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¹ European Commission, “Chemicals manufacturing at regional level,” *European Commission*, August 3, 2013, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Chemicals_manufacturing_at_regional_level.

LUND UNIVERSITY

Master of Arts in European Studies

Autonomist Regions and the EU

Scotland and Szeklerland

-A Comparative Perspective-

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Motto: *“The EU is a project, which will always be in the making, constantly being revised and open to different social forces and interests. [...] The EU represents an on-going political, social and cultural process. Within frames as a widening Globalization, Multi Level Governance and emergence of displayed identities, the project will keep adjusting itself, as it is liable to new social structure phenomena.”*²

Fredrik Söderbaum

*”In some sub-national regions, [...] there are powerful autonomist or separatist movements which mostly see the EU as a way to by-pass the nation-state. They think that accelerating direct relations with the EU will probably positively affect their autonomy.”*³

Selcen Öner

Abstract:

The ability to successfully manage finances is considered to be proof of self-sufficiency and maturity. It is valid in the case of individuals as in the case of countries and regions. In an un-premeditated feedback loop, the EU funds are designed to create stronger regional autonomy which in turn fosters stronger demands of more funds particularly customized on regional identity and aimed at creating more regional power. Furthermore, when separate ethnic identity comes into picture emphasizing different interests from a perspective outside the majority, direct decision-making and enhanced space for manoeuvre becomes surprisingly appealing. It is not yet the time for a Europe of Regions; still, powers are being shifted within the national level. The present thesis hopes to define new concepts into the scholar research in understanding the EU-enhanced behaviour of autonomist regions.

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² Fredrik Söderbaum, “Fredrik Söderbaum on the waning State, conceptualizing the Region and Europe as a Global Actor,” *Theory Talks*, October 1, 2008, <http://www.theory-talks.org/2008/10/theory-talk-19.html>.

³ Selcen Öner, *Relations between the EU and sub-regions and their impact on the European nation-state*, 33-48.

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List of Abbreviations

CoR – Committee of Regions

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

GT – Grounded Theory

MA – Managing Authority

MDSD – Most Different System Design

MEP – Member of the European Parliament

MLG – Multi-level Governance

NUTS – Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics

RECHAR – “Reconversion de Bassins Charbonniers,” EU funding programme providing grants for the reconversion or development of depressed mining areas. The sum allocated for the UK covered mostly Scotland and the EC pressured the UK treasury to release the funds to the regional level.

SNC – Szekler National Council

Key words: referendum, EU funds, state decentralization, regional representation, autonomy.

Research Question: How does the European Union, by providing institutional structures and mainly financial resources, influence its autonomist Regions?

Chapter I – Introduction:

One of the main specificities of Europe in general and of the European Union as a focus point can be described by cliché mottos such as *mosaic* or *unity in diversity*, which in fact mean a blend of not only nationalities but also ethnicities. Out of those, some European ethnic groups with a long separate-identity tradition can be described as autonomist; that means that they aim at independent decision-making, self-governance, autonomy⁴ and/or eventually independence.⁵ Under a centralized EU structure, national borders give way to regional borders and sub-national authorities are gradually receiving incentives to handle EU affairs from a closer approach instead of leaving most decisions for the state capital.⁶

From the bottom-up perspective, the EU represents a financial and institutional resource from the point of view of fund absorption. It **unintentionally** influences regional domestic perspective, regional responses and struggles for power shifting (between the three MLG levels). The topic of this thesis emphasizes what processes were generated in autonomist regions under EU financing bureaucracy. The focus will be set on two particular autonomist regions: Scotland in the United Kingdom and Székely Land or Szeklerland in Romania. Scotland used to be an independent territory⁷ while Szeklerland was part of the Habsburg⁸ and later the Austro-Hungarian Empire⁹. For the purpose of this work, I will use “autonomist” as the generic term referring to both case-study disintegrative regions, although in the case of Scotland, a historic nation with its own

⁴ “AFP: The Hungarian minorities from Eastern Europe are not tempted by the Kosovo precedent,” (Original: “AFP: Minoritățile maghiare din estul Europei nu sunt tentate de precedentul Kosovo”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=192%3Aafp-minoritile-maghiare-din-estul-europei-nu-sunt-tentate-de-precedentul-kosovo&catid=16%3Ahirek&Itemid=22&lang=ro.

⁵ BBC UK, “Salmond calls for independence referendum in 2014,” *BBC UK*, January 10, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-16478121>.

⁶ Öner. *Relations between the EU and sub-regions and their impact on the European nation-state*, 33.

⁷ William E. Burns, *A Brief History of Great Britain*. (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2010), 49, http://books.google.se/books?id=Fjf4YynnC90C&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

⁸ “Ethnicities of the Habsburg Empire,” Corney, Frederick C. <http://fccorn.people.wm.edu/HIST112-HabsburgEmpire-Ethnes.jpg>.

⁹ “Ethnic groups in Austria-Hungary,” Google User Content, https://lh6.googleusercontent.com/-E7fHmO33g4o/TXELPYwfDLI/AAAAAAAAALc/Nt6lZCCBK18/s1600/774px-Ethnic_groups_in_Austria-Hungary_1910.png.

political agenda¹⁰ and currently preparing an independence referendum, one could also say “potential separatist”. Also, I need to specify that “Szeklerland” is a self-named administrative unit unrecognized by the Romanian state and, it will be referred to in this paper as such only for easy-reading purposes instead of “the so-called Szeklerland”. Lastly, the term autonomist will only refer in the present thesis to **disintegrative** autonomists: areas populated by a national ethnical minority ”seeking greater autonomy or even separation”¹¹ and will not refer to geographically distinct territories such as EU territories outside Europe.

The hypothesis of the thesis is that organized groups representing both of these regions consider that their interest cannot be pursued by the central national government as efficiently as they would through the regional responsibility and simplified bureaucracy the EU can offer. As these regions are looking for independence, respectively autonomy, the European Union represents the most relevant superstructure they look up to in terms of commerce, financial help and dependence. In that sense, absorption of EU funds is one of most important criteria these autonomist regions are considering while pursuing their own interest, together with matters of internal finance, culture, development, education and language.¹² The Scottish National Party, dominant in the current government, have strongly argued for direct and intrinsic EU membership for an independent Scotland, since threatened membership may dissolve internal regional support.¹³ Enjoying less importance within its state, the representatives of Szeklerland argue that the regional division used by the Romanian government for allocation of European structural funds¹⁴ is a deliberate strategy to fit the land in a broader, unnaturally framed administrative unit where the Hungarian majority will become a minority and therefore will not be able to represent and pursue its interests neither at a local level nor with regard to fund absorption and, on a general level, to representation within the EU.¹⁵

¹⁰ Michael Keating, ”The invention of regions: political restructuring and territorial government in Western Europe,” *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 15 (1997): 390.

¹¹ Keating, ”The invention of regions,” 389.

¹² ”AFP: The Hungarian minorities from Eastern Europe are not tempted by the Kosovo precedent.”

¹³ Tony Barber, ”Europe: Stretched at the seams,” *Financial Times*, November 8, 2012, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/c1781c92-281a-11e2-ac7f-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2LlStP7Na>.

¹⁴ ”Regional Operational Programme,” (Original ”Programul Operational Regional”), Ministerul Fondurilor Europene, <http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/documente-programare/programe-operationale/por>.

¹⁵ ”The administrative reform of Romania must be fundamental on the solidarity of local communities,” (Original: ”Reforma administrativă a României trebuie fundamentată pe soildaritatea colectivităților locale”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=248%3Aareforma-administrativ-a-

The incentive I had in choosing regions in the United Kingdom and Romania would be my desire to research this topic on countries within the EU that are highly contrasting as proven by the dichotomies pointed out by the divisions: continental versus insular, pro EU versus euro-sceptic, older versus newer member state, convergence versus competitiveness and employment region,¹⁶ a higher degree of self-governance for Scotland than for the Szeklerland and different individual history. The reason for them being different was a potential extrapolation of the thesis conclusion towards autonomist ethnical regions in the EU. Still, the basis for the comparison is their common positive attitude towards EU structural funds in their plans for an improved status quo within the nation state. Moreover, in the present light of Scotland aiming to hold a referendum on independence and Szeklerland requesting autonomy as an EU Region, a comparative case-study dealing with the importance of the EU structural funds as a bureaucratic institution in support of disintegrative purposes represents an intriguing and fairly fresh topic of academic research.

As theoretical approach, in my view Multi-level Governance best explains the functioning of the EU. One of the envisioned aims of the paper is to use new empirical research to test and enlarge MLG applicability on autonomist regions in order to cultivate a more sophisticated view that would refine the theory and pave the way for extrapolations. Extended empirical research towards autonomist regions can only advance our understanding of MLG while my personal motivation lies both in the current character of the events presented in the case-study and in the desire to broaden the EU scholarly knowledge towards a new and less researched member state such as Romania. In that sense, UK and Scotland make a perfect comparison point as a widely known case of separate regional identity area and a milestone in EU studies and MLG literature.¹⁷

A key aim of this chapter is the clarification of some important background concepts: EU Regionalisation as a political process leads to the introduction of regional policies which are the basis for the operation of the EU structural funds. One of the main aims of structural policy of the EU is to decrease uneven development throughout the Union and

romaniei-trebuie-fundamentat-pe-soildaritatea-colectivitor-locale-&catid=16%3Ahirek&Itemid=22&lang=ro.

¹⁶ "EU Regional Policy," Wikimedia,

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/69/EU_Regional_Policy.svg.

¹⁷ Ian Bache and Matthew Flinders, *Multi-level Governance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

low level of regional integration.¹⁸ The structural funds represent the main financial instrument of EU regional policy, the ERDF.¹⁹ EU regional funds are directed towards networks (interest groups, NGOs, regional agencies, associations etc) which reinforce regional representation.²⁰

While Scotland is already formed and established as four NUTS2 (basic regional division for the application of regional policies²¹), Romania has temporarily divided its territory during the 2007-2013 period in eight NUTS2 Regional Development Councils but with no legal personality and no real administrative powers.²² Consequently, according to the present legislative draft for a new administrative structure, the regions are to be represented by agencies with legal personality which will be of enormous benefit as a result of shared “competencies in between the state and the region [...] directed towards matters of international relations-especially with the EU”²³ (Appendix 1). The current EU funds-driven decentralisation reform undergoing in Romania has established the Centre Region (of NUTS2 level) as formed of three counties with clear Romanian majority and three counties (the North-East of the Centre Region) which the Hungarian minority intend to make official as Szeklerland, the most compact area in Romania inhabited mostly by Hungarians²⁴ (Appendix 2).

Regarding limitations I expect fewer resources about Romania than about the UK because of the different period of integration in the EU and of language barriers. Another envisioned limitation is not extending the applicability of the study towards radically eurosceptic regions.

To conclude, the proposed topic qualifies as current, relevant and exceptionally interesting. With Scotland’s coming referendum and Szeklerland being revolted by the regional

¹⁸ European Parliament, “Regional structures in the applicant countries and their compatibility with the Structural Funds.” European Parliament, April, 2002, 6.

¹⁹ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 165.

²⁰ Adina Balan, “So I ask: are you for or against regionalisation?” (Original: “Aşadar, vă întreb eu acum: sunteţi pro sau contra regionalizare?”), *Clubul National Liberal*, September 14, 2012, <http://national-liberal.ro/asadar-va-intreb-eu-acum-sunteți-pro-sau-contraregionalizare/>.

²¹ “NUTS - Nomenclature of territorial units for statistics,” European Commission, http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/nuts_nomenclature/introduction.

²² “National Delegation of Romania,” Committee of the Regions, <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/nationaldelegations/Pages/romania.aspx>.

²³ Realitatea, “How Romania will look after the regionalisation. Law proposal,” (Original: “Cum va arată ROMÂNIA după REGIONALIZARE. Proiect de lege”), *Realitatea*, February 6, 2013, http://www.realitatea.net/cum-va-arata-romania-dupa-regionalizare-proiect-de-lege_1107665.html#ixzz2QuRMgqAg.

²⁴ “Regional Operational Programme.”

territorial division implemented by the Romanian government, important questions are rising. Is the EU perceived as a favourable financial and institutional condition for an eventual deeper-than-the-current independence from the state? Is it that the EU funding policies can be seen as a potential safety net, aid or valuable collaborator for these regions in the process of distancing from the central governments? We shall observe reactions (generated by the EU structure) of disintegrative regional public-representation groups; more precisely, consequences of the appearance of institutional structures for regional administration of EU funds.

Chapter II – Theoretical approach:

I have tried to establish which EU theoretical framework would coherently explain "the discourse of fragmentation according to which the nation-state is being eroded by the emergence and re-emergence of cleavages among ethnic, cultural and religious lines."²⁵ In that sense, "multi-level governance can generate testable hypotheses to guide empirical research, the findings from which can lead to further research questions"²⁶. Also, the MLG perspective has tended to focus on SNAs (sub-national authorities).²⁷

I will discuss MLG and Regionalism and explain how they can be used to explore the current case study. The two studied regions share a different identity, similarities with another country or region and an emphasized desire to control their own finances. Also, they consider that national governments do not pursue the regional interest, they project the future as a stronger collaboration with the EU and they display a strong regional-ethnic interest in the EU funds. These are the characteristics developed in the empirical part – peculiarities of areas which are blending national and European levels while building webs of unilateral transnational interaction in the detriment of the state.

Consequently, I have divided and processed the most important characteristics of MLG in a structure explicitly focused on understanding regional agency and the context around it:

²⁵ Jörg Friedrichs, "The Meaning of New Medievalism," *European Journal of International Relations* (2001): 479, DOI: 10.1177/1354066101007004004.

²⁶ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 117.

²⁷ Op. cit., 125.

1. Basic general characteristics of MLG

MLG claims that power sharing takes place within three levels of government and that there are different designs through which the power is intertwined.²⁸

There are three main principles of the MLG theory regarding its applicability to the EU. The first argues for joint decision-making disputed by agents placed in different regional levels and not absorbed by state governments. The second refers to consensual decision-making among member states which implies a deficit of authority from central governments. The third claims that political platforms are intertwined in both a formal and informal manner and not necessarily enclosed; regional actors have access to national and EU arenas facilitating lobby in their course of action and national governments are no longer as effective as gate-keepers.²⁹ Gary Marks describes MLG as a pattern of perpetual bargaining among acknowledged governments at different territorial levels from supranational to local. It is the outcome of a complex development of reallocation of decisions and emergence of institutions.³⁰ MLG also draws attention towards the legitimacy of actors placed at different territorial levels. The dichotomy domestic vs. international has been re-valued by MLG approach and replaced by the **intermestic**, meaning actors operating at the crossroads of internal and external policy which require new ways of cooperation.³¹ The EU-structure has challenged the role of the state, powerful decision-making become more spread across different territorial levels³² and there is a stronger role for non-governmental actors in policy making.³³ Furthermore, the state has lost exclusive direct policy control to network actors which trigger questions about the way state power has been challenged and about who holds true democratic accountability. Within the EU, functions are formally and informally pushed both upwards to the superstructure and downwards towards regional assemblies.³⁴

In certain cases sub-national authorities can only mobilize, while in others they exercise real influence.³⁵ Nevertheless, it is the EU structure that offers the context for action, the

²⁸ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 116.

²⁹ *Op. cit.*, 96.

³⁰ *Ibidem*.

³¹ *Op. cit.*, 94.

³² *Op. cit.*, 95.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ *Op. cit.*, 97.

³⁵ *Op. cit.*, 123.

structure where paradoxically “globalization catalysed integration.”³⁶ According to Ian Bache it is “Type II multi-level governance [that] describes governing arrangements in which the jurisdiction of authority is task-specific, where jurisdictions operate at numerous territorial levels and may be overlapping.”³⁷ There, authority is more flexible and policy-making pluralized. One of the main claims about MLG is that the central states cannot monopolize governing power but share it with sub-national and supranational actors.³⁸ States still have the main role but MLG affirms that the EU structure decreases that role in favour of power-sharing.³⁹ Nevertheless, it is primarily goal-driven actors like the nation states that agree to readjust in a new context since financial instruments such as the structural funds are aimed at their financial development in the process of EU-effect on domestic politics.⁴⁰

I will test the same claims described by MLG on the two cases of autonomist regions. Although I expect certain differences, a pattern must arise in the way autonomist regions perceive the institution of EU funds. My anticipated conclusion is that autonomist regions with separate identity would be tempted to reach an improved status quo if helped by bureaucracy and financing. My research is neither on whether they will succeed in acquiring those further advantages nor the factual financial impact of the EU funds. It is the EU context explained by MLG which provides a platform for action (a further alternative to bypass state government), opportunity that is in a way or another valued by the autonomists. Within three levels of formal and informal governance, the EU bureaucracy can involuntarily be of aid either to the national or to the regional level depending on various internal and external circumstances.

