establishment of regional offices, the EFA, regional policy, and the CoR.

Regionalist parties have been influenced by the emergence of this multilevel federal polity in two ways. First, the EU has reduced the cost of autonomy and independence, which has made regionalist sentiments more viable in the eyes of the electorate. The transfer of traditional state-functions to the EU, through the completion of the European Single Market and the introduction of the euro for example, has meant that regions are no longer entirely politically or economically dependent on their state. This has made the potential for autonomy or independence more viable. Second, through the process of European integration, MS have created a supranational space that they cannot fully control. As such, regionalist parties have been provided with a political platform that is more receptive to their ideas and that facilitates them to cooperate with, and learn from, like-minded politicians. These two elements of European integration contribute to the rise of regionalist parties in Europe.

Despite the fact that this has improved our understanding of the rise of regionalist parties significantly, it provides an incomplete picture. European integration cannot explain why Catalan regionalist parties thrive and regionalist parties in Friesland and Brittany do not. This thesis has sought to address this by analysing how cultural, political, and economic factors may have influenced the impact of European integration on the rise of regionalist parties in Catalonia and Friesland. Both cases have shown that European integration has an important effect on the rise of regionalist parties, but that this effect differs depending on the respective domestic status quo of the region.

In Catalonia, cultural, economic and political grievances perpetuated the perception that Catalonia was, and would continue to be, treated unfairly by the Spanish state. A large proportion of the population was thus keen for alternatives to belonging to the Spanish state. The EU made this viable, which catapulted Catalan regionalist desires into the mainstream. Without the EU, independence would have been an even more difficult and costly option for Catalonians. It is therefore safe to assume that people would have been more reticent in supporting regionalist parties in the absence of the EU.

In Friesland, there are no significant cultural, political, or economic grievances that justify strong regionalist sentiments. On the contrary, domestic factors seem to inhibit the rise of the FNP. This could, of course, constitute a grievance with the Dutch state in and of itself. However, due to the fact that Frisians prefer to work in concert with the Netherlands, rather than in opposition to it, this does not seem to be the case.

That is not to say that European integration does not affect the FNP, but this effect is limited to providing it with a voice in European institutions and learning from other regionalist parties. In a way, this has also served to inhibit the rise of the FNP. The EU has provided a limited but sufficient way for Friesland to achieve its regionalist aims: protection of the Frisian culture and language. In doing so, European integration may have curbed potential grievances the FNP could have had with the Dutch state. This confluence of European and domestic factors has meant that the FNP could not take root as a regionalist party in Friesland in the same way that regionalist parties in Catalonia have done.

In conclusion, cultural, political, and economic factors impact the influence European integration has on the rise of regionalist parties to a significant extent. European integration has created conditions in which regionalist parties can thrive, but the ways in which these parties interact with these conditions is dependent on domestic factors. European integration is therefore only relevant in relation to domestic factors and vice versa. Although this may seem obvious, few authors have deployed such an integrated approach. At a time when the future of the EU is hotly contested, it is imperative to understand the complex nature of the interaction between regions, states, and the EU. Failing to fully account for both domestic and European factors in explaining the rise of regionalist parties will lead to incomplete explanations of the rise of regionalist parties. This approach will therefore improve our understanding of the rise of regionalist parties in Europe.

Appendices

Appendix A

Interview with Sybren Postumus, member of the Frisian Provincial Parliament on behalf of the FNP, on 15 March 2018.

Hans: Het interview is in drie delen opgedeeld. In principe heb ik een paar vragen die ik wil stellen, maar ik wil het gesprek ook z'n beloop laten gaan. Mijn eerste vraag is als volgt: u wilt meer autonomie voor Friesland en ik vraag me af waarom u dat wilt en wat u voor zich ziet qua meer autonomie?