2. The status quo of a region depends on internal characteristics

A proof of the sophistication of MLG is displayed in the theory’s claim that the nature of the EU hinders generalizations and in return calls for empirical research on particular topics. Regarding cohesion policy, Hooghe states that the empirical research calls for

³⁶ Gerald Delanty and Chris Rumford. *Rethinking Europe: Social Theory and the Implications of Europeanization* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2005), 125.
http://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/0415347149/ref=rdr_ext_tmb.

³⁷ Ian Bache, “Europeanization and multi-level governance: EU cohesion policy and pre-accession aid in Southeast Europe,” *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 10 (2010), DOI:10.1080/14683851003606739.

³⁸ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 125.

³⁹ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁰ Bache, “Europeanization and multi-level governance.”

distinction between member states. There are reasons for the existence of variations in regional influence and those reasons are found in the relationship of regional actors with the EU which, in turn, depend on national characteristics or inter-level state organization.⁴¹ MLG does not make claims about the level of autonomy of sub-national authorities. Such findings comprise one of the research-topics MLG studies through empirical research. The present thesis shall extend the theory's understanding upon autonomist regions within the EU. Sometimes regional actors are powerful and sometimes they are menial depending on the conditions under which they can show influence.⁴² The reasons that influence the capability of the state to preserve the gatekeeper-role vary significantly depending on the internal characteristics.⁴³ Scotland is a region with advanced powers, such as an elected regional parliament, a limited right to levy taxes and limited budgetary powers while Szeklerland has no powers, no elected regional parliament, no right to levy taxes, no budgetary and legislative power and all of its financial resources are transferred from the central government.⁴⁴

The balance swings sometimes on the favour of regional institutions and sometimes in favour of national pursuits.⁴⁵ “The factors that affect whether a particular SNA will be effective in influencing national European policy are constitutional position, the quality of intergovernmental relations within the state, the level of entrepreneurship displayed by the SNA (which in turn will be affected by the level of internal institutional adaptation, leadership, and the strategies of coalition-building adopted) and the legitimacy of the SNA (the extent to which it has the backing of a local/regional population with a strong sense of common identity and purpose).”⁴⁶

The variations in between regions are much influenced by internal constitutional arrangements,⁴⁷ in this case Scotland being devolved since 1998 while Szeklerland is still part of a compactly unitary state. The level of entrepreneurship also explains the differences in leadership and differential empowerment depending on whether the regional

⁴¹ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 116-117.

⁴² *Op. cit.*, 117-118.

⁴³ *Op. cit.*, 96.

⁴⁴ Öner, *Relations between the EU and sub-regions and their impact on the European nation-state*, 39.

⁴⁵ Simona Piattoni, “Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?” (paper presented at Globalization and Politics: A Conference in Honor of Suzanne Berger, MIT, May 8 and 9, 2009), 33.

⁴⁶ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 117.

⁴⁷ *Op. cit.*, 121.

policy community was present in the region before the arrival of the EU structural funds.⁴⁸ Regional mobilization can materialize in smaller or larger movements⁴⁹ but the arrival of funds changed the balance of power incredibly dissimilarly. Regions can independently access EU funds according to their political power or their lobbying abilities within the EU.⁵⁰ Therefore, it highly depends among the member states whether their sub-national authorities have a say in national European policy; it generally happens if the European policy itself somehow already infringes on the national policy-making.⁵¹ While Scotland and Szeklerland differ in regional entrepreneurship and economy, they both count on ethnic support for a more separate region.

Empirical evidence shows that regional interference grew unevenly across the EU⁵² and that regional mobilization does not necessarily become regional influence within the state.⁵³ However, in the case of devolution, MLG explains that the ongoing process has relocated competences, created cleavages and started conflicts within state levels.⁵⁴ Multi-level governance offers great insights into the changes of British politics where devolution has facilitated creations of new structures, processes and institutions.⁵⁵ Decentralization brings about redistribution of policy-competencies and accountability potential in between parliamentary and government bodies⁵⁶ while mostly facilitating the sub-national level.⁵⁷

It can be claimed therefore that, from one member state to another, governments and territorial levels have particular institutional competencies but are also liable to definitions of legitimacy which derive from the general conceptualization of how that society should be ruled and what are the overall governing relationships within that particular state.⁵⁸

3. Are the EC and the Regions a team in bypassing the nation state?

Since the 1990's the European Commission was able to monitor the way EU funds were used at national level. The outcome was a progressive move towards spending on EU

⁴⁸ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 117.

⁴⁹ *Op. cit.*, 122.

⁵⁰ *Op. cit.*, 87.

⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, 124.

⁵² *Op. cit.*, 116.

⁵³ *Op. cit.*, 107.

⁵⁴ *Op. cit.*, 93.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem.*

⁵⁶ *Op. cit.*, 101.

⁵⁷ *Op. cit.*, 102.

⁵⁸ Piattoni, "Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?", 35.

prioritized projects to the detriment of domestic interests and in favour of regional levels.⁵⁹ Both supranational and the territorial levels have grown in importance in comparison to the nation state⁶⁰ while European structure enhances a stronger role for European regions.⁶¹ The Commission and the regional actors can use structural policy and its resources to improve their status quo in relation to the state government.⁶² Some scholars are even of the opinion that the EU also displays a social dimension; although not as strong as a welfare state, agricultural and cohesion policy are aimed at helping regions in need and excluded societal margins. Still, the EU structure has not overcome the national one, but merely created new regulatory patterns.⁶³

The development of MLG entails three steps: “1) as increasing sub-national mobilization and involvement in policy-making particularly at the EU level, sustained [...] by the desire of (some) sub-national authorities to claim back command over their own destinies [...]; 2) as increasing transnational social movement activism on “value” issues, welcomed by some EU institutional and individual actors as a way of promoting particularly cherished agendas [...]; and 3) as increasing mobilization and involvement in policy-making of civil society organizations at the sub-national level, in turn connected with the growing interest of local political classes to engage the problems of their territory and of the new saliency of the sub-national territorial level for policy-making.”⁶⁴ Clearly, information about EU business is a strong advantage in domestic negotiation⁶⁵ and some scholars consider that within the EU it is even possible to bypass nation state level if addressing supranational institutions directly.⁶⁶

In my view, MLG does not necessarily always empower the regions as much as makes them liable to its direct influence. Therefore, in relation to the Commission, regions accept both the rights and the responsibilities that come along. The EU-regions relationship experiences both ups and downs: in certain cases the regions and the European Commission can form a coalition for particular purposes, especially related to fund

⁵⁹ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 121.

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, 97-98.

⁶¹ *Op. cit.*, 102.

⁶² *Op. cit.*, 121.

⁶³ Piattoni, “Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?”, 32-33.

⁶⁴ *Op. cit.*, 35.

⁶⁵ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 115.

⁶⁶ *Op. cit.*, 76.

spending⁶⁷ (like in the RECHAR case⁶⁸) or when “the Commission encourages lobbying by sub-national groups to obtain sources of information and to strengthen the communautaire spirit;”⁶⁹ in other cases the relationship can prove conflictual like in between Saxony Land and the EC.⁷⁰ Still, this implies that the EU can be seen as a helping platform for the two regions. As the national state is not perceived to represent their interests, they are developing relations with the EU and similar neighbouring regions.

4. MLG and matters of legitimacy in the EU

I agree that “MLG arrangements contribute to EU democracy in a number of ways: 1) they entrench the right of the “peripheries” to be involved in decisions that concern their material and cultural destiny (the “grass roots”); 2) they do so in such a way (“loose coupling”) as to avoid the deadlock that is normally associated even with cooperative federalist settings in which each actor has veto power over the final decision; and 3) they foster the creation of more organic ties between sub-national authorities and their local societies that tend to produce locally responsive outputs”.⁷¹

While nation-states develop hard politics, MLG argues for the fact that implementation is most accurately felt by the individuals living in the territorial level mainly preoccupied with soft politics.⁷² Sub-national authorities are gaining more credibility with their claims of representing the populations of the regions and their power increases with their lobbying skills.⁷³ In other words there is a developing relationship between informality of lobbying and inequality in EU politics regarding territorial level.⁷⁴ On the other hand, nation states are rather critical of the MLG procedure since it implies a decrease in their control competencies while increasing their liability when complying with EU policies, regulations and institutional demands.⁷⁵

⁶⁷ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 120.

⁶⁸ *Op. cit.*, 119-120.

⁶⁹ Öner, *Relations between the EU and sub-regions and their impact on the European nation-state*, 34-38.

⁷⁰ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 122.

⁷¹ Piattoni, “Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?”, 35.

⁷² *Ibidem*.

⁷³ Piattoni, “Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?”, 37.

⁷⁴ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 87.

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, 83.

5. Autonomist and different-identity regions

Selcen Öner states that “sub-national regions rarely try to displace states or take over state functions.” Nevertheless, “is the policy of the many [...] nationalist groups” to try to “replace the existing Union with a federation of regions and small nations.”⁷⁶ Especially if alimented by ethnic and cultural peculiarities, regional governments became more aggressive in their relationship with the nation state. They may try to achieve a place on EU-level and circumvent national governments.⁷⁷ From a monetary perspective though, they count both on supra-national support and state welfare.⁷⁸ “A region’s separate purposes can be: to recognise special linguistic or ethnic features; to limit central government’s power over autonomous areas; and to establish a territorial framework which is suited to the needs of economic administration”⁷⁹ together with increasing its planning powers.

Within and due to fragmentation, territorially organized sub-state entities such as autonomous regions and non-state actors, for e.g. ethnic minorities, actively try to “increase their sovereign powers to possibly attain title over the territory they occupy, most commonly by appealing to the right of self-determination.” Still, their capacities and motives strongly fluctuate.⁸⁰ At a micro-level, the desire for a stronger status quo within the state is highly related to the capacity of local communities to make their voices heard.⁸¹

6. Structural funds

EU funds policy-domains have reactivated the sub-regional in the recent past.⁸² Even the concept of MLG itself emerged from Gary Marks’ study on Structural Policy.⁸³

The appearance of semi-independent market-related patterns has boosted fragmentation throughout the EU and gave rise to an elaborated bureaucratic dominion.⁸⁴ The allocation of structural funds given for the development of disadvantaged regions was the main

⁷⁶ Öner, *Relations between the EU and sub-regions and their impact on the European nation-state*, 47.

⁷⁷ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 97.

⁷⁸ Delanty, *Rethinking Europe*, 110.

⁷⁹ European Parliament, “Regional structures in the applicant,” 4.

⁸⁰ Simone Florio, “The Fragmentation of Geopolitical Space: What Secessionist Movements Mean to the Present-Day State System.” University of Granada, February 12, 2011, 2.

⁸¹ Florio, “The Fragmentation of Geopolitical Space,” 9.

⁸² Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 98.

⁸³ *Op. cit.*, 3.

⁸⁴ *Op. cit.*, 97.

incentive for national governments to accept the Commission's idea that the funds would be distributed through sub-national cooperation mostly in between the EC and regional or local levels.⁸⁵ Although the traditional role of states would be to govern the economy, under EU rules for funds distribution that function became from many points of view, volatile.⁸⁶ Also, national governments sometimes follow goals that require adjustments, even when involving the unwanted re-establishment of hierarchies of authority. But once new institutions have been put in place with responsibilities transferred to them, a new status-quo has already been created.⁸⁷ That is the moment MLG emerges. In all of the three formal and informal mixed levels, EU funds flow represents a crucial re-motivation for lobbying, negotiation and policy-making. Sub-national authorities at that point have the resources to increase their autonomy from the national government. The resources provided by the European Commission act both as incentive and means in order to maximize the use of what EU fund policy can offer. Once a policy sector becomes influenced by the EU, new resources become available and new levels have already appeared.⁸⁸ It is incredibly attractive for actors at the regional level in the two regions to have a direct link with influential and resourceful supranational institutions. Regions are aware of the monetary resources that the EU funds can add to their budgets⁸⁹ and social policy (welfare) becomes equivalent to economic policy (funds).⁹⁰

New Regionalism and Regionalism and Supranationalism

In addition to Multi-level Governance, the Regionalism-Supranationalism theoretical approach also depicts regional tensions and changing structures of influence, majorly related to funds accession. Therefore, for the purpose of a more complete and refined academic insight, I have selected an additional piece of Regionalism approach to reinforce the MLG theoretical backbone of the thesis.⁹¹ Although it is MLG that offers the best overview, regionalism depicts a few key insights more detailed; the regional dimension is

⁸⁵ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 98.

⁸⁶ *Op. cit.*, 97.

⁸⁷ *Op. cit.*, 114-115.

⁸⁸ *Op. cit.*, 121.

⁸⁹ *Op. cit.*, 83.

⁹⁰ Delanty, *Rethinking Europe*, 110.

⁹¹ David M. Cameron, ed. *Regionalism and Supranationalism: Challenges and Alternatives to the Nation-state in Canada and Europe*. (Montreal, 1981) 39.

http://books.google.se/books?id=V6Tk3nM1F0UC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false.

intended to accurately reflect the cultural and national divisions within Europe.⁹² On the same line as MLG, New Regionalism states that Regions are not being created uniformly within the EU.⁹³

Like in my two cases, a **”strong regionalism is where political institutions can build on a distinct culture and identity”** which can climax in a separatist or disintegrative regional autonomy: actors pursuing interests in a bilateral zero sum game.⁹⁴ They are the “territories or populations with a distinct set of historical, linguistic characteristics.”⁹⁵

As the world economy becomes more integrated, it is more difficult to control a state’s functional development from the capital. Moreover, in places where local differences such as ethnic, linguistic, cultural or historical peculiarities exist, it is more likely that a political demand for increased autonomy and federalism would be displayed.⁹⁶

As the nation state is challenged by too many functions and must share competencies, the regional and supranational levels are occasionally prone to forming strategic alliances against the middle level. While in federal states like Germany growth of regional power was naturally embedded in the status quo, in unitary states it led to tensions.⁹⁷ In my cases, Romania is a unitary state while the UK is unitary *de jure* but decentralized *de facto*, due to the pressure for devolution. Actors that feel disadvantaged by the national structure in matters of economic growth, employment etc, perceive the structural funds as alternatives. Moreover, when resentment and different interests collide in between national and local structures, direct decision making becomes incredibly appealing.⁹⁸

Regionalism argues that smaller units are more responsive to the local individual (more electorate-sensitive and endowed with local distinctiveness) while primary group attachment such as regional connection based on cultural, tradition, social practices and historical ties creates a community sense of identity and desire for own decision-making,

⁹² Susana Borrás-Alomar; Thomas Christiansen and Andrés Rodríguez-Pose, “Towards a `Europe of the Regions'? Visions and Reality from a Critical Perspective,” *Regional Politics and Policy* 4 (1994): 27-28. http://kisi.deu.edu.tr/sedef.akgungor/Research%20Methods%201_Fall%202009/towards%20a%20europe%20of%20the%20regions.pdf.

⁹³ Keating, ”The invention of regions,” 396.

⁹⁴ *Op. cit.*, 394.

⁹⁵ John Loughlin, “Regional institutions. Representing regions in Europe: The committee of the regions.” in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?*, ed. Charlie Jeffery, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 154.

⁹⁶ Cameron, *Regionalism and Supranationalism*, 39.

⁹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 40.

⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 51.

as opposed to the desire to build a strong state in matters of security, economic development and influence on the international arena.⁹⁹ Regionalism can appear as a method of promoting economical development, as a demand for self governance or as a demand for policy concessions or local autonomy.

Top-down reforms tend to promote the most competitive regions in order to advertise indigenous attractions on the international market for even further development, and may turn into a zero sum game¹⁰⁰ when coming across mobilization at the ground (referendums, social movements arguing for regional knowledge and asking for different paths of development etc).¹⁰¹ A counter example is the case of rejectionist regionalists: for example Scandinavian peripheries that want to keep the equalitarian welfare system are quite attached to the idea of nation state.¹⁰²

EU integration changed territorial politics especially since economic growth has reshaped the political agendas. Territorial disparities are more obvious in an integrated market and new territorial hierarchy is being formed both in the EU and at country levels. EU Regional policy can act as a reward while a partnership with the EC increases mobilization and raises expectations. Therefore, the EU has provided what I will later conceptualize as the **means** to a fruitful arena for the aspirations of minority nationalists. Some regions even want to secede as a region and rejoin as member state. Minority regionalists (defined by common language, historic memories, pre-state past and myths) seek a more natural and more participative level. Nevertheless, as actors, regions (especially disintegrative) are unlikely to be uncontested. In addition to acquiring an advantageous position on the European market which is vital for any region, autonomist ones try to use Europe to loosen the control of the state (e.g.: Scotland, Tirol etc). In addition to that, when feeling that the economic change is not entirely dependent on the state anymore, regions seek alternatives. Additionally, member states may at times sacrifice regional interests to get a package deal (e.g.: for fisheries in the UK) while regional offices in Brussels give the chance to develop narratives for project proposals. Brussels offices are also preferred since the Committee of Regions is a rather weak body instead of the hoped second legislative chamber. But the Commission has an interest in partnership with regional representatives mainly from the

⁹⁹ Cameron, *Regionalism and Supranationalism*, 3-4.

¹⁰⁰ Michael Keating, "Europe and the regions: past, present and future." (paper presented at ECSA Conference, Seattle, May, 1997), 2.

¹⁰¹ Keating, "Europe and the regions: past, present and future," 1-2.

¹⁰² *Op. cit.*, 3-9.

structural funds point of view. In that sense, poor regions rely both on national and EU funding.¹⁰³ Still, whether they are poor territorial units clinging to fiscal centralization or rich decentralist territories, a separate ethnic aspect has a huge potential to emphasize desired changes in the status quo.¹⁰⁴ Since the Single European Act, EU matters have lost the exclusive foreign policy character,¹⁰⁵ and places with ethnic specificity¹⁰⁶ are quite prone to attract development means that would enhance the regional quality of life.¹⁰⁷ Regions that are successful at national level are also more likely to be successful in Brussels;¹⁰⁸ still, a lack of cover from the state also exposes them to potential hits from the market (e.g.: Szeklerland).¹⁰⁹ With the European Commission insisting on additionality and transparency to make sure that it is not the states' treasuries receiving the funds, a powerful mobilization on the ground was encouraged.¹¹⁰ Some countries (e.g. Romania) even had to establish updated regional structures in order to qualify for funds.¹¹¹ Within the EU, due to the principle of subsidiarity, funds managing authorities directly receive the payments made by the Commission.¹¹² Information, selection of projects, payment and supervision¹¹³ are performed by the appointed MA.¹¹⁴ On the ground implementation of ERDF depends on intermediate authorities which are the main contact bodies with the beneficiaries.¹¹⁵

"The Scottish Government is the Managing Authority for Structural Funds in Scotland and has overall responsibility for supervising the implementation, ongoing management and effectiveness of the programmes."¹¹⁶ Unlike in Romania,¹¹⁷ the MA of Regional Policy in

¹⁰³ Keating, "Europe and the regions: past, present and future," 3-9.

¹⁰⁴ Keating, "The invention of regions," 389.

¹⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, 388.

¹⁰⁶ *Op. cit.*, 387.

¹⁰⁷ *Op. cit.*, 386.

¹⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, 395.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibidem.*

¹¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 388.

¹¹¹ *Op. cit.*, 388.

¹¹² The European Union, "Regulation (EC) No 1080/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council," *Official Journal of the European Union* (2006): 8. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2006:210:0001:0011:EN:PDF>.

¹¹³ "How are programmes implemented?" European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/funds/prord/prords/implem/pdim1_en.htm.

¹¹⁴ "What are the Structural Funds implementation principles?" European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/funds/prord/prords/implem/pdim2_en.htm.

¹¹⁵ "How do the Structural Funds work?" European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/funds/prord/prords/implem/pdimp_en.htm.

¹¹⁶ "European Structural Funds," The Scottish Government, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Business-Industry/support/17404>.

¹¹⁷ "Managing authorities. Romania," European Commission Regional Policy, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/manage/authority/authorities.cfm?lan=EN&pay=ro#1.

the UK is not a single national institution; there are two MAs covering only Scotland.¹¹⁸ The regional impact of EU funds in Scotland is rather noticeable and displays no great novelty. Only the Scottish Co-investment Fund started in 2003 and partly funded by the ERDF¹¹⁹ benefited of £27m within the Structural Fund Programmes. Another money flow of £29m ERDF came in 2008 making it acknowledged an exemplar fund by the European Commission and the European Investment Fund.¹²⁰

In Romania until the present reform, the public administration was dominated by vertical-hierarchical political culture and institutional practice.¹²¹ During decentralization, competencies are transferred to the regional level. National territorial-administrative units defined by legal personality will from 2014 on coincide with the EU NUTS2 regions covered by Regional Development Agencies (implementation units¹²²) which supervise the whole implementation process,¹²³ are in direct contact with the EC,¹²⁴ closer to the citizens¹²⁵ and perform a faster bureaucracy.¹²⁶

Therefore, according to MLG and Regionalism, national and regional circumstances matter but the overall reality is dominated by a true potential for power shifts between the three EU governance levels.

Before deciding on MLG and Regionalism, I also examined four other valid theories but considered them not to be the best reflection of autonomist EU regions. **Neofunctionalism:** I appreciated the elements that Neofunctionalism shares with MLG, namely the idea of

¹¹⁸ "Managing authorities. United Kingdom," European Commission Regional Policy, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/manage/authority/authorities.cfm?lan=EN&pay=uk#1.

¹¹⁹ "Scottish Co-investment Fund," Scottish Enterprise, <http://www.scottish-enterprise.com/fund-your-business/scottish-investment-bank/sib-equity-funding/scif.aspx>.

¹²⁰ The Scottish Government, "Fiscal Commission Working Group - First Report - Macroeconomic Framework." (published by the Scottish Government, Edinburgh, 2013), 12.

¹²¹ Ioan Toderasc, "The Role of Technical Assistance Allocation from European Structural Funds: Developing Administrative Capacity of Managing Authorities or Supporting Europeanization Process of The Domestic Administrative Systems?" University of Bucharest, June 23 - 24, 2009, 325.

¹²² Institute for Public Policy, "Transparency and Effectiveness of Use of Structural Funds in Romania and Bulgaria: learning by mistakes." Institute for Public Policy, Bucharest, January, 2012, 11.

¹²³ "Responsible institutions," (Original: "Institutiile responsabile"), Programul Operational Regional, <http://www.inforegio.ro/node/11>.

¹²⁴ Toderasc, "The Role of Technical Assistance Allocation from European Structural Funds," 319.

¹²⁵ Regionalizare, "Regionalizarea Romaniei si descentralizarea administratiei publice," <http://regionalizare.mdrap.ro/>

¹²⁶ Regionalizare, "Liviu Dragnea: the regionalisation will have direct implications in increasing the absorption of European funds," (Original: "Liviu Dragnea: Regionalizarea va avea implicatii directe in cresterea absorbtiei fondurilor europene"), *Regionalizare*, February 8, 2013, <http://regionalizare.mdrap.ro/2013/02/08/liviu-dragnea-regionalizarea-va-avea-implicatii-directe-in-cresterea-absorbtiei-fondurilor-europene/>.

alliance between the supranational and the regional in the detriment of the national; yet, it does not depict the reality of my case-studies and claims that the link is a one direction uniform spill-over that decreases state sovereignty instead of varying majorly from case to case.¹²⁷ **Rational Choice Theory**: this proposes the idea of economic behaviour which could explain reactions towards EU funding but it did not fully match since: 1. autonomist regions also have other considerations to take into account than pure numbers and 2. I would have needed more detailed data on the resources available to actors during a wider time frame than 2007-present. Public image of funds can suffer serious modifications during seven years but documented statements on resources require a wider time span. “If multi-level governance is to develop as a branch of rational choice analysis, it needs a stronger theory of the resources available to actors.”¹²⁸ **Liberal Intergovernmentalism** argues that cohesion policy has a role in inter-state competitiveness rather than in internal social goals.¹²⁹ Finally, **New Medievalism** claims similarity with the pre-Westphalia order. It is a suitable theory due to stating that: fragmentation erodes the power of the state in the favour of actors placed under and above it, economical globalization destabilizes borders, institutionalization of global structures emerge, institutional authorities compete,¹³⁰ there is a “system of overlapping authority and multiple loyalty [and a] decentralized network of socio-political relationships [...] held together by the antagonistic organizational claims of the nation-state system and the transnational market economy.”¹³¹ Yet, despite the explanatory potential, I opted out using New Medievalism since it focused on the global macrolevel,¹³² the American global empire¹³³ and trade beyond the state¹³⁴ rather than the sub-national dimension.

In conclusion, it is states that control foreign policy but the EU level is not simply a matter of foreign policy anymore. Although European integration has the role of regional well-being, it is not time for the Europe of Regions yet. That is the main reason why MLG still

¹²⁷ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 111-113.

¹²⁸ *Op. cit.*, 118.

¹²⁹ Delanty, *Rethinking Europe*, 141.

¹³⁰ Sergio Fabbrini, “European Regionalism in Comparative Perspective: Features and Limits of the new Medievalism Approach to World Order,” *Jean Monnet/Robert Schuman Paper Series 9* (2009): 21. <http://aei.pitt.edu/14996/1/EurReg.pdf>.

¹³¹ Friedrichs, “The Meaning of New Medievalism,” Abstract.

¹³² *Op. cit.*, 492.

¹³³ Roberto Rotondo, “Towards a new Middle Ages?” *30 Days*, issue no. 10 2004, http://www.30giorni.it/articoli_id_5335_13.htm?id=5335.

¹³⁴ Fabbrini, “European Regionalism in Comparative,” 21.

encapsulates the three dimensional character of the present EU phenomenon best¹³⁵ which will in the current thesis be tested on autonomist regions.

Chapter III – Methodology and Material:

The methodology used in this thesis is Qualitative Data Analysis and more exactly Grounded Theory. The advantage of QDA is the interpretation of themes supported by data,¹³⁶ it allows for categories to emerge from data and most importantly it best captures the richness, variety, and individuality of nuanced data. GT methods create a process of building theory up from the data itself.¹³⁷ According to Grounded Theory, the researcher begins with an inductive approach on the data related to a phenomenon in order to generate wording codes; second, the still-developing theory will require further relevant data and will suggest more-focussed questions to ask, which simultaneously represents the deductive phase of the GT method.¹³⁸ Moreover, abductive reasoning occurs during all stages of analysis due to the constant comparative analysis in between categories which eventually lead to theoretical integration. (Appendix 3)

Groups of open codes generate core categories (in this case the subtitles of the empirical chapter). Further, categories can only be theoretically saturated when new data analysis returns codes that only fit in existing categories, and these categories are sufficiently explained in terms of their properties, conditions that a particular category may exist under, the dimensions of a category or the relationship between categories. When linking the categories by using abductive logic, the researcher tests if the hypothesis remains unmodified when tested on new empirical cases.¹³⁹ Therefore, due to mild autonomist regions as Normandy or Bavaria not fitting in the hypothesis, this led me to narrow down the concept describing my focus regions to a specific kind of autonomists: “ethnic disintegrative regions which are not eurosceptic.”

¹³⁵ Cameron, *Regionalism and Supranationalism*, chap. 3, p. 51.

¹³⁶ Amanda Coffey and Paul Atkinson, *Making Sense of qualitative data*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1996), 29.

¹³⁷ Birks and Mills, *Grounded Theory*, 9-14.

¹³⁸ “What is Grounded Theory?” Grounded Theory, <http://www.groundedtheoryonline.com/what-is-grounded-theory>.

¹³⁹ Birks and Mills, *Grounded Theory*, 9-14.

In more detail, the methodological GT process started with sampled data (from media reports, the EU, government and organisations documents) which I then open coded¹⁴⁰ and axial coded,¹⁴¹ all under constant comparative analysis while adding further data until categories started to emerge. Selective coding then reshaped the core categories and led to patterns, which triggered theoretical saturation (when new data does not change the emerging theory). The categories coincide with the subtitles of the empirical chapter, the theory is saturated by encompassing **non-euroceptic ethnic disintegrative regions** and the patterns discovered are revealed in the conclusion.

The aim of the methodology is for the core categories to lead to an explanation of how the main phenomenon is dealt with and processed. GT is most of all “comprehensive because it includes variation rather than assuming there is a one-size-fits-all answer to a research question.” The conclusion of a research using GT is like a storyline, it basically “explains a process or scheme associated with a phenomenon.”¹⁴² The categories were formed by explaining the consequences of the appearance of institutional structures for regional administration of EU funds. The studied phenomenon (and the gap in research that I am trying to fill) is **reactions of disintegrative regional public-representation groups, generated under EU structure**. Therefore, validity in its traditional sense is not an issue in GT, which instead should be judged by fit. A GT is never right or wrong, it just has more or less fit, relevance, workability and modifiability.¹⁴³

The research design is comparative case study, known in social and especially political sciences, as an analysis through creating themes and making assertions.¹⁴⁴ Most studies that attempt theoretical analysis of social phenomena by examining similarities or differences are comparative; comparing several societies with different types of characteristics enables conclusions to be drawn.¹⁴⁵ I argue that this was the most suitable design since it led to a persuasive response to the research question and opened the possibility for the measurements to be replicated on other cases. By using across-case-

¹⁴⁰ Shahedul Huq Khandkar, “Open Coding.” (paper presented at University of Calgary, October 23, 2009), 4.

¹⁴¹ Khandkar, “Open Coding,” 5.

¹⁴² Birks and Mills, *Grounded Theory*, 9-14.

¹⁴³ *Ibidem*.

¹⁴⁴ Delber C. Miller and Neil J. Salkind, eds., *Handbook of research design and Social measurement* (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications Inc., 2002), 147,

http://www.google.se/books?hl=en&lr=&id=sgoHv5ZP6dcC&oi=fnd&pg=PR19&dq=experimental+research+h+design&ots=VmGsXoapfp&sig=9Q5pFm9vq3Lv0dWhS2JIpuNPnOA&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false.

¹⁴⁵ Russell K. Schutt, *Investigating the Social World*. (USA: SAGE Publications, 2012), 343.

development analysis of themes, aspects that were either common or different across the two cases were pointed out by the holistic analysis. The empirical categories were interpreted by using appropriate verbatim quotes.¹⁴⁶ Various characteristics and autonomist attitudes related to the EU were coded in the subtitles and compared between the cases so as to assert the different extents to which each region was fulfilling each criterion. The aim was capturing views, motivations, and experiences and explaining the meaning the two regions make of them.¹⁴⁷

In my research I chose two regions from very different EU countries in order to test the institutional and financial multi-level impact of the EU on autonomist regions. I chose the “Most Different” Systems Design since it uncovers what was common enough to explain similar developments.¹⁴⁸ In other words, it is a study in which the differences are irrelevant in relation to the mutual characteristic/the dependent variable.¹⁴⁹ A competent MDSD proves that similar outcomes can be conceptualized in the end, beyond the obvious differences.¹⁵⁰

Regarding material, I used qualitative text analysis on national and regional media sources and on the main regional public-representation groups in the studied regions, especially the two most representative ones: Yes Scotland (www.yesscotland.net/) and Szekler National Council (<http://www.sznt.ro>). Such types of sources may not be numerous but they are key variables in understanding the case-studies in relation to the topic. Yes Scotland is set up by the Scottish Government while SNC is an association of 17 (and increasing¹⁵¹) local councils supporting the autonomy of Szeklerland.¹⁵² Other sources are the Scottish Government, the Scottish Parliament, Scotland Europa etc. Even the Scottish National Party is used as a source as it is dominant

¹⁴⁶ Paul Gill, “Analysing and presenting qualitative data,” *British Dental Journal* 204 (2009): 432. http://www.academia.edu/709185/Analysing_and_presenting_qualitative_data.

¹⁴⁷ Jane Forman and Laura Damschroder, “Qualitative Content Analysis,” in *Empirical Methods for Bioethics: A primer*, ed. Liva Jacoby and Laura A. Siminoff. (Oxford: Jai Press, 2008.), 39-45.