Sybren: Ja, nou ik moet zeggen dat de FNP een visie document heeft uitgewerkt. Daar staat wat we willen en waarom. (...) Tegenwoordig denken we, waarom we van het economisch, wetenschappelijk en innovatief perspectief meer bevoegdheden willen. Aan de ene kant, willen we bepaalde dingen en aan de andere kant willen we bepaalde dingen niet. De wensen zijn bijvoorbeeld een eigen universiteit, een echte universiteit, geen vestiging van de RUG Groningen. Zoals dat in heel veel regio's in Europa al het geval is. Maar ook dat je door meer autonomie, wetgevende bevoegdheden, het is wetenschappelijk aangetoond dat dat ook een boost geeft aan je BNP. Dus dat is ook goed voor de werkgelegenheid. Nu worden er ook bijvoorbeeld vanuit Den Haag allemaal ingrepen gepleegd op ruimtelijk gebied, denk aan grote windmolenparken terwijl we hier een heel mooi vlak landschap hebben nou, dat geeft heel veel verzet vanuit de bevolking. Dat is dan een voorbeeld van wat we niet willen. En door dan een Fries parlement te hebben, met wetgevende bevoegdheden en de financiële mogelijkheden, krijg je dan dat je zelf veel meer kan sturen en baas bent in je eigen regio. Dat betekent niet dat we onafhankelijk willen zijn, dus we willen net zoals iets als de Duitse deelstaten of de gemeenschappen in België. Dat zijn we nog aan het uitwerken.

Hans: En, als ik het goed begrijp, coördineert de centrale overheid dan niet met de provincie, of heeft de provincie alleen adviserende rol? Wat is de relatie?

Sybren: Er worden dus zaken opgelegd he, een doorvertaling vanuit Europa van bepaalde energie doelstellingen, zoveel willen we realiseren en het moet volgens een bepaalde verdeling over de provincies worden verdeeld. Vervolgens krijgt Friesland via een wazige constructie discussie in IPO verband 530MW opgelegd en we mogen dan zelf wel invullen waar die parken

moeten worden gerealiseerd. Wij zijn best bereid om te zien hoe we zelfvoorzienend kunnen worden, maar dat we willen zelf dan wel beslissen hoe dat moet via zonnepanelen of windmolens en waar dan. Dat willen we zelf kunnen invullen.

Hans: Want dat gebeurt dus nu op veel mindere hoogte dan jullie zouden willen zien?

Sybre: Ja, ja, terwijl op zich de provincie Friesland wel bevoegdheden heeft, maar als het dan puntje bij paaltje komt worden er heel veel zaken doorgedrukt, toen ook met de economische crisis en herstelwet, dan grijpt de centrale overheid toch in op dingen die we niet zouden willen.

Hans: en denkt u dat dat haalbaar is in de huidige politieke situatie in Nederland, meer autonomie?

Sybre: Nou, ja, dat hangt ervan af, daar moeten dan handelingen voor gaan plaatsvinden, op zich is de FNP natuurlijk wel de partij in Friesland die daar het meeste mee bezig is maar je ziet wel dat bij heel veel partijen hier in de staten van Friesland ook wel uitspraken hebben gedaan over bijvoorbeeld de opbrengst van gaswinning, dat bijna unaniem gesteund wordt dat een redelijk gedeelte van de opbrengst van gaswinning terugkomt naar Friesland. Er is ook uitgesproken dat we andere regels willen op het gebied van circulaire economie, welke aanpassing precies, gaat het dan niet over, maar de staten willen dat wel. De nieuwe commissaris, Arno Brok, heeft ook gezegd vorig jaar bij de ontbloting van een replica van het oude Friese vrijheidszegel, 'als Friesland zouden we meer bevoegdheden moeten hebben, niet alleen op het gebied van taal en cultuur maar ook als het gaat om regionale economie en landbouw' dus het wordt in die zin breder gedragen dan alleen de FNP hier in de staten. Je maakt ook regelmatig mee dat er uitspraken zijn over het ziekenhuis van Dokkum, bijvoorbeeld, om daar de geboortezorg te behouden dat er een hele duidelijke uitspraak was van de staten van, ja 'dat willen we' en dat een week of twee weken later het wordt behandeld in het Nederlands parlement, de Tweede Kamer, en dat daar dan de vloer mee wordt aangeveegd. Dus dat men geen boodschap heeft aan de wens van Friesland. Er is in die zin ook bij de Friese afdeling van de staten fracties van de landelijke partijen ook wel een wens om meer regionalistisch op te treden, maar als het puntje bij paaltje komt, wordt dat dan toch weer overruled vanuit Den Haag, vandaar dat we zeggen dat die bevoegdheden gewoon overgeheveld moeten worden zodat we zelf de bevoegdheid hebben.

Hans: Dat is wel interessant, want dat vroeg ik me ook wel af, de FNP is de enige die meer autonomie wil, maar is het net zoals in de Nederlandse politiek (waar de PVV bijvoorbeeld de CDA heel erg beïnvloed) dat jullie andere partijen met die positie ook beïnvloeden?