¹⁴⁸ Guy Peters, *Comparative Politics, Theory and Method*. (New York: University Press, 1998), 36-41.

¹⁴⁹ Sara Enil Gunn, “Comparative Analysis and Case Studies.” (presented at University of Oslo, November 9, 2010).

¹⁵⁰ Carsten Anckar, “On the Applicability of the Most Similar Systems Design and the Most Different Systems Design in Comparative Research,” *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* (2008): 389-401.

¹⁵¹ “Referendum on Hungarian’s Day,” (Original: “Referendum de Ziua Maghiarilor”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=217%3Areferendum-de-ziua-maghiarilor&catid=18%3Acikkek-tanulmanyok&Itemid=24&lang=ro.

¹⁵² “Local Councils supporting autonomy,” (Original: “Consilii locale pentru autonomie”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=20&Itemid=26&lang=ro.

in the present government so it is likely its policy line will reflect in the mainstream direction of Scotland. Also, mainstream newspapers were used: Financial Times, EU Observer, BBC, Adevarul, Gandul, Romania Libera, Curierul National etc.

The time frame of the study is January 2007-May 2013, from the moment Romania became an EU member state until three months before the thesis' deadline. Regarding **data collection**, I found the above-mentioned material for the empirical analysis by using key words highly relevant to the topic in Google search – in combination with “Scotland” the search key words (in English) were: ”independence, referendum, EU funds, devolution, regional level, regional representation, EU membership, resources, economy and Brussels.” In combination with “Szeklerland” the key words (in Romanian) were: Hungarians, Szeklers, regionalisation, EU funds, autonomy, self-organisation, EU membership, resources, economy and Brussels.” These key words brought about numerous un-envisioned sub-themes in the topic which will be presented in the results section. Also, by noticing that, while taking turns in using the mentioned key words, the material found overlapped with itself within the broad theme, I consider to have exhausted most known publications on the referendum for independence in Scotland and the autonomy within regionalisation in Szeklerland.¹⁵³ During the **coding process**, I open coded first and then I focussed on related recurring codes (axial coding) to turn them into sub-themes/categories. The material used **solely for the empirical part** summed up: official statements of the regional representation groups, numerous articles from approximately 35 different online newspapers and media publications (the international and national most popular but also the very regional ones),¹⁵⁴ selected by exhausting the articles that came up after using the key words for the topic, all making up around 80 different sources for both cases.

Moreover, the study included the up-to-date state of the art regarding the secondary literature of interactions between Scotland and the EU for the purpose of making a proper comparison to Szeklerland. One of the main works was *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?* edited by Charlie Jeffery. Published one year before the Scottish devolution, the source gives insight of key steps that have the potential to be repeating in Szeklerland in time. Also, writings of David Cameron, Michaël

¹⁵³ Margarete Sandelowski, *Writing A Good Read: Strategies for Re-Presenting Qualitative Data*. (University of North Carolina, 1998), 375–382.

¹⁵⁴ Philip Burnard, “Writing a qualitative research report,” *Accident and Emergency Nursing* 12 (2004): 176–181. http://www.nrudrh.edu.au/doclib_udrh/public/Burnard%202004.pdf.

Tatham, Michael Keating, Ian Bache, Selcen Öner and Gary Marks have introduced me into what it had already been researched on the topic: the interests and stages related to the EU funds in the process of regionalization have been until now looked at through the comparison of “unitary versus federal state,” mostly UK versus Germany. The studies concluded that the gatekeeper role of the British government had been weakened by the structural and regional policy of the EU and that a unitary administration (more than a federal one) will be eroded by the cooperation in between the EC and regional levels.¹⁵⁵ While devolution changed the unitary character of the UK, rigorous researches comparing disintegrative autonomists in the EU is still practically missing. As I was aiming for a new approach, previous scholar information on Scotland was relatively easy to find as opposed to the one on Szeklerland, where there is almost nothing of scholar character available to the general public and where I had to consider the linguistic differences (the resources being mostly in Romanian and translated by me).

Unless otherwise stated, throughout the entire Results chapter **the presented view is the autonomist one**, since the key words attracted mostly the opinion of the disintegrative regionalists rather than of the national state.

Although an important part of the sources were media texts, I choose not to use content analysis since it encompassed the risk of missing the overall sense of communications since it only offers quantitative summaries of the content. Any communication evokes a feeling, an overall impression, or a sense that cannot be captured simply by counting the frequency with which certain items appear¹⁵⁶ and so the categorized data risks becoming largely decontextualized.

Potential limitations: most of the sources for the practical part were online newspapers, media articles and dominant regional manifestos due to the on-going character of the events. Still, this characteristic represents more of a peculiarity than a real limitation since novelty also makes an advantage.

¹⁵⁵ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 116.

¹⁵⁶ Paul S. Gray; John B. Williamson; David A. Karp and John R. Dalphin, *The Research Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 285.

Chapter IV – Findings:

While studying the empirical material according to the presented method and research design, I identified six most recurrent themes which made the **top concerns of both autonomist regions** studied in relation to the EU and its funds. Each category exhibits the findings from each region while making a direct or implied comparison, depending on the context.

a) Separate identities:

The Hungarian minority in Romania concentrated in the centre of the country and comprising seven per cent¹⁵⁷ of the total population, aims at creating an autonomous region in which, among others, Hungarian would be the official language.¹⁵⁸ In that sense, Szeklerland would be comprised of the Hungarian-inhabited part of Mures County and the less modernized Covasna and Harghita counties.¹⁵⁹ In the petition to create Szeklerland, they mention similar cases such as: “Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, Catalonia, Basque Land, Galicia, South Tirol, Corsica, Bretagne, Frisian Provence, Valle d’Aosta, Friuli-Venezia Giulia”¹⁶⁰ as further examples of similar values and interests.

In the case of the Scots, comprising 10.08 percent of the UK population,¹⁶¹ language difference does not constitute a major claim. Although part of the same political system as England for 300 years, it maintained its own legal system and strong self-administrative powers.¹⁶² Some sources even claim that after the 1998 devolution in the UK, the state adopted a quasi-federal structure and has been unitary only on paper (asymmetrical

¹⁵⁷ ”AFP: The Hungarian minorities from Eastern Europe are not tempted by the Kosovo precedent.”

¹⁵⁸ ”Szekler villages have a great self-organizing capacity” (Original: ”Satele secuiești au capacitate mare de auto-organizare”), Szeklerland National Council,

http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=249%3Asatele-secuieti-au-capacitate-mare-de-auto-organizare&catid=18%3Acikkek-tanulmanyok&Itemid=24&lang=ro.

¹⁵⁹ Agenția pentru Dezvoltare Regională Centru, ”The demographic analysis of the Center Region” (Original: ”ANALIZA DEMOGRAFICĂ A REGIUNII CENTRU”) (paper presented for the Regional Operational Programme, 2010).

¹⁶⁰ ”Europe’s peoples are equal” (Original: ”Popoarele Europei sunt egale”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=264%3Apopoarele-europei-sunt-egale&catid=11%3Ahatározatok&Itemid=15&lang=ro.

¹⁶¹ ”Funding the devolved administrations,” UK Government, <https://www.gov.uk/devolution-of-powers-to-scotland-wales-and-northern-ireland#funding-the-devolved-administrations>.

¹⁶² Honor Mahony, ”Independence question raised again in Scotland,” *EU Observer*, August 16, 2007, <http://euobserver.com/political/24599>.

federalism).¹⁶³

While Romania is a state with no devolved powers to local administrations¹⁶⁴ and “with a combination of a majoritarian system of representation, statist policy-making processes and a unitary state structure,”¹⁶⁵ the Scottish Government has under its jurisdiction education, the judicial system, the health system, transportation and rural affairs, handling a budget of approximately 25 billion pounds per year.¹⁶⁶ Defence and foreign policy on the other hand, including participation at the EU level¹⁶⁷ are subordinated to the central government in Westminster.¹⁶⁸ Regarding the Quality of Government enjoyed (understood as low corruption and as high protection of the rule of law, government effectiveness and accountability), the Centre Region in Romania scores 30.09 while Scotland 89.60.¹⁶⁹ Yet, Bucharest scores less than the Centre Region which raises a point on the compensating feeling of belonging that will be further discussed in the next chapter;¹⁷⁰ “decentralization is not consistently linked with [...] higher levels of QoG.”¹⁷¹

Furthermore, while Romania is rather pro-EU across the entire state and fairly drawn by the idea of structural funds, Scotland makes a separate case for not being Eurosceptic like most of the UK.¹⁷² Such strategic difference pushes Scotland towards seeking a path of its own: “David Cameron’s proposal for an in/out referendum on the UK’s membership of the

¹⁶³ “The United Kingdom,” Crawford’s World, <http://www.crawfordsworld.com/rob/apcg/UK/Unit4UKStructure.htm>.

Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 100.

Udo Bullmann, “Introductory Perspectives-The Politics of the Third Level.” in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?*, ed. Charlie Jeffery, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 3-18.

¹⁶⁴ “Romanian Constitution,” (Original “Constitutia Romaniei”), Camera Deputatilor, http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?den=act2_1&par1=1.

¹⁶⁵ Bache, “Europeanization and multi-level governance.”

¹⁶⁶ “The Scottish Government,” The Scottish Government, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/>.

¹⁶⁷ Piattoni, “Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?”.

¹⁶⁸ Honor Mahony, “Independence question raised again in Scotland.”

¹⁶⁹ Nicholas Charron; Victor Lapuente and Lewis Dijkstra, “Regional Governance Matters: A Study on Regional Variation in Quality of Government within the EU.” (paper presented by the Directorate-General for Regional Policy, Brussels, January, 2012, 20).

¹⁷⁰ Charron, “Regional Governance Matters,” p. 8.

¹⁷¹ *Op. cit.*, Abstract.

¹⁷² “Comparative Highlight Report, 2003,” Eurobarometer 59, http://cdn.grin.com/images/preview-object/document.26879/00b95d26bd904d3a271fede580d6f24c_LARGE.png.

Max Fisher, “Map: What Europeans think of the EU (Brits really don’t like it),” *The Washington Post*, January 23, 2011, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2013/01/23/map-what-europeans-think-of-the-eu-brits-really-dont-like-it/>.

Thomas Raines, “Euroscepticism is most common in Wales, the Midlands and among the over-60s; however the wording of any potential referendum question on EU membership will be crucial for the result,” *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, July 23, 2012, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2012/07/23/euroscepticism-survey/>.

European Union has underlined that the threat to Scotland's place in Europe lies not with independence but with an increasingly Eurosceptic Westminster."¹⁷³ Polls have proven that Scottish people are in strong support of continued EU membership and perceive it as a path in favour of Scottish national interest while England is a supporter of leaving the EU.¹⁷⁴ Those pro-independence emphasize this fact as a need for bypassing an undecided national government while enhancing direct relationship with the European Union. Circumstances where the Eurosceptic Tory Party and the Prime Minister himself are drafting options such as fewer areas of cooperation with other member states and a potential full exit from the EU,¹⁷⁵ emphasize the party-line separation existent in the British society and facilitates a turn towards ethnic parties. The same phenomenon is observable in Romania where the Hungarian population votes mostly on ethnic criteria.¹⁷⁶

Consequently, in the two areas societal cleavages (different ethnographical background, linguistic nature, matters of power-sharing between the national and regional level, orientation towards the future within the European Union etc) explain amplification of a separate identity and a trend in attempting MLG power-shifts since it implies state decentralization.

b) Belonging towards another societal model:

In the named Szeklerland, the local councils forming the Szekler National Council argue for similarity with South Tirol.¹⁷⁷ They recommend autonomy based on that similar model and emphasize separate education, economy and language both as minority rights that should prevail over the decisions of the national level and as a means of ensuring equality in a region that is dually claimed within public administration, judicial system and use of

¹⁷³ Angus Millar, "Nicola Sturgeon: Scotland as an outward looking, global nation," *Yes Scotland*, January 25, 2013, http://www.yesscotland.net/nicola_sturgeon_scotland_international_relationships.

¹⁷⁴ Angus Millar, "In/out EU vote underlines uncertainty of staying in Union," *Yes Scotland*, January 24, 2013, http://www.yesscotland.net/in_out_eu_vote_underlines_uncertainty_of_staying_in_union.

¹⁷⁵ European Policy Centre, "Scotland and the EU – Implications of the referendum on independence," *European Policy Centre*, February 26, 2013, http://epc.eu/events_rep_details.php?cat_id=6&pub_id=3372.

¹⁷⁶ Punctul, "Without ethnic voting the Hungarians would not enter the Parliament," (Original: "Fără vot etnic maghiarii nu intră în Parlament"), *Punctul*, November 8, 2012, <http://punctul.ro/2012/11/08/fara-vot-etnic-maghiarii-nu-intra-in-parlament/>.

¹⁷⁷ "South Tirol: a model of autonomy and cohabitation?" (Original: "Tirolul de Sud: un model de autonomie si convietuire?"), Szeklerland National Council,

http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=258%3Atirolul-de-sud-un-model-de-autonomie-si-convietuire&catid=19%3Atanulmanyok&Itemid=25&lang=ro.

"Szekler villages have a great self-organizing capacity."

toponimes.¹⁷⁸

Since the UK at present is the one of "the fourth most unequal society in the developed world,"¹⁷⁹ supporters of Scottish independence want to pursue the Nordic welfare state model where "social justice leads to social cohesion, and social cohesion [...] is a building block of economic success."¹⁸⁰ And while Scotland ventures Nordic-like economic planning, Great Britain is the adept of economic liberalism and radical capitalism.¹⁸¹ In this sense, Scotland aspires at breaking the limitations of the kingdom by looking towards another geographical orientation and by endeavouring bypassing limitations on decisions.¹⁸²

One claim of pro-independence advocates is improving the situation of marginal groups such as women, the old and the young, who as shown in GDP statistics, are still disadvantaged under an only-devolved system of governance.¹⁸³ They state that, unlike in an equalitarian society: Scotland within the UK suffers some of the very worst levels of inequity and poverty in the developed world.¹⁸⁴

The co-investment model that Scotland has introduced was taken as example "in other countries like: England, Wales, Sweden, New Zealand and Canada."¹⁸⁵ The National Health Service is placed under the devolved Scottish Government. The Scottish National Party (majoritarian in the present pro-independence government) announces an opposition of views in between them and the Tory Party who are adepts of NHS privatization and profit in the detriment of public welfare. So, if privatization hits the rest of the UK, it shall not hit Scotland.¹⁸⁶

¹⁷⁸ Sergiu Constantin, "South Tirol-A model of autonomy and cohabitation?." (Original: "TIROLUL DE SUD – UN MODEL DE AUTONOMIE ȘI CONVIEȚUIRE?"), (paper presented at the Institute for Studying the Problems of National Minorities, Cluj-Napoca, 2009),15-25.

¹⁷⁹ Yes Scotland, "An independent Scotland will be a beacon of equality," *Yes Scotland*, February 1, 2013, http://www.yesscotland.net/an_independent_scotland_a_beacon_of_equality.

¹⁸⁰ Millar, "Nicola Sturgeon: Scotland as an outward looking, global nation."

¹⁸¹ Michael Ward and Sally Hardy, eds., *Changing gear –Is localism the new regionalism?* (The Smith Institute, 2012), 120, <http://www.smith-institute.org.uk/file/Changing%20Gear.pdf>.

¹⁸² Ward and Hardy, *Changing gear*, 125.

¹⁸³ *Op. cit.*, 119.

¹⁸⁴ Mike Danson and Katherine Trebeck, "Whose Economy? An introduction. Whose Economy Papers." (seminar paper presented in Scotland, 2011, 3-5).

¹⁸⁵ The Scottish Government, "Fiscal Commission Working Group," 12.

¹⁸⁶ Lynda Williamson, "Nicola Sturgeon to address influential Europeans in Brussels," *Newsnet Scotland*, February 24, 2013, <http://newsnetScotland.com/index.php/referendum/6812-nicola-sturgeon-to-address-influential-europeans-in-brussels>.

Scotland is increasingly projecting its ideal future in the Nordic welfare, in small nations' model and nations living within another state. They started a quest for an improved political economy which can only occur under increased regional potential.¹⁸⁷ In a general orientation towards enhanced responsibility, the supporters of independence count on a legitimate liable Parliament and Government in the strive for an ethnic regional economic plan, circumventing the powers attributed to the national government and providing "Scottish solutions to Scottish problems."¹⁸⁸

Scotland will emphasize inclusion, reasonable growth and align with the Europe 2020 strategy¹⁸⁹ and will follow their envisioned model, Scandinavia,¹⁹⁰ as in parallel (although without offering much detail about it) Szeklerland argues that it follows South Tirol.

c) Regional Economy:

While asserting the overall potential for a more extended degree of autonomy for the regions in the case studies, it is absolutely crucial to consider the status of their internal economy.

In Szeklerland, the regional financial situation ranks below the Romanian national average. Only one out of three inhabitants of Harghita, Covasna and Mures counties has a defined occupation and only one out of five is employed. Romanian newspaper "Adevarul" created a hypothetical feasibility test based on national official statistics arguing that from a macroeconomic point of view the self-established region could not support itself financially and its bureaucracy if it were a state, without massive debts. If Szeklerland were an independent state, the poor economy would become dependent on loans while the population would live in a new country where the GDP per capita would score 5.000 Euros (Appendix 4). Furthermore most of its geographical structure (75%) is composed by mountain terrain, so the main resources in agriculture would be obtained from animal farms and cultivating legumes (both sectors with minor economic production). Moreover,

Nicola Sturgeon, "Scotland's National Health Service is safe from Tory reforms," *Nicola Sturgeon MSP*, October 12, 2011, <http://www.nicolasturgeon.org/archives/1339>.

¹⁸⁷ Michael Keating, "Rescaling Europe," *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 10 (2009): 34-50, DOI: 10.1080/15705850802699995.

¹⁸⁸ Ward and Hardy, *Changing gear*, 118.

¹⁸⁹ European Commission, "Commission of the European Communities Europe 2020: A Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth." (paper presented as Communication from the Commission, Brussels, March 3, 2010, 2).

¹⁹⁰ Mol/He, "Independent Scotland to become Nordic," *Press TV*, Dec 29, 2011, <http://www.presstv.ir/detail/218321.html>.

with rather little industry, the main income of the land could be summed up by tourism, mineral waters and wood processing.

According to *Adevarul* newspaper, only in 2013 Romania had to balance the low VAT budget of Mures, Harghita and Covasna counties with 108.9 million RON (about 25 million Euros), an amount aimed at keeping an equilibrium in between the local income and the local expense. Also, the calculated hypothetical currency would display an exchange rate of 1.000 SIC (Szeklerland currency) for three Euros.¹⁹¹

Another county income study was endeavoured by *Gandul* newspaper. Without a special focus on Szeklerland, the source established that in 2011 the percentage of welfare money received from the Romanian state from the amount it had been paid as taxes summed up to: 70,7% for Mures County, 78.8% for Covasna County and 82.5% for Harghita County. As a counter-example, the most developed region in Romania (the capital) received from the state budget 11.2 to 15.9% from the taxes it had paid.¹⁹²

In the same kind of report for the year 2010, the same *Gandul* newspaper mentions the declaration of the head of Harghita County Council who claims that it is not important who receives more national funds. Also the president of Harghita County Council, Borboly Csaba, an supporter of Szeklerland autonomy remarks that the desired attitude is to reach those in need. As a wrap-up, *Gandul* newspaper enunciates that according to their calculations based on the dates provided by the Ministry of Public Finances, Harghita County received back from the Romanian state 59.5% of taxes closely followed by Covasna County with 60,5%.¹⁹³

In conclusion, from the three counties which would make up Szeklerland, Mures County is the one placed on an economical national average while Harghita and Covasna are under

¹⁹¹ Dan Straut, "Szeklerland would be a "state" with a bankrupt economy," (Original: "Ținutul Secuiesc ar fi un „stat” cu o economie falimentară"), *Adevarul*, February 10, 2013, http://adevarul.ro/economie/stiri-economice/infografie-Tinutul-secuiesc-stat-economie-falimentara-1_5117f27b4b62ed5875f8b45d/index.html.

¹⁹² Alexandra Pele, "Money map in Romania. How much your county gives to and receives from the state budget," (Original: "HARTA BANILOR din România. Cât dă și cât primește înapoi de la bugetul de stat județul tău"), *Gandul*, March 28, 2012, <http://www.gandul.info/financiar/harta-banilor-din-romania-cat-da-si-cat-primeste-inaoi-de-la-bugetul-de-stat-judetul-tau-9444892>.

¹⁹³ Victor Rotariu, "Money map in Romania on counties. See how much your county receives from the taxes paid to the state," (Original: "HARTA BANILOR din România, pe județe. VEZI AICI cât primește înapoi județul tău din IMPOZITELE plătite statului"), *Gandul*, July 31, 2011, <http://www.gandul.info/financiar/exclusiv-gandul-harta-banilor-din-romania-pe-judete-vezi-aici-cat-primeste-inaoi-judetul-tau-din-impozitele-platite-statului-8549493>.

the country's midpoint regarding unemployment rate, number of employees, GDB per capita and salary range¹⁹⁴ (Appendices 5-8).

To the pessimistic statistics presented by the national documents, a supporter of Szeklerland, Szasz Jenő, the president of the Hungarian Civic Party replied: "Let Bucharest not worry for us, [...] let us die in our poverty." Furthermore, he argues that he does not believe in the accuracy of the data. His statement ends with saying that the people in Szeklerland were provoked by the proposal of dividing Romania in only eight regions.¹⁹⁵

Regarding the debate on the factual ongoing regionalization, besides opposing an ethnic regional divide, the Romanian side also opposes the Hungarian proposal for administrative reform due to a large number of small region units for NUTS2 and a predicted huge discrepancy in their economical sustainability. Poor regions like the mainly-rural parts of Romania (including Szeklerland) will remain behind rich regions like the other half of the Centre Region from which the Hungarian minority would want to secede as an EU Region.¹⁹⁶ In general, the poor counties in the country display great hopes in the European funds.¹⁹⁷

To conclude, several factors can create demands for regional autonomy: different stages of urbanization, education, political leadings, economic state but also **questions of legitimacy** of the state as explained by MLG.¹⁹⁸

Moving the focus towards Scotland, the state of the regional economy has a totally different potential than Szeklerland. Similar to the debates on economy presented above, in the case of Scotland within the UK, there are also statistics from both sides, making assertions on present and future numbers.

Yes Scotland affirms that "a £250 million annual saving [would be achieved simply] from no longer contributing to the cost of the UK's nuclear weapons." Moreover, "there will be

¹⁹⁴ Constantin Racaru, "Nationalism does not pay the bills in Szeklerland," (Original: "Nationalismul nu tine de foame in Tinutul Secuiesc"), *Ziare*, June 18, 2011, <http://www.ziare.com/politica/reorganizare-teritoriala-romania/nationalismul-nu-tine-de-foame-in-tinutul-secuiesc-opinii-1101832>.

¹⁹⁵ Ziare, "PCM: Bucharest should not worry about the claimed subzistence in Szeklerland," (Original: "PCM: Sa nu-si faca griji Bucurestiul ca in Tinutul Secuiesc nu am avea din ce trai"), *Ziare*, June 22, 2011, <http://www.ziare.com/politica/stiri-politice/pcm-sa-nu-si-faca-griji-bucurestiul-ca-in-tinutul-secuiesc-nu-am-avea-din-ce-trai-1102851>.

¹⁹⁶ Racaru, "Nationalism does not pay the bills in Szeklerland."

¹⁹⁷ Pele, "Money map in Romania."

¹⁹⁸ Gary Marx, "An actor-centered approach to multi-level governance." in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?*, ed. Charlie Jeffery, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 20-35.

a £50 million annual saving from no longer paying for the Westminster Parliament.”¹⁹⁹ Additional statistics from the Scottish Government show that there is little difference between Scotland and the UK average in recent years GDP per capita (year 2010), unemployment rate (year 2012) and net fiscal balance (years 2010-2011).²⁰⁰ There is also little difference in average annual GDP growth rates,²⁰¹ in comparative GDP weights,²⁰² in Scottish and UK performance over Recession,²⁰³ in Scotland's share of UK Public Spending and share of UK Receipts.²⁰⁴ Also there is a rather positive Scottish Net Fiscal Balance in comparison with the UK²⁰⁵ while the UK Continental Shelf and Illustrative Scottish Boundary display a majority of UK waters belonging to Scotland,²⁰⁶ a discrepancy in GVA per Hour Worked,²⁰⁷ a lower Dependency Ratio in Scotland than in the UK,²⁰⁸ a close to EU Gross Expenditure on Research and Development in 2001-2010,²⁰⁹ around 11 billion pounds from international exports towards EU 27 in 2011²¹⁰ and a bigger devolved taxation under the Scotland Act 2012 than in the interval 2010-2011.²¹¹ Moreover, while asserting the significant balance between generated taxes and income from the state, Yes Scotland explains that the 2011-2012 Government Expenditure and Revenue figures demonstrate that while Scottish people make up 8.4-10% of the country's population, they also brought about 9.9% of UK taxes in 2012 and 9.6% in 2011, from which they were offered from the national fund for running services 9.3% of UK public spending. Figures for the last two years show that Scotland contributes £4.4 billion more in comparison to the rest of the UK.²¹² Furthermore, an Estimate of Scotland's GDP per Capita Ranking shows Scotland (including a share of the North Sea output) placed in the 6th place with 41.189 dollars GDP per head in 2010 while the UK lies in the 16th place with just 35.715 dollars

¹⁹⁹ Yes Scotland, “How will an independent Scotland be different?” *Yes Scotland*, http://www.yesscotland.net/how_will_an_independent_scotland_be_different.

²⁰⁰ The Scottish Government, “Fiscal Commission Working Group,” 38-43.

²⁰¹ *Op. cit.*, 49.

²⁰² *Op. cit.*, 62.

²⁰³ *Op. cit.*, 49.

²⁰⁴ The Scottish Government, “Fiscal Commission Working Group,” 157.

²⁰⁵ *Op. cit.*, 166.

²⁰⁶ *Op. cit.*, 41.

Kemp G. Alexander, “The Hypothetical Scottish Shares of Revenues and Expenditures from the UK Continental Shelf 2000 – 2013.” University of Aberdeen, 2013, 5.

²⁰⁷ The Scottish Government, “Fiscal Commission Working Group,” 50.

²⁰⁸ *Op. cit.*, 55.

²⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, 63.

²¹⁰ *Op. cit.*, 64.

²¹¹ *Op. cit.*, 114.

²¹² Yes Scotland, “Can Scotland afford to become independent?” *Yes Scotland*, http://www.yesscotland.net/can_scotland_afford_to_become_independent.

Yes Scotland, “Why vote Yes. Firm Foundations,” *Yes Scotland*, http://www.yesscotland.net/firm_foundations.

GDP per head in the same year.²¹³

On the other side, supporters of a unitary UK claim that the driving forces of separatist ideas are not of economic nature since Scotland is not one of the most competitive areas of Britain; they may not even be able to support the state structures running, as Roland Sturm, political scientist at the University of Erlangen-Nuremberg stated.²¹⁴ In addition to that, EU Observer uses the story of two main Scottish banks nearing bankruptcy which were saved by £80 billion influx from the British Treasury just in 2008. Also, the Scottish National Party emphasizes the oil values in Scottish waters but the general amount is decreasing and oil prices are unreliable. Still, what Scotland aims at for the future is developing research in wind and wave renewable energy.²¹⁵

Beyond the material I gathered from the media and official resources, the interactive Eurostat Statistical Atlas – Regional Yearbook 2012 provides a very useful and user-friendly interface for comparing any NUTS2. In addition to the statistics already presented, it is also worth mentioning: the minimum percentage of long life learning education in Szeklerland (less than 20%) compared to 40 to 50% in Scotland; same noticeable differences in female employment rate (less than 50% compared to– more than 65%), elderly employment rate (less than 35% compared to more than 50%); smaller change in unemployment rate and higher youth and long term unemployment rate in Szeklerland than in Scotland; regional business concentration varies from less than 37% in Szeklerland to just under 50% in Scotland; tourism intensity spreads within a range of less than 2000 tourists (Szeklerland) to 3500-10.000 tourists per 1000 inhabitants in Scotland; the share of agriculture in the economy scores more than 3.5% of the value added in all Romania except the capital region while in Scotland it goes down to maximum 1.5% in the Low Lands; likewise, proportion of research displays two concentration areas in Scotland, with income from maritime goods versus none in Szeklerland; and predominantly rural regions in Szeklerland while an almost equal distribution of rural, small and big urban regions in

²¹³ The Scottish Government, “Scotland’s International GDP Per Capita Ranking.” (presented by the Scottish Government, March 2012), 1.

²¹⁴ Marcus Lütticke, “EU debt crisis gives boost to separatists,” *Deutsche Welle*, November 27, 2012, <http://www.dw.de/eu-debt-crisis-gives-boost-to-separatists/a-16407226>.

²¹⁵ Tom Gallagher, “Pro-independence surge in Scotland,” *EU Observer*, May 13, 2011, <http://euobserver.com/opinion/32329>.

Scotland.²¹⁶

The main conclusion of this section is first of all that Scotland is unarguably financially superior to Szeklerland and therefore would have a higher chance of supporting its own independent state; my secondary conclusion is related to the form of the data – while selecting material about resources for comparison, I noticed that supporters of Szeklerland mostly comment on statistics made by their opponents while the bureaucratic structures of Scotland (regardless of their view on independence) have solid accounts on the region's economy. Therefore, beyond the factual numbers and hierarchy presented between the two case-study regions, it is also rather intuitive to assert which has a better regional bureaucratic structure to support its claims based on the amount of preparation spend on the plan of improving the status quo.

d) The importance of “an ethnic” EU Region:

Since 2005 (when first rejected by the Chamber of Deputies) there were eleven failed attempts on voting for an autonomous Szeklerland in Romania. The latest of them took place in September 2012 when the Romanian Senate rejected the referendum legislative proposal since, after having received a negative report from the Juridical Commission and the Commission for Public Administration in 2009, the draft was unsuccessfully brought up during Senate meetings ten other occasions.²¹⁷

One of the most important implications followed by this thesis in this present regionalization of Romania is whether the ethnic region of Szeklerland finds the EU-driven context a favourable one for their autonomy plans. For the next funding period 2014-2020 Romania expects 164.279 billion Euros for convergence.²¹⁸ Due to lack of national governmental strategy, Romania is currently not absorbing all allocated EU funds.²¹⁹ As it is currently in process, the administrative reform started by the EU NUTS2 division,

²¹⁶ ”Statistical Atlas – Eurostat regional yearbook 2012,” Eurostat, <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistical-atlas/gis/viewer/>.

²¹⁷ Constantin Pescaru, ”What Szeklerland is for Romanian economy,” (Original: ”Ce inseamna Tinutul Secuiesc pentru economia Romaniei”), *Ziare*, February 27, 2013, <http://www.ziare.com/economie/analiza-economica/ce-inseamna-tinutul-secuiesc-pentru-economia-romaniei-1221140>.

²¹⁸ ”EU structural instruments and fund absorption in Romania” (Original: ”Instrumentele Structurale ale Uniunii Europene si absorbtia Fondurilor Europene în Romania”), EU Finantare Info, http://eufinantare.info/Instrumente_structurale_UE.html.