Sybren: Dat is op dit moment nog niet echt het geval. Er zijn wel uitspraken geweest die in die richting komen. Ook in het coalitieakkoord bijvoorbeeld, daar staat expliciet in vermeld dat wij meer bevoegdheid willen over de verspreiding van gezondheidsvoorzieningen. Dat steunen CDA en SP bijvoorbeeld dan ook. Andere partijen schuiven dus wel op, dat zie je ook bij de Friese cultuur en taal, de FNP kwam daar echt mee, maar omdat we zelf onze visie op autonomie niet goed hebben uitgewerkt, is dat nu nog minder zo. Ik denk wel, als we daar consequent op hameren, dat andere partijen daar wel wat mee moet doen, omdat ze ons wel als bedreiging zien voor de gevestigde orde. Zo ziet de bevolking dat ook: we zijn geen Haagse partij.

Hans: Dat bindt ook een beetje in met mijn volgende vraag, de FNP is namelijk nog een relatief kleine partij, met 10% van de stemmen, maar heeft u alsnog het gevoel dat het streven naar meer autonomie in Friesland ook echt leeft bij de bevolking of is het alleen een kleine fractie? Wat is uw inschatting?

Sybren: Dat hangt af van de vraagstelling, de term autonomie weegt heel zwaar en schrikt mensen af, maar als je het hebt over meer zeggenschap, dat we meer in Friesland zelf kunnen bepalen, er is een onderzoeker van de universiteit van Uppsala die dat een aantal jaren geleden heeft onderzocht. Iemand uit Baskenland. De vraag in Friesland was naar autonomie en in Baskenland naar onafhankelijkheid. Maar 47% van de bevolking van Friesland had daar wel oren naar. Hier blijkt dus uit dat een populatie die groter is dan het aantal FNP'ers er wel voor open staat.

Hans: De FNP is al vrij lang actief, sinds 1962, wat mij opviel, is dat sinds de jaren 90 er een groei is geweest in stemmers, waar denkt u dat dat aan ligt? Wat is de reden voor die groei?

Sybren: Nou, 2003 was uitzonderlijk omdat we toen de kwestie van de zweeftrein hadden, alle partijen in Friesland waren toen allemaal voor een zweeftrein van Amsterdam door de polders naar Groningen. Dat zou miljarden gaan kosten, met een bijdrage van de provincie van honderden miljoenen. Dat werd een gigantisch thema. Daar was FNP op tegen. Dus toen gingen

van 3 naar 7 statenleden in een klap. Dus dat was uitzonderlijk. Daarna zijn we in 2007 en 2011 teruggezakt naar 10%, maar we zijn nu wel op dat niveau gebleven. Dus we zijn niet ver teruggezakt. De groei zette dus wel door, bij de gemeenteraadsverkiezingen zojuist zijn we wel weer wat meer teruggevallen, maar dat kwam ook door meer verantwoordelijkheden. Dat krijg je terug van je kiezers, soms moet je ook onpopulaire beslissingen nemen, dat is het nadeel van coalitiepartijen, dan zak je soms weleens wat terug. Maarja, de reden voor de groei, in 2003 heel duidelijk door de zweeftrein, maar ook omdat we ons als FNP verbreed hebben. Ons imago was eerst een taal en cultuur partij en dat is nu veel breder geworden. Dat we ons ook echt inzetten op een Friese universiteit, bevordering van de economie, werkgelegenheid, landbouw, natuur inclusieve landbouw en toerisme. Dus dat we ons heel breed inzetten, dat we interessante themadagen organiseren met onze eigen visie. We zijn dus inhoudelijk gegroeid als partij, maar we zijn ook bij elke dorpsvergadering aanwezig, we houden goed contact met de gemeenschap en laten dat niet los. Ja, dus, en natuurlijk ook wel onze kritiek op het centralistische Nederlandse model, wat, hoewel er nu wel meer zaken worden gedecentraliseerd, is er vergeleken met heel veel andere Europese landen, nog steeds sprake van een behoorlijke centralistisch politiek gebouw.

Hans: en heeft die decentralisatie meegespeeld, of ligt het echt aan hoe de FNP zich heeft gepositioneerd en verbreed of spelen er ook andere zaken mee?

Sybren: Ik denk dat het aan de ene kant komt doordat dat we breder zijn geworden en professioneler optreden, maar aan de andere kant, de europeanisering speelt ook een rol, je ziet de trend naar opschaling maar ook de tendens naar kleinschaligheid, regionalisering, het minder sterk worden van de nationale staten en dat de regio's meer opkomen. Dat is niet alleen een tendens in Friesland, maar dat zie je ook bij onze collega partijen in de EVA, de Schotten, Corsicanen en Catalanen zijn allemaal hele sterke partijen geworden. Heel veel partijen zitten ook in de regering en hebben bestuursverantwoordelijkheden. Sterker nog, NVA is de grootste partij van België. Je ziet het dus overal in Europa.

Hans: Dat was inderdaad waar ik de balans bij zoek, de FNP heeft zich inderdaad ontwikkeld maar ik focus me op de externe situaties, en het is mijn taak om te kijken naar wat de FNP zelf doet en wat door externe situaties komt.

Sybre: Wat Europa betreft zijn we meer actief geworden. We laten vragen stellen in het EP, we brengen moties in op de jaarvergadering van de EVA, die vervolgens fractieleden met zaken opdragen.

Hans: Mijn volgende onderwerp gaat daarom ook over regionale mobilisatie en hoe Friesland en de FNP zich daarin bewegen. Hoe belangrijk is vanuit uw oogpunt de EU voor politici van de provinciale en gedeputeerde staten, zijn ze actief bij de EU betrokken, of speelt het meer in de achtergrond?

Sybre: Ja, ik denk dat dat steeds meer het geval is, de EU wordt steeds belangrijker, en de statenleden zien dat ook. In de vorige bestuursperiode hebben we ook een platform Europa opgericht waar elke staten fractie gerepresenteerd is, zelfs de PVV. Daarin worden zaken besproken die direct aan de posities van de provincie Friesland raken. Landbouwpolitiek bijvoorbeeld is voor Friesland heel belangrijk. 80 miljoen uit het gemeenschappelijk landbouwbeleid gaat per jaar naar Friesland en in totaal vloeit er 105 miljoen naar Friesland vanuit de EU. Terwijl we op jaarbasis waarschijnlijk minder betalen, wij zijn dus een netto-ontvanger van EU gelden terwijl NL een nettobetaler is. De belangen zijn dus ook niet gelijk. De regering zet in op vermindering van nationale bijdrage en wij als regio's van name plattelandsprovincies hebben veel baat bij Europa. Daarnaast heeft Friesland ook een grote exportmarkt. De gedeputeerden zijn daarom veel op pad, ze zijn vaak in Brussel om te lobbyen voor de nieuwe sluis van de Afsluitdijk bijvoorbeeld, dat we natuur inclusieve landbouw willen, ook op taal- en cultuurgebied, we hebben dan ook net een conferentie gehad met andere regio's dat de krachten moeten worden gebundeld. Men ziet dus de voordelen heel goed in Europa.

Hans: Over de FNP specifieker, welke baten zijn er voor de FNP om actief te zijn in Europa?

Sybre: Je ziet aan de ene kant heel veel inspiratie, je ziet hoe het beter kan en hoe het anders kan. Je ziet parallellen, zoals met de universiteit in Corsica. Het is dus inspirerend om op EVA-congressen aanwezig te zijn. Het helpt ons ook, je kunt er publicitair mee scoren, we brengen amendementen in over bijvoorbeeld biodiversiteit. Het is dus heel breed. Het is positieve publiciteit voor ons ook qua imago. De kiezers denken 'ja de FNP is alleen maar in Friesland actief dus ze hebben geen lijntje naar den Haag', maar dat hebben we dus wel door de EVA bijvoorbeeld. De lijntjes zijn er dus weldegelijk en ze zijn effectief. Daarnaast geeft het

cofinanciering voor projecten, zo hadden we een energieconferentie in oktober waar de EVA ook aan heeft bijgedragen.

Hans: We hebben het er al wat over gehad, de lijntjes die de FNP ogenschijnlijk niet heeft, want de FNP heeft geen directe representatie in de officiële EUinstituten (geen Europarlementariër bijvoorbeeld)?