²¹⁹ Agenda de Iasi, ”All you need to know about the 2014-2020 EU funds for Romania! Details on how the money should be spent,” (Original: ”Iata tot ce trebuie sa stii despre alocarea fondurilor europene in Romania in perioada 2014 - 2020! Detalii despre cum trebuie cheltuiti banii”), *Agenda de Iasi*, February 11, 2013, <http://www.agendadeiasi.ro/business/6-stiri/30404-iata-tot-ce-trebuie-sa-stii-despre-alocarea-fondurilor-europene-in-romania-in-perioada-2014-2020-detalii-despre-cum-trebuie-cheltuiti-banii.html>.

represents both an opportunity for more structural funds throughout the entire country (Appendix 9) and, within the domestic arena, a platform for challenging the state-regions status quo. The official national perspective in Romania states that the Regions are more efficient in applying for structural funds than the central government while less dependency of Bucharest and more responsibility towards the specific circumstances they know how to manage best can only speed processes up. As the Prime-minister points out, the reform is not compulsory but highly recommended by Brussels while the Regional Operational Program was the most successfully implemented and proved most observable outcome.²²⁰ Projected to be over during 2013, the regionalization bears high stakes for all involved parties since it opens the door towards the new 2014-2020 package of funds from the EU budget for Regional Development. This administrative reform triggered by the EU structural funds will not only regionalize but also **decentralize** the country.²²¹ The Vice-prime minister and person in charge with the administrative reform himself, Liviu Dragnea, declared that the administrative regions must be fit for a **direct partnership** with the European Commission as an alternative to the Commission dealing only with the Central Government. He added that regionalization will decrease waiting time, bureaucracy and boost the latent potential of the regions but will not question the unity of the Romanian state.²²² He also added that the people who present different alternatives for regionalization than the official one only wish to advertise their image by using the confusing context.²²³

On the other hand, a representative of the most known Hungarian party in Romania states that only the autonomy they are fighting for could truly preserve the Szekler traditions,

²²⁰ Agerpres, "Victor Ponta: Regionas can be way more effective than the Government in apsorbing European funds," (Original: "Victor Ponta: Regiunile pot fi mult mai eficiente decât Guvernul în absorbtia fondurilor europene"), *Agerpres*, April 2, 2013, <http://www.agerpres.ro/media/index.php/politic/item/186356-Victor-Ponta-Regiunile-pot-fi-mult-mai-eficiente-decat-Guvernul-in-absorbtia-fondurilor-europene.html>.

²²¹ Revista 22, "Regionalisation has just started," (Original: "S-a dat startul REGIONALIZARII"), *Revista 22*, February 19, 2013, <http://www.revista22.ro/-sa-dat-startul-regionalizarii-guvernul-a-avizat-demararea-procedurilor-de-regionalizaredescentralizare-22671.html>.

²²² Costin Nitu, "Regionalisation, objective due until the end of 2013," (Original: "Regionalizarea, obiectiv ce trebuie finalizat până la sfârșitul lui 2013"), *Curierul National*, January 14, 2013, <http://www.curierulnational.ro/Economie/2013-01-14/Regionalizarea,+obiectiv+ce+trebuie+finalizat+pana+la+sfarsitul+lui+2013&hl=alul&tip=toate>.

²²³ Romania Libera Online, "Dragnea: I already saw regionalisation maps on TV although we are only starting the project now," (Original: "Dragnea: Am văzut la TV hărți despre regionalizare, deși abia acum se constituie grupul de lucru"), *Romania Libera Online*, February 7, 2013, <http://www.romanioliberal.ro/actualitate/eveniment/dragnea-am-vazut-la-tv-harti-despre-regionalizare-desi-abia-acum-se-constituie-grupul-de-lucru-292732.html>.

language, culture (Appendices 10-11), decision-making and freedom.²²⁴ Also, the President of the Szekler National Council states that poverty is an effect of centralization and lack of independence for the regional economic reserves. The people who do not know the peculiarities of the zone cannot draft proper policy for it. Szekler villages, he argues, have a great self-organizing capacity towards a particular purpose.²²⁵ Thus, the regionalisation map proposed by a rising Hungarian party divides Romania into 12 smaller units, with a view on a historical nine-territories division (Appendix 12) throughout the entire country but with Szeklerland and the second-biggest Hungarian inhabited region, Partium, within separate administrative structures.²²⁶ Aware of EU structures facilitating autonomy,²²⁷ representatives of SNC strongly claim that the region with “peculiar historical, geographical, political, cultural and economic” characteristics should become its own NUTS2 region in order to make most of the EU funds.²²⁸ It is complicated to find ways of direct representation in Brussels in a different direction than the one of the member state, and not representing a compact EU Region can deter the purpose enormously also since regional offices inform about the availability of different kinds of Community funds²²⁹ and since membership in the CoR is also applied on NUTS2 areas.²³⁰

“Although the public is not that aware of it, the benefits of regionalization are the European Funds that can be better absorbed for further regional development,” claims a supporter of united Covasna, Harghita and Mures counties, Csaba Borboly-politician and

²²⁴ Departamentul Corespondenți – Mediafax, “How Tanczos from UDMR sees the regionalisation: A development region for Szeklerland would be the ideal solution,” (Original: “Cum vede Tanczos, de la UDMR, regionalizarea: O regiune de dezvoltare care să se bazeze pe Ținutul Secuiesc va fi soluția ideală”), *Gandul*, January 7, 2013, <http://www.gandul.info/politica/cum-vede-tanczos-de-la-udmr-regionalizarea-o-regiune-de-dezvoltare-care-sa-se-bazeze-pe-tinutul-secuiesc-va-fi-solutia-ideala-10436365>.

²²⁵ “Szekler villages have a great self-organizing capacity.”

²²⁶ Stiri de Cluj, “The map of regionalisation according to PPMT. Szeklerland is torn from Transylvania,” (Original: “Harta REGIONALIZĂRII României, conform PPMT. Ținutul Secuiesc e rupt de TRANSILVANIA”), *Stiri de Cluj*, 2013, <http://www.stiridecluj.ro/politic/harta-regionalizarii-romaniei-conform-ppmt-tinutul-secuiesc-e-rupt-de-transilvania-vezi-harta>.

²²⁷ “Decision regarding citizens’ initiative at EU level” (Original: “Hotărâre privind inițiativa cetățenească de nivel unional”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=265%3Ahotrare-privind-iniatiiva-ceteneasc-de-nivel-unional&catid=11%3Ahatarozatok&Itemid=15&lang=ro.

²²⁸ “Petition towards the Romanian Government, on the Day of Szekler Freedom,” (Original: “Petiție către Guvernul României, în Ziua Libertății Secuiești”), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?view=article&catid=12%3Afolyamodvanyok&id=274%3Apetiie-ctre-guvernul-romaniei-in-ziua-libertii-secuieti&tmpl=component&print=1&page=&option=com_content&Itemid=16&lang=ro.

²²⁹ Öner, *Relations between*, 33-48.

²³⁰ “The EU’s Assembly of Regional and Local Representatives-Centre region,” Committee of the Regions, <http://cor.europa.eu/ro/regions/Pages/Region.aspx?Country=Romania&Region=Centru&MemberList=Member>.

CoR member.²³¹

Adevarul newspaper presents an article on the more profound implications of the regionalization. Besides other problems Romania faces, creating in 1998 eight regions without legal personality which just sum up counties did not lead to the desired better EU funds absorption. Its inefficiency was mostly triggered by overlapping of new and old borders with no real power given to the former. At the very present, domestic conflict over regional interests is aggressive and highly influenced by leaders' agency.²³²

In the other case-study, "the Scottish Government is the 'Managing Authority' for Structural Funds in Scotland and has overall responsibility for supervising the implementation; ongoing management; and effectiveness of the programmes. In Scotland, Structural Funds are the significant source of European Union funding for economic development. Programmes run over a seven year period. The 2007 - 2013 Structural Funds Programmes are well underway with hundreds of projects across Scotland already benefiting from this key funding. The resources being made available are allowing us to focus Structural Funds on Scottish priorities and strategies and assist the economy during difficult times."²³³ Still, international politics comprising among others the European Union are under the jurisdiction of the national Government and Parliament, where the regions have no real power.²³⁴ An example could be the RECHAR conflict.²³⁵

From a NUTS2 point of view, Scotland covers the convergence region composed of Highlands and Islands and 3 Competitiveness and Employment regions representing Lowlands and Uplands;²³⁶ also, it has a great interest in Structural Funds, Agriculture and Rural Development, European Fisheries Funds²³⁷ and in developing low carbon²³⁸ energy

²³¹ Balan, Oana, "Over 50% of Romanians and over 30% of the Hungarians in Harghita want to keep the present county structure," (Original: "Peste 50% din românii și peste 30% din maghiarii din Harghita vor păstrarea actualelor județe"), *Adevarul*, March 05, 2013, http://adevarul.ro/locale/brasov/peste-50-romanii-30-maghiarii-harghita-vor-pastrarea-actualelor-judete-1_5136458700f5182b85d1b3fe/index.html.

²³² Radu Carp, "Regionalisation? A burdening disease," (Original: "Regionalizarea? Boală grea"), *Adevarul*, February 27, 2013, http://adevarul.ro/news/politica/regionalizarea-boala-grea-1_512de00700f5182b85aceda9/index.html.

²³³ "European Structural Funds."

²³⁴ "National Delegation of the United Kingdom," Committee of the Regions, <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/nationaldelegations/Pages/9d82e61f-efb8-49e6-8e57-b48b4817ebce.aspx>.

²³⁵ "Pounds 124 million package of European funds for British coal-mining areas (RECHAR initiative)," Europa, http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-92-128_en.htm.

²³⁶ "European Structural Funds."

²³⁷ "EU structural funds," Future of the Funds Blog, <http://blogs.scotland.gov.uk/eu-structural-funds/>.

"Have your say on structural funds programmes," Future of the Funds Blog, <http://blogs.scotland.gov.uk/eu-structural-funds/2012/08/09/have-your-say-on-future-structural-funds-programmes/>.

resources, innovation and business. Regarding the management of the Fishery fund (of which it received €55 million²³⁹), Scotland promotes a strategy of combining the EMFF with Structural Funds according to local needs and **financing cases peculiar for the area**. Nevertheless, the EMFF have the implementation negotiated at state level while the Structural Funds are under the jurisdiction of the devolved Region; therefore, the mismatch in between the two levels makes the desired customized combination of funds very unlikely.²⁴⁰ It is in such type of situations that the bypassing of the middle MLG level increases in appeal for disintegrative autonomists.

With a view of the Europe 2020 strategy, Scotland is planning a National Reform Programme to improve access to European Structural Funds, a sure path to investment and financing.²⁴¹ “For the period 2007-13 Scotland has been allocated approximately £1.3 billion from a number of funds-the European Social Fund, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Fisheries Fund. To date these European funds have supported over 1.350 projects, assisted over 28.000 businesses, created or safeguarded 32.700 jobs and provided training and support to over 248.000 individuals.”²⁴² EU funding is a crucial aspect of economic growth in Scotland. The difference they make can be seen both in organisations and in regular people’s lives and Scotland’s interest is that these funds would continue to be absorbed in “in a way that is [...] less bureaucratic for beneficiaries.”²⁴³ More, as one **regional profile**, Scotland aims to become a beacon of low carbon and green energy supplies. In that sense they hope to develop 130.000 more jobs by 2020 by using EU funding.²⁴⁴

Besides, what a noticeable part of Scotland argues for is that regional interest would be completely subordinated to regional responsibility since a superior national structure that

²³⁸ “Low carbon Scotland,” Future of the Funds Blog, <http://blogs.scotland.gov.uk/eu-structural-funds/2012/05/23/low-carbon-scotland/>.

²³⁹ “European Fisheries Fund,” Marine Management Organisation, <http://www.marinemanagement.org.uk/fisheries/funding/eff.htm>.

²⁴⁰ Ian Duncan, “European and External Relations Committee Agenda.” (presented at Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh, May 15, 2012).

²⁴¹ The Scottish Government, “Fiscal Commission Working Group,” 12.

²⁴² *Op. cit.*, 10.

²⁴³ *Op. cit.*, 11.

²⁴⁴ “Transition to a Low Carbon Economy,” The Scottish Government, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Economy/EconomicStrategy/LowCarbon>. “Renewable Energy, Targets by 2020,” European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/energy/renewables/targets_en.htm.

does not know the regional peculiarities only complicates bureaucracy and chooses the wrong priorities. On the other hand as claimed by MLG and Regionalism, regional responsibility for decision-making strengthens legitimacy and would be more efficient with regard to the local interest. That will in return boost commitment with a positive impact on economy, reliance and enthusiasm.²⁴⁵

With the purpose of offering the European Commission an insight on Scottish peculiarities and the different concepts considered there, the Scottish Government drafted a separate Scottish National Reform Programme 2012. Besides the official UK NRP, this separate report is closer to the view of the Scottish Government on interacting with EU institutions and emphasizes the specific interests and endowment of Scotland²⁴⁶ in a greater collaboration with the other partner states.²⁴⁷ European Funds such as Structural Funds, the EAFRD and the EFF “play and will continue to play, a crucial role in delivering sustainable growth and accelerating recovery in Scotland. In the light of this the Scottish NRP takes the opportunity to highlight how European Funds are currently being used across Scotland in order to support the delivery of the ambitions in the Government Economic Strategy.”²⁴⁸ Scotland Europa -“a voice for Scotland”²⁴⁹ since 1991- the main Scottish representative in Brussels intermediates funding opportunities and facilitate European funding for Scottish projects. They provide dissemination of information, lobbying, networking and contact with the European Commission. After selecting funding opportunities, Scotland Europa offers pieces of advice regarding the application.²⁵⁰ For an enhanced profile for funding and for Scottish economy and research, there is need to interact with the EU **without intermediaries** in order to guarantee Scotland’s voice is heard.²⁵¹ Scotland offices were backed up by regional government in order to make a representative body of their respective nation in Europe. They were also seeking some potential processes towards a decentralized government in the UK because the central government had the general funding gate keeping role. Noticeable, the regional offices

²⁴⁵ Gavin McCrone, “European Challenges: Scotland.” (presented for Scotland Europa, September, 1996), 37.

²⁴⁶ The UK Government, “Europe 2020: UK National Reform Programme 2012.” (paper presented as Government strategy, 2012, 6).

²⁴⁷ The Scottish Government, “Fiscal Commission Working Group,” 5-6.

²⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, 6.

²⁴⁹ Peter John, “Europeanization in a centralized state: MLG in the UK.” in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?*, ed. Charlie Jeffery, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 131-145.

²⁵⁰ “EU Funding”, Scotland Europa, <http://www.sdi.co.uk/scotland-europa/eu-funding.aspx>.

²⁵¹ The Scottish Government, “Fiscal Commission Working Group,” 21.

were not interested in areas by which their region was not covered by the hierarchy-making of the state government.²⁵² Politicians such as Dick Knowles mentioned that bypassing the Westminster government and negotiating with Brussels is an advantageous process for regions. As euroscepticism in the UK grew, there were ideas of alliances to the detriment of the nation-state.²⁵³ Szeklerland did not enjoy such representation by now but there are attempts to form a representative unit in the process of increasing autonomy by bypassing the state.

Towards a more radical claim for Scotland, supporters of independence state that in the current status quo the choices affecting the entire country, like economic policy, international relations and welfare, are the responsibility of the central government which represent a mismatching note with the Scottish interest in matters of European interest. Also, topics like fisheries, agriculture, employment, economic development and digital agenda are being argued in Brussels without representatives of the Scottish Government. Already unilaterally encompassing four NUTS2 territories, Scotland desires a future where it could take part in EU decision-making process as a regular member.²⁵⁴ Independence would provide “the ability to decide the level of capital investment that was appropriate for the Scottish economy, in the context of wider economic conditions and the need to maximize our long run economic growth rate”²⁵⁵ (Appendices 13-26).

Overall, taking into account that fund management is a complex matter and that the Commission seeks a balance in between control and local agency, under the overall UK Partnership Agreement, there are already individual Partnership Agreements with Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland.²⁵⁶

In conclusion, being part of an older EU state, Scotland had time to **gradually** undergo the processes of increasing its autonomy within supra-national context. In this sense I argue that, just like these UK regions which gained increases in power gradually across a period of time, it is vital for Szeklerland to have its own administrative structure in order to take further steps in lobbying. Representing one half of the Centre Region would be a huge

²⁵² Charlie Jeffery, “Regional information offices in Brussels and MLG in the EU: A UK-German comparison.” in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?*, ed. Charlie Jeffery, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 190.

²⁵³ John, “Europeanization in a centralized state.” 131-145.

²⁵⁴ European Policy Center, “Scotland and the EU.”

²⁵⁵ Millar, “Nicola Sturgeon: Scotland as an outward looking, global nation.”