Sybre: Dat klopt, maar wij beschouwen de Europarlementariërs uit Wales en Corsica en uit Catalonië als onze eigen directe vertegenwoordigers, ik heb hun 06, hun email en we zien elkaar bijvoorbeeld over een paar weken weer. Dat zijn dus wel onze mensen. Al sinds de oprichting van de EVA 37 jaar geleden hebben we constant bestuursleden gehad in die organisatie. Dan heb je dus een directe lijn met die Europarlementariërs en de directie van de EVA.

Hans: Je merkt dus echt dat de FNP impact heeft op besluitvorming via indirecte lijntjes?

Sybre: Dat is natuurlijk heel moeilijk te zeggen omdat het besluitvormingstraject heel lang duurt. Maar, bijvoorbeeld, een van de twee lobbyisten van de SNN is een voormalig wethouder van de FNP in Brussel, dus op die manier heb je weer een contact. Maar als je even een voorbeeld hebt van Tryater, een professioneel theatergezelschap, hun positie werd op een gegeven moment bedreigd. Het Nederlandse kabinet wilde dat wegbezuinigen. Wij hebben toen een motie ingebracht in de algemene vergadering van de EVA, dat dat niet moest zijn. Dat raakt Europese belangen want minderheden zijn overal. Vervolgens kwam de VVD in de tweede kamer met de exacte tekst van onze motie om Tryater te behouden. Dus, zo, linksom en rechtsom heb je wel wat invloed op besluitvormingsprocessen. Daarnaast krijgen we altijd wel terugkoppeling van Europarlementariërs. Dat is natuurlijk een kwestie van aanhouden en constant contact, maar we hebben dus die indruk wel.

Een ander voorbeeld is de situatie in Nord Friesland, wij zijn ook solidair met andere gebieden in heel Europa. We zijn er voor alle Friezen en alle minderheden die worden onderdrukt in andere delen van Europa. De Kreis Nort Friesland in Duitsland werd met opheffing bedreigd, nou, toen hebben wij een motie ingebracht op de Algemene Ledenvergadering van de EVA dat de EVA alles in het werk moest stellen dat tegen te gaan. Toen hebben ze vragen gesteld aan de Europese Commissie, vervolgens hebben zij vragen gesteld aan de Lidstaat Duitsland, want

de Friezen daar hebben officiële minderheid erkenning, en toen zei de regering van Duitsland dat ze niet wisten dat die Kreis zou worden opgeheven. Er is toen wel wat gebeurt waardoor dat niet is doorgegaan.

Hans: Heeft betrokkenheid op Europees niveau van de FNP een invloed gehad op de boodschap die het uitdraagt? Is de FNP regionalistischer geworden bijvoorbeeld?

Sybren: Nou kijk, door die internationale contacten zien we hoe het er in andere regio's aan toe gaat. En zien we dat het belangrijk is voor de toekomst van regio's dat je zelf bepaalde bevoegdheden hebt en dat het succesvol kan zijn. En ja, elke regio doet dat weer anders, want bepaalde minderheidsgroepen willen een stukje zelfbeschikking op het gebied van taal en cultuur, zoals bijvoorbeeld de Sorben in Duitsland. Voor hun is taal en cultuur van belang. Maar Friesland is tien keer zo groot en wij kunnen in koninkrijksverband een meer autonome positie hebben. En wij hebben dus door middel van de voorbeelden van Schotland, België en Duitsland gewoon gezien dat dat wel kan.

Hans: En Europese integratie in het algemeen, wat voor een invloed heeft dat gehad denk je op regionalistische partijen zoals de FNP?

Sybren: We zijn voorstander van Europese integratie. Ik denk, dat wij daar echt wel profijt van hebben gehad. Dat kiezers aan de ene kant zien dat de Europese integratie doorgaat samen met globalisering en dat ze dan ook denken dat ze dicht bij huis dingen willen laten organiseren. Dat is positief voor ons.

Hans: Een van de dingen die ik me kan indenken: het feit dat er technisch gezien geen grenzen meer zijn, geeft natuurlijk voor mijn gevoel een hele andere dynamiek aan de politiek.

Sybren: Je kunt meer over de grenzen zien, dat geeft een andere mindset. Tegenwoordig kun je makkelijk naar andere Friezen en je betaalt met dezelfde munt. Het denken dat het allemaal in Nederland moet gebeuren is wat verdwenen, ondanks de opkomst van de PVV. We kunnen het ook op Europese schaal doen, Friesland is geen stip in Nederland maar is gewoon een Europese regio.

Appendix B

Interview with Ramon Tremosa, MEP on behalf of the Partit Demòcrata Europeu i Català, on 6 March 2018.

Hans: To get a better idea of the Catalonian independence movement, as I am an outsider, never having had an affiliation with a region rather than a state, it is difficult to put myself in that perspective. So, first of all, do you believe Catalonia should be independent and if so, why?

Ramon: My opinion has been changing over time, it is not only a question of money or power but it is also a question of being a normal country. For instance, if you go to twitter you will see that the Catalan language is very strong. For instance, FC Barcelona has twitter accounts in many languages, in Catalan, they have about 6 million followers – there are only 12 million Catalan speakers. In this house I cannot speak Catalan as it is forbidden, but in the UN, as Andorra is an independent country whose official language is Catalan, Catalan is official in the UN. If Andorra joined the EU, we could speak Catalan, but Spain says you cannot speak Catalan. When, if you visit Catalonia, you will see it is the language of television and radio, they have 70 percent of the share. You will see all the literature in Catalan, theatre, schools, internet, social media are in Catalan. So what is normal here [in the EP], is not normal, because the Spaniards say you cannot speak your language. So, if the only way to speak Catalan in the European Parliament is to become an independent state, we go for it.

Hans: So Spain has to agree, in the current configuration, for Catalan to be an official language.

Ramon: Just like Ireland did with Gaelic, yes. In nine years in this house I have never heard Gaelic. I really appreciate the respect Ireland has for thirty thousand speakers of Gaelic. Catalan is not allowed in the Spanish congress but it is also not allowed in the European Parliament. This is one. Furthermore, this is a Catalan magazine for which I write a weekly column. This is about a direct flight between Barcelona and Tokyo, which has been a long fight. There is an agreement between Spain and Russia, that only Madrid airport can provide these flights. We have been fighting for this for years. The EU law is against this break down of the level playing field. There are Japanese companies interested in direct flights between Tokyo and Barcelona, 80% of Japanese tourists to Spain come to Barcelona and now they are forced to travel via

Madrid. There is an agreement between Spain and Russia that only Madrid and Iberia can provide this flight.

Hans: So you say Spain has been inhibiting Catalonia?

Ramon: Yes, our port is not managed by the regional government, for instance, but by the central government. So if we say we need a new railway connection, it is not important. More interestingly, five years ago, this parliament [the EP] voted the new network of European interest railways and put for the first time the Barcelona port on the map. There is therefore money allowed to be invested in the port of Barcelona to connect to the European markets, but the Spanish government is investing this money in Madrid. There is a long list of situations that mean we are not a normal country. All our taxes are collected by Spain. There is a long fight so we can collect our own taxes like the Basques. We are second-class Spaniards, because we are not allowed to manage our airport, our port, our trains, and our taxes. We pay more than we receive much more than you can imagine.

Hans: You mentioned that your opinion has changed because I assume that your first recourse would be to solve this internally with Spain?

Ramon: Yes, we have been trying for 35 years to make Spain a federal country. All our attempts have failed. Nobody in Spain wants this.

Hans: So why did Catalanian independence come to a head now and not in the past 35 years?

Ramon: It is true, ten years ago there were only 200 thousand independence voters and now nearly 2 million. And, it is, a very good question, because if you go 100 years ago, Catalonia only had 2 million people, now we are 7.5 million. This is a big change, we were, and still are, very small. Catalonia is twice the size of Flanders. So, it was demographically weak, but now we are 7.5 million. During Francoism, three million Spaniards were sent to Catalonia. This is very important. In the five years of the republic before Franco, there was talk of granting more independence to Catalonia. There was a lot of opposition to this, and if you go to the minutes of the Spanish parliament, there are records of Spanish MPs saying that this Catalanian issue was easy to be solved by just sending 3 million Spanish to Catalonia. Franco did so. This is why, in the 70s and 80s, and 90s, there was no issue, because these Spanish speaking people

voted for Spanish parties. But now, the descendants of these Spanish migrants have been exposed to Catalan everywhere, and they have been feeling more and more Catalan and now they vote for independence. This is the big change.

Hans: So you are saying there have always been grievances, but the fact that there has been a demographic shift ...

Ramon: Yes, and we have a degree of autonomy to build our own school system, to build our own media communication in Catalan. We managed to make Catalan a language everybody knows and this is why all the polls show that the younger the people are, the greater preference for independence. The young people vote 2/3 for independence. The problem will only grow, jail or repression will not solve this in the long term. Now, people that are not for independence but are in favour of democracy, now realise the Spanish state is not a democracy.