²⁵⁶ Duncan, “European and External Relations Committee Agenda.”

impediment in advancing the ethnical Szeklerland region at EU level.²⁵⁷

e) The EU influence in internal politics:

Since 2007 the European Union co-financed in Romania projects of over €12m through the Structural Funds.²⁵⁸ The Regional Operational Programme aims at regional development following the lines of the National Development Plan and of the National Strategy for Regional Development. It pursues decrease of disparities in social and economical development between Romania and the average level of EU states.²⁵⁹ In the present EU internal context, it is substantial for the regions to enhance their participation on the internal market and in EU decision making.²⁶⁰

Regarding the present reform, representatives of the Szekler National Council state that the Presidential Commission of Analysis of the Political and Constitutional Regime in Romania itself proposed a democratic solution of forming the new administrative units based on free will associations of local communities; instead of being drawn on a map in an office in Bucharest, it should be the will and the solidarity of the communities since that is how a sustainable decision is made. They also affirm that it is a mystery how, after such an official and researched proposal, there is still not more sustainable and more legitimate alternative to the mainstream one. There is no doubt that, in a free choice option, Szeklerland would represent a region by itself since the Hungarian minority is used to self-organisation. And the same right should be offered to Romanians throughout the whole country.²⁶¹

More radical claims state the fact that EU structural funds is a pretext or context for a new reform whereas the true purpose is to gather the Hungarian minority in an administrative unit with a Romanian majority where they could not make their voices heard. The new administrative reform should be pursued according to the European principle in which one does not mark a region but recognizes an already existent one since across history Szeklers always had their administrative units even after the Communist reform in 1968.²⁶² The new

²⁵⁷ John, "Europeanization in a centralized state." 137.

²⁵⁸ European Commission, "Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council. On Progress in Romania under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism." (paper presented as Commission report, Brussels, July 18, 2012, 3).

²⁵⁹ "Regional Operational Programme."

²⁶⁰ Wilfred J. Ethier, "The New Regionalism," *The Economic Journal* 108 (1989): 1159. <http://www.china-up.com:8080/international/case/case/1431.pdf>.

²⁶¹ "Szekler villages have a great self-organizing capacity."

²⁶² "The administrative reform of Romania must be fundamented on the solidarity of local communities"

regional development division represents an emergency priority in the interest of both Romania and Szeklerland and therefore it should not neglect the European practice of subsidiary or artificially force the three counties in the Centre Region. The drafting of new territorial units must be done after consulting the citizens as the European obligations of Romania require.

Furthermore confirming MLG and Regionalism, European autonomies are successful only where the solidarity of local population is based on a strong regional identity that represents that region. Being aware of the fact that the process of EU regionalization can play an important role in promoting the idea of Szeklerland autonomy, that an increase in the role and importance of the EU Regions can be used in the favour of the Szeklerland cause, that a continuous representation of the local administrative authorities would be represented in the Commission of the Regions, the desire of the Szekler National Council is to use the structure of the European Union. They will contact Hungarian deputies in the European Parliament to forward Szeklerland's aspiration for autonomy and to draft mutual projects that will make the cause more popular and will enhance regional self-governing.²⁶³ The president of SNC also speaks of the importance of accessing European funds²⁶⁴ and of the fundamental values of the EU stressing the equality of peoples regardless of whether they live in their own state, or live in another country as historical communities. The second article of the European Union Treaty stresses the rights of the minorities. These are mutual values of the member states and of a society based on pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality. The EU structural reform emphasizes the concept of **internal enlargement**. In support of EU internal enlargement, the SNC is for a democratic change that strongly promotes subsidiary, the rights peoples have to self-determination and the emergence of new states. Such process must encompass a **renegotiation of status quo** in between the member states and the regions inside them, extend regional competencies, acknowledgement of communities desiring self-determination by both extending the competencies of autonomous regions and protecting the regions with national, linguistic and cultural peculiarities at European level.²⁶⁵ The

²⁶³ "The decisions of the Council of Local Representatives in Szeklerland," (Original: "Hotărârile Adunării Aleșilor Locali din Ținutul Secuiesc"), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=237%3Ahotrarile-adunrii-aleilor-locali-din-inutul-secuiesc&catid=13%3Akoezlemenyek&Itemid=18&lang=ro.

²⁶⁴ "Szekler villages have a great self-organizing capacity."

²⁶⁵ "Declaration regarding the internal extension of the EU," (Original: "Declarație privind extinderea internă a Uniunii Europene"), Szeklerland National Council,

Szekler people want the autonomy of Szeklerland and, as EU citizens, can settle and maintain bilateral relationships with other EU citizens and with the EU institutions.²⁶⁶ At Targu Mures the petitioners read a request towards the Romanian Government, asking for territorial autonomy for Szeklerland, the historical region where about half of the 1.4 million ethnic Hungarians in Romania live. **The petitioners asked that Szeklerland became a separate unit when accessing EU Development funds**²⁶⁷ and asked for territorial autonomy according to EU practice.²⁶⁸ More, SNC also expected support from the Hungarian EU presidency.²⁶⁹

Autonomy and decentralization are steps towards independence. Certainly, the Romanian part agrees that the new regional decentralisation reform represents a chance to fulfil Szeklers' greatest dream, ethnic territorial autonomy.²⁷⁰ They also fear that autonomy would bring about territorial division with separate financial, security and welfare institutions in a fully different administrative structure²⁷¹ where the 25% Romanian minority in Szeklerland would be stuck with Hungarian as official language while the official and financially contributing Romanian state would remain mostly just a formal

http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=267%3Adeclaratie-privind-extinderea-intern-a-uniunii-europene&catid=11%3Ahatározatok&Itemid=15&lang=ro.

²⁶⁶ "Decission regarding Szeklerland's External Relations Service," (Original: "Hotărâre privind Serviciul de relatii externe al Tinutului Secuiesc"), Szeklerland National Council,

http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=266%3Ahotarare-privind-serviciul-de-relatii-externe-al-tinutului-secuiesc&catid=11%3Ahatározatok&Itemid=15&lang=ro.

²⁶⁷ Ziare, "Protests for the autonomy of Szeklerland in cities of Europe and USA," (Original: "Demonstratii pentru autonomia Tinutului Secuiesc in orase din Europa si SUA"), *Ziare*, March 11, 2013,

<http://www.ziare.com/stiri/proteste/demonstratii-pentru-autonomia-tinutului-secuiesc-in-orase-din-europa-si-sua-1223428>.

"The Autonomy Statute of Szeklerland," Szeklerland National Council,

http://www.sznt.ro/en/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=15%3Athe-autonomy-statute-of-szeklerland&catid=10%3Astatutum&Itemid=14&lang=en.

²⁶⁸ Pescaru, "What Szeklerland is for Romanian economy."

²⁶⁹ "SNC waits for support from the future Hungarian EU Presidency regarding the autonomy," (Original: "CNS aşteaptă de la viitoarea Preşedinţie ungară a UE sprijin în problema autonomiei"), Szeklerland National Council, http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=236%3Acns-ateapt-de-la-viitoarea-preediniie-ungar-a-ue-sprijin-in-problema-autonomiei&catid=18%3Acikkeketanulmanyok&Itemid=24&lang=ro.

²⁷⁰ Claudiu Bran, "Eight regions don't suit the Hungarians. UDMR wants a land-region," (Original: "Regionalizarea în opt nu e pe placul maghiarilor. UDMR vrea regiune-ţinut"), *Ziua News*, March 07, 2013, <http://m.ziuanews.ro/dezvaluiri-investigatii/regionalizarea-in-opt-nu-e-pe-placul-maghiarilor-udmr-vrea-regiune-tinut-90316>.

Bianca Toma, "Dividing the regions for EU funds," (Original: "Împărţirea regiunilor pentru fondurile UE"), *Adevarul*, October 10, 2011, http://adevarul.ro/international/europa/Impartirea-regiunilor-fondurile-ue-1_50ad94f17c42d5a66397a9a5/index.html.

²⁷¹ I.R. "The law on the autonomy of Szeklerland has been rejected by the Senate," (Original: "Legea privind statutul de autonomie a Tinutului Secuiesc a fost respinsa de Senat"), *Hot News*, September 25, 2012, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-13290784-legea-privind-statutul-autonomie-tinutului-secuiesc-fost-respinsa-senat.htm>.

structure. More radical voices claim that is just a matter of time until (alimented with financial support and after self-administration experience) the next desired step will be secession.²⁷²

In addition to domestic lobbying under an EU generated context, Szeklerland opened its **first representation in Brussels**. Romanian MEP Ramona Manescu considers this action as an unprecedented attack towards Romanian sovereignty and territorial integrity. The Representation Office of Szeklerland in Brussels, located in the House of Hungarian Regions was opened on the 1st of June 2011 and held its first inauguration reception in the European Parliament building. Apparently, this representation is financially supported by the Hungarian Government and its aim is lobbying for the regionalisation and decentralisation reform in Romania to be performed on ethnical criteria,²⁷³ action which has the potential to cool the bilateral relationship in between Romania and Hungary.²⁷⁴

In addition to that, the ethnic-Hungarian Romanian MEP, Laszlo Tokes, announces that 2013 is the year of federalisation and autonomy in Romania. He also pleads for all Hungarians in Romania to get together and deal with the problems they have in relation to the Romanian majority. The means he argues for is imposing the will of the masses. Toro Tibor, the president of Hungarians in Transylvania Popular Party adds that the next context for reforms is the potential modifying of the country's constitution. He gives the uprisings in Catalonia as an example and claims a special status for both Szeklerland and Partium.²⁷⁵ Also, a meeting for the autonomy of Szeklerland was organized in on the 10th on March at

²⁷² Ioan Solomon, "Referendum for the autonomy of Szeklerland, in the eve of celebrating the Unification of Romania," (Original: "Referendum pentru autonomia "Tinutului Secuiesc", in ajunul sarbatorii Marii Uniri"), *Napoca News*, October 1, 2008, <http://www.napocanews.ro/2008/10/referendum-pentru-autonomia-%E2%80%9Ctinutului-secuiesc%E2%80%9D-in-ajunul-sarbatoririi-marii-uniri.html>.

²⁷³ Ziare, "Ramona Manescu: Szeklerland representancy in Brusseles, sovereignty attack," (Original: "Ramona Manescu: Reprezentanta Tinutului Secuiesc la Bruxelles, atac la suveranitate"), *Ziare*, June 2, 2011, <http://www.ziare.com/politica/maghiari/ramona-manescu-reprezentanta-tinutului-secuiesc-la-bruxelles-un-atac-la-suveranitate-1098493>.

²⁷⁴ Ziare, "Baconschi warns that the Szeklerland scandal could damage the relationship with Hungary," (Original: "Baconschi avertizeaza ca Scandalul cu Tinutul secuiesc ar putea strica relatia cu Ungaria"), *Ziare*, May 31, 2011, <http://www.ziare.com/teodor-baconschi/ministru-de-externe/baconschi-avertizeaza-ca-scandalul-cu-tinutul-secuiesc-ar-putea-strica-relatia-cu-ungaria-1098277>.

²⁷⁵ Stiri de Cluj, "Laszlo Tokes wants 2013 to be the year of autonomy and federalism," (Original: "Laszlo Tokes vrea ca 2013 să fie anul autonomiei și federalismului"), *Stiri de Cluj*, 2013, <http://www.stiridecluj.ro/politic/laszlo-tokes-vrea-ca-2013-sa-fie-anul-autonomiei-si-federalismului>.
Stiri de Cluj, "Tokes at Cluj: The purpose of PPMT is national autonomy," (Original: "Tokes la Cluj: Scopul PPMT este autonomia națională"), *Stiri de Cluj*, 2013, <http://www.stiridecluj.ro/politic/tokes-la-cluj-scopul-ppmt-este-autonomia-nationala>.

Targul Mures 2013 by SNC.²⁷⁶

Scotland: Unlike the EU, the ruling superstructure which is the central Government in London wants to decide the terms of the referendum that might decrease the size of its territory. If Scotland becomes independent there are only two options regarding the EU. If considered a different state, Scotland would not inherit part of UK's national debt and then it would apply for EU membership as soon as possible. If independent and seen as a successor of the United Kingdom, it would naturally remain a member of the EU with the same legal status as the other parts composing the present UK since its membership would be decided by majority voting in the Council of the EU. Moreover, independence advocates do not fear Spanish vote since the Spanish Constitution, unlike the British one, declares the country to be a unitary indivisible nation.²⁷⁷ Still, after Catalonia declaring to have drawn inspiration from Scotland,²⁷⁸ that may not be the case. Also, President Jose Manuel Barroso, in an interview about Scotland, told the BBC that new states hoping to join the EU would have to apply for membership.²⁷⁹ Statistics show that in 2012 support for full separation in Scotland was at around 30% provided that EU memberships were not at stake. The UK Government insists that the re-entry procedure would take place as in the case of a new state, with a unanimous vote that is difficult to acquire.²⁸⁰

Nevertheless, it is not only Scotland that has great advantages from being part of the EU;

²⁷⁶ Mediere Net, "SNC supports the regionalisation only if "Szeklerland" is created, they organize a meeting about it on the 10th of March," (Original: "CNS sustine regionalizarea tarii doar daca va exista regiunea "Tinutul Secuiesc", organizand in acest sens un miting pe 10 martie"), *Mediere Net*, January 8, 2013, <http://www.medierenet.ro/2013/01/08/cns-sustine-regionalizarea-tarii-doar-daca-va-exista-regiunea-tinutul-secuiesc-organizand-in-acest-sens-un-miting-pe-10-martie/#.UgwQQZJkNWY>.

G.S., "UDMR condemns the decision of SNC to hold an autonomy march on the 10th of March," (Original: "UDMR condamnă decizia Consiliului Național Secuiesc de a organiza un marș al autonomiei pe 10 martie"), *Antena 3*, February 23, 2013, <http://www.antena3.ro/politica/udmr-condamna-decizia-consiliului-national-secuiesc-de-a-organiza-un-mars-al-autonomiei-pe-10-martie-204491.html>.

B1 Ro, "Over 2.500 people are expected at the autonomy meeting," (Original: "Peste 2.500 de persoane, așteptate la mitingul pentru autonomie"), *B1*, March 10, 2013, <http://www.b1.ro/stiri/eveniment/peste-2-500-de-persoane-asteptate-la-mitingul-pentru-autonomie-51574.html>.

Ziare, "Meeting at Tg. Mures: 5.000 participants drafted a petition for the autonomy of Szeklerland," (Original: "Miting la Tg. Mures: 5.000 de participanti, s-a adoptat o petitie pentru autonomia Tinutului Secuiesc"), *Ziare*, March 10, 2013, <http://www.ziare.com/stiri/proteste/miting-la-tg-mures-5-000-de-participanti-s-a-adoptat-o-petitie-pentru-autonomia-tinutului-secuiesc-1223360>.

²⁷⁷ Paul T. Kavanagh, "The A to Z of Independence - Sorting myth from fact," *Newsnet Scotland*, February 14, 2009, <http://www.newsnetscotland.com/index.php/scottish-opinion/4341-a-unionist-lexicon-an-a-z-of-unionist-scare-stories-myths-and-misinformation>.

²⁷⁸ Xavier Solano, "Catalonia also says Yes," *Yes Scotland*, September 13, 2012, http://www.yesscotland.net/catalonia_also_says_yes.

²⁷⁹ Honor Mahony, "Commission ducks questions on separatism in EU states," *EU Observer*, May 15, 2012, <http://euobserver.com/political/117867>.

²⁸⁰ Barber, "Europe: Stretched at the seams."

the region offers important assets (fishing, oil, gas and renewables), is an open market for products from other member states and offers education to over 16,000 EU students. It is in EU's economic, social and political interests if Scotland continues to be a member.²⁸¹ The Scottish Government and Scotland's MEPs are looking forward for the future EU structural funds 2014-2020²⁸² while, since 80 percent of Scottish exports are destined for the UK or the EU, economic growth is envisioned for 2014.²⁸³

Prof. Crawford from Cambridge University states in an interview that new agreements in the international treaties will not present any major challenges since Scotland is an EU insider, fulfils the *acquis* already and there will be 18 months for negotiations with the EU in the interval between the potential yes and the actual independence.²⁸⁴ EU law Professor and former judge on the European Court of Justice, Sir David Edward, states the re-negotiation would be performed from within the EU since Scotland has been a member for forty years and since its citizens have a rightful claim to European citizenship. Just like in a potential break-up of Belgium, nobody would dream of kicking a part of it out.²⁸⁵

Besides, the former Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations backed up the idea that Scotland would continue EU membership²⁸⁶ and Professor David Scheffer, declared that Scotland in the EU will be treated as a unique precedent.²⁸⁷

Nevertheless, not all Scotland is necessarily decided on secession. The European Funds are important and if EU membership were to be uncertain, much support for independence

²⁸¹ The Scottish Government, "Scotland's Future: from the Referendum to Independence and a Written Constitution." (published by the Scottish Government, Edinburgh, February, 2013), 12.