Hans: Another question, some say Catalonian independence would not be viable outside the Spanish state, you are an economist yourself, what is your take on that?

Ramon: There have been a lot of economists that have said Catalonia is perfectly viable. There is a collective of academics, Wilson.cat, and there are many important economists of Catalonia that have written many interesting articles about this. Catalonia represents only 6 percent of Spanish surface but generates 20% of GDP, 27% of Spanish exports, and 28% of tourism. There are about 7000 multinationals in Catalonia. It is a strong powerhouse. It is wishful thinking that independence will ruin us. After the referendum Spain said Catalonia was reeling, but from the Spanish office of statistics we only see growth figures for this time. So all the figures, including from the Financial Times, said that Catalonia is still a good region to invest in. The Spanish governments wants to link decadence to independence, but the link does not exist. It is difficult to say we are going down, on the contrary, Catalonian economy is going really well.

Hans: How important is the European internal market for these figures?

Ramon: The Spanish market is less and less important. We export more and more outside than in Spain. This was not the case during Franco. Now, we sell more all over the world than to the Spanish market.

Hans: Do you think the European internal market is important ...

Ramon: Yes, Yes, Yes, it is like the nord of Italy, Lombardy and Catalonia are core business of the EU. We are more and more integrated economically with the European market. We are more and more linked with the European business cycle and more and more disconnected with the other regions in Spain.

Hans: Do you think that process also affects feelings of independence among politicians?

Ramon: Centralised states are not generating efficiency, on the contrary. Catalonia and Lombardy are integrated in European markets, and they want to have the same tools to compete as the Netherlands and Luxembourg do. To have one tax agency, a seat in the Council, etc. In Spain we are not well represented. We have no Catalan ambassadors, no Catalan ministers. We are not like the Flemish in Belgium. So we feel like the state goes against us.

Hans: What would be your preferred relationship with the EU. Current conditions aside.

Ramon: The same as Scotland, an agreed referendum to discuss the status quo with Spain and perhaps get a new status with Spain. The Scottish example has had a great influence in Catalonia.

Hans: Why do you think it is important for a party such as your own to be active at the European level in the current configuration?

Ramon: Well for us, to copy paste best practices and to put pressure on Madrid, it is a win-win. No other country has the same problems. Germany does not forbid flights from Munich to Tokyo and saying you have to go to Frankfurt. This is why, for us, Europe has been a best practices place to try and change the Spanish business as usual.

Hans: And do you think you and your colleagues have been effective in this pursuit?

Ramon: Yeah, well, not as we wanted, because with the flight we have been working for years, and we worked a lot of years for the trains to the port and when we got it the Spanish

government is using the money for other things. This is frustrating. So people are shifting to independence, because they don't realise any other solution.

Hans: Do you think that the emergence of the EU as it is now and the Spanish membership of it affected Catalanian independence parties?

Ramon: Catalan independence movement has been feeding of people that have realised that Spain will not reform and that the EU is impotent to export best practices to Spain. Nobody will do the job for us.

Hans: Although the EU is impotent as you say, negatively affecting Catalonia because Spain violates EU regulations ...

Ramon: Yeah and also in human rights, and the Commission is controlled by big capitals: Rome, Paris, Madrid. So Tajani, Juncker, and Timmermans are marionettes. I saw Timmermans after the Catalanian referendum, and he was saying that Spain is a perfect democratic country, there was no violence in the streets, like the Popular Party said in Spain. But Timmermans perhaps wants to have a job next year. But if he says the truth, I don't like what Spain did, I believe in political dialogue, I do not believe in police against voters, like Donald Tusk you are done.

Hans: So although the EU has failed in many of these occasions, do you think that the idea of Europe and the internal market has strengthened support for independence parties?

Ramon: It was in the past. Look at Italy, 55 percent of the voters voted explicit anti-EU parties and in France Marine le Pen was very close. It is coming. People feel less and less attached to the EU, the internal market is very important of course it was perfect in the last 25 years to create a feeling: the Erasmus programme and other successes: the euro, but now when you see violence against the people. You are not only violating the directives but EU Treaties. We are escalating into massive disaffection with the EU. In our parliament 95 percent of MPs are pro-EU and all Catalan MEPs sit in pro-EU parties, but this will change.

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