²⁸² The Scottish Parliament, "European and External Relations Committee 5th Report, 2012 (Session 4) EU Structural Funds." (published by the Scottish Parliament, July 3, 2012).

²⁸³ "State of the Economy - August 2013 Summary of Key Conclusions," The Scottish Government, <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Economy/state-economy/latestSofE>.

²⁸⁴ "Legal opinion - an 'own goal' for UK government," Scottish National Party, <http://www.snp.org/blog/post/2013/feb/legal-opinion-own-goal-uk-government>.

²⁸⁵ Stephen Noon, "Answering your questions on the EU," *Yes Scotland*, October 31, 2012, http://www.yesscotland.net/your_questions_on_the_eu_answered.

"David Edward: Scotland and the European Union," Scottish Constitutional Futures Forum, <http://www.scottishconstitutional futures.org/OpinionandAnalysis/ViewBlogPost/tabid/1767/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/852/David-Edward-Scotland-and-the-European-Union.aspx>.

Adrian QC O'Neill "A Quarrel in a Faraway Country?: Scotland, Independence and the EU," *Eutopia Law*, November 14, 2011, <http://eutopialaw.com/2011/11/14/685/>.

²⁸⁶ Peter Dempsey, "Senior diplomat and former Labour minister says independent Scotland will be warmly welcomed by EU," *Yes Scotland*, February 21, 2013, http://www.yesscotland.net/senior_diplomat_and_former_labour_minister_says_independent_scotland_will_be_warmly_welcomed_by_eu.

²⁸⁷ *Yes Scotland*, "International law expert: 'Independent Scotland would be equal member of EU'," *Yes Scotland*, January 19, 2013, http://www.yesscotland.net/legal_expert_says_independent_scotland_would_be_equal_member_of_eu.

would be lost. That factor will probably be a decisive one in people's voting choice at the referendum. Losing both national and supranational financing would be a disaster and therefore the part of Scotland against independence are most likely hoping to remain in the **national arena** but to bypass it as much as possible when it comes to EU matters. From a legal point of view, there is a wide range of competent opinions on what the EU status of an independent Scotland would be. The Scotsman newspaper offers sources who think that both new countries would become successors of the European Union and would renegotiate their membership. In such scenario, Scotland and the country made of England, Wales and Northern Ireland would be on equal footing in front of Brussels and are most likely to be able to continue their membership without restrictions. There is no way Scotland would be placed in the same category as states like Croatia which are applying for EU membership for the first time. This is also supported by the Scottish National Party which is certain EU membership is a sure goal. Experts from Commons library argue that one cannot know for sure in the lack of a precedent but still, whatever happens to Scotland would also mirror the fate of the rest of the UK.²⁸⁸

f) Matters of external policy:

“Scotland has been a key member of the regional association that published a Common Declaration on European Governance in May 2002; an association, which includes Aquitaine, Emilia-Romagna, Flanders, Hessen, Marche, Skåne, Tuscany, Wales, and Wallonie that aims to produce a ‘networked response’ to the debate about European governance that will support a greater role for the regions of Europe.”²⁸⁹

Also, already in the on-going Yes campaign, Nicola Sturgeon is assuring like-minded countries (like Ireland) of a beneficial alliance with an independent Scotland.²⁹⁰

Still, from the point of view of external recognition, countries such as Cyprus, Greece, Slovakia, Spain and, of course, Romania are given as examples of potential opposition towards recognizing a future Scottish independence and its EU membership.²⁹¹ ”Half a

²⁸⁸ The Scotsman, “Scotland and rest of UK ‘would have to renegotiate EU status’,” *The Scotsman*, February 15, 2012, <http://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/top-stories/scotland-and-rest-of-uk-would-have-to-renegotiate-eu-status-1-2116803>.

²⁸⁹ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 102.

²⁹⁰ Millar, “Nicola Sturgeon: Scotland as an outward looking, global nation.”

²⁹¹ James Ker-Lindsay, “An independent Scotland would face little European opposition to membership of the European Union,” *The London School of Economics and Political Science*, March 21, 2012, <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/europpblog/2012/03/21/an-independent-scotland-would-face-little-european-opposition-to-membership-of-the-european-union/>.

dozen European Union states fear the example that is being set for ethnic minorities within their borders [...] Cyprus declared Kosovo a violation of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia [...] Feeling is equally strong in Slovakia and Romania, where ethnic Hungarians make up 10 per cent and 6 per cent of the population respectively [...] Some Slovak deputies openly accused their Hungarian compatriots of planning secession [and] Traian Basescu, Romania's president, bluntly told a NATO meeting, [that Kosovo] is "a risky precedent [and:] What message are we sending to multi-ethnic societies or to others that are facing ethnic issues?" Further, "separatists in the Basque region, some of whom have now resumed to violence, look openly to Kosovo [and Scotland] for encouragement. Other regions – Catalonia, Valencia, Galicia – are also pressing for greater autonomy;" Belgium may also be in doubt. All these countries facing ethnic cleavages perceive "their motivation [as] nationalist and, like the Scottish National Party, they put their nation first. But nationalism in the Balkans is a raw, visceral force that the milder political culture of Western Europe easily underrates [...]. "Scotland in Europe" is a centrepiece of **separatist** strategy. As the debate on independence picks up, voters will seek reassurance that they will not be locked out on the doorstep"²⁹² of the EU, the same way Kosovo is held back by Spain.²⁹³

Further, in 2010 during an official visit to Romania, the Hungarian Prime-minister, Semjen Zsolt, declared that Hungary supports the cultural and territorial autonomy of Szeklerland.²⁹⁴ Hungary is, through all possible means, supportive of any path of protecting the interests of the Hungarians in Romania. There are only common interests for all Hungarians and the mother-country supports them.²⁹⁵

²⁹² Simon James, "Kosovo could end Scotland's European dream," *Financial Times*, February 26, 2008, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/a4756a3c-e472-11dc-a495-0000779fd2ac.html#ixzz2RezGUvCQ>.

²⁹³ "Would Spain stop Scotland from joining the EU?" The Spectator Blog, <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/coffeehouse/2012/01/would-spain-stop-scotland-from-joining-the-eu/>.

²⁹⁴ Ziare, "The Viceprime-minister of Hungary: We have the autonomy of Szeklerland in mind," (Original: "Vicepremierul Ungariei: Ne gandim la autonomia Tinutului Secuiesc"), *Ziare*, June 19, 2010, <http://www.ziare.com/marko-bela/tinutul-secuiesc/vicepremierul-ungariei-ne-gandim-la-autonomia-tinutului-secuiesc-1022950>.

²⁹⁵ Stiri de Cluj, "Nemeth Zsolt at Cluj: Hungary supports the interests of Hungarians from Transylvania," (Original: "Nemeth Zsolt la Cluj: Ungaria sprijină interesele maghiarimii din Ardeal"), *Stiri de Cluj*, 2013, <http://www.stiridecluj.ro/politic/nemeth-zsolt-la-cluj-ungaria-sprijina-interesele-maghiarimii-din-ardeal>.

Chapter V – Analysis:

Intro to analysis – wrap up facts

What Scotland and Szeklerland have in common are: different identity than of the majoritarian population within the state, they claim similarities with another country or region than the state they are part of, they consider that national governments do not pursue the regional interest and do not possess the proper knowledge about the region's peculiarities, they develop plans for noticeable change, they project the future as a stronger collaboration with the EU (Scotland worries that UK Euroscepticism might put them in a disadvantaged position while Szeklerland is struggling to become a separate administrative EU Region with legal personality, against the Romanian state which placed it in a majoritarian Romanian Region-Centre), they display a strong interest in EU funds (Scotland has administered its EU funds rather independently while the current aim of Szeklerland is becoming its own Region in order to administer the EU funds it strongly needs within their majoritarian Region and with an ethnical view). All in all, both regions count on the EU and its funds to **bypass the national government** up to autonomy (Szeklerland) and independence (Scotland).

There are also differences to be found in between the two regions especially regarding their potential for influence: unlike Scotland, Szeklerland has a relatively undeveloped economy both at EU level and nationally, it is still part of a de facto unitary state with no independent Regional powers, has the geographical disadvantage of enclave aspect, is just as pro-EU as the state it belongs to and it could not sustain itself without the funds from the national level. According to MLG and Regionalism approach, these different domestic structures will impact the success of the two regions just as “external matters act as a function of a proportionality of the ability to act in internal matters.”²⁹⁶

By extrapolating the claims of MLG (through deductive research design), I argue that the two regions are more (Scotland) and less (Szeklerland) successful in bypassing the national level and achieving more independence depending on national circumstances (especially current level of autonomy). While Scotland has been devolved since 1998 and may

²⁹⁶ Charlie Geoffrey, “Conclusions: Sub-national authorities and European domestic policy.” in *The Regional Dimension of the European Union-Towards a Third Level in Europe?*, ed. Charlie Jeffery, (London: Frank Cass, 1997), 217.

potentially become a new country next year, in Szeklerland the self-governing process is still in a fairly incipient stage as the region is striving to use EU context to become autonomous, to position itself in the international arena and seeks to develop separate institutions and official interests so it could **only then** truly bypass the national government. In the case of Britain, multi-level governance is strengthened by the insights of a ‘domestic politics’ approach: the ‘differentiated polity’. The introduction of autonomous relationships in order to mimic market style relationships has increased the level of independence and created a complex bureaucratic topography.

My two case-studies also show that conflicts in domestic relations (which normally remains national), have a higher tendency to move on EU level when it comes to separatist regions, being frequently propelled by ethnic and cultural identification. As MLG affirms, European governance will support a greater role for the regions of Europe.

As presented by the empirical research of the previous chapter, what Scotland succeeded and Szeklerland may very likely be on the path of achieving is blending national and European levels while building webs of unilateral transnational interaction.²⁹⁷ The pattern of creating quasi-autonomous market-like structures (through “new public management (NPM)—deregulation, contracting-out, agencification, privatization” etc.) naturally favoured fragmentation and individualized different bureaucracies. Therefore, the so-called process of hollowing out of the state is not deliberate in its purpose.²⁹⁸ It is merely the outcome of structural and Regional policy applied throughout the European Union. As we have seen in the case of Scotland, it led to a balance shift in between the regional agencies and the state in the advantage of the former.²⁹⁹ For example, in the previously-mentioned RECHAR case it becomes rather evident that the precedent did not mean a deliberate alliance in between the European Commission and the Regions but more of a decision made on a very particular case. Nevertheless, the occurrence brought about a noticeable power shift since, in a moment of discrimination from the state, it was the EC that represented a safety net and that followed up with a change in mentality and perception of the power relation going through the three levels.

²⁹⁷ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 93-106.

²⁹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 93-106.

²⁹⁹ *Op. cit.*, 121.

Even at present, the EC stresses upon transparency to make sure, among others, that it is EU and not national projects being helped by the structural funding, and that encourages and facilitates a powerful grass route mobilization³⁰⁰ (**re-motivation and means**). Fragmentation due to EU policy domains re-activates the sub-regional;³⁰¹ it is a rewarding environment for sub-national actors to operate and it acts as both incentive and enhancer for autonomist actions in regions that are **actively seeking such outcome**, since self-administration represents a competent start for autonomy and/or separatism.³⁰² In countries where societal cleavage and contested power-sharing patterns is a peculiarity, matters of non-state related financing become a strong facilitator and driving mechanism.

The conditions that affect successfully exercising influence³⁰³ are fairly diverse and proven by the empirical part: establishing offices in Brussels as both Scotland and Szeklerland did, the reason for which it is so important for Szeklerland to be able to lobby in the name of an EU NUTS2 Region; reach out to similar regions or allied countries; pressure the national government to allow the region become a more important opinion poll regarding decisions related to the EU; set up formal means to influence the unilateral representation of the region in Brussels; contact Commission officials directly; trying to reach out to other EU institutions beyond the EC; participation in the Committee of the Regions; try to rise impediments to treaty amendments; stress the importance of subsidiary (one of the key words in the Szekler demands) as opposite to national level decisions etc. In time, such processes are **in principle capable of shifting the balance** away from the central government and towards the regional authorities. Still, it strongly depends from one autonomist region to another whether they have the capabilities and the resources to pursue these steps towards **a more independent status quo**.³⁰⁴

Sub-national authorities exercise from great to almost no range of competencies in various distribution of domestic authority.³⁰⁵ The most relevant factors that make the difference in the visibility and weight of their voice in the EU arena are their status in the nation state and the strength of the mark national and international structures can place on them. Therefore, it is absolutely critical to stress that according to both empirical research and

³⁰⁰ Keating, "The invention of regions," 388.

³⁰¹ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 102.

³⁰² *Op. cit.*, 98.

³⁰³ *Op. cit.*, 121.

³⁰⁴ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 115.

³⁰⁵ Geoffrey, "Conclusions." 218.

MLG interpretation, regions should not be conceptualized under a homogenous approach. Due to specificities of “population, area, economic capacity, cultural background, institutional structure, political capacity, strength of their business, social networks, civic cultures” and so on, the path and the pre-requisites towards a better status quo will highly differ³⁰⁶ depending on “variations in the nature and extent of EU pressures and incentives over time both across and even within states.”³⁰⁷

For Szeklerland it would be incredibly beneficial as an aspiring autonomist region within the EU if it could coincide with the institutional NUTS-division and overlap the separate identity to the purpose and the scope of the funds they intend to apply for.³⁰⁸

In order to approach fund policies, national governments sometimes have to rearrange their political structures; that took form in erosion of nation-state sovereignty especially in the presence of active autonomist regions. Therefore, the EU can be practically seen as an external support system for those sub-national communities which try to escape from the control of their centre while creating institutional linkages with the supranational level. The EU has begun to be viewed “as a source of material support for economic development, especially through structural funds. From an institutional perspective, autonomists have used Europe as a framework for the international projection of the region and, in some cases, as a source of support for regional cultures and languages.”³⁰⁹

Although mostly an economic motivation, the autonomist incentive is linked to historical territorial and cultural identities.³¹⁰ Regardless of the present degree of regional liberty, there is constant room for bettering the status quo when interests and identities collide since “European integration [has a great potential to act] as an opportunity to escape from the authority of their nation-state.”³¹¹

Consequently, changes in power balance bring about matters of democratic legitimacy: while the autonomist region claim further rights based on grass-route representation, it is fairly unlikely that it will obtain unquestionable unanimous international sympathy.³¹²

³⁰⁶ Öner, *Relations between*, 38-39.

³⁰⁷ Bache, “Europeanization and multi-level governance.”

³⁰⁸ Öner, *Relations between*, 33.

³⁰⁹ *Op. cit.*, 36.

³¹⁰ Keating, “Europe and the regions: past, present and future,” 1-2.

³¹¹ Öner, *Relations between*, 39.

³¹² Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 97.

Despite the attenuation in the significance of borders, the Westphalia international recognition system is still dominant in the EU. Moreover, also related to democratic accountability, there is a real danger that in a gradually stronger autonomy, regional elites and dominant politicians are liable in time to “becoming absorbed in the administrative grind of running a [structure] with numerous economic and social problems [or became a] **new party of patronage.**”³¹³

There is also a strong possibility that autonomist regions like Szeklerland and Scotland may never factually pursue independence and secession. Still, even if that were the case, they are still pursuing a looser state structure by using the EU as a safety net and as a both practical and discourse tool which also confirms my hypothesis of EU influencing autonomist regions in their quest for a more advantageous and more independent status quo.³¹⁴

In comparing with previous research in the field, I consider my conclusion enhancing to further understanding. Previous research applies to regular/typical national regions (used as the benchmark) while my conclusion refines the research towards the autonomist ones that perceive their origin, interests and desired future-direction to belong to a very different path than the one of the national government and intend to take over state functions in a zero sum-like game.

One of the previous papers I compared my conclusion with was that of Michaël Tatham; only three years ago he wrote an inspiring draft paper for the 5th ECPR Pan-European Conference on EU Politics in which he states, unlike my thesis, that it is **not** the case for devolution and fragmentation to aliment conflicts in between the national and the regional level on the European arena while facilitating bypassing of the former by the latter in Brussels and that MLG failed to capture state-region relations in Brussels after devolution. Although I strongly agree only with the fact that regions may not be influential players in the domestic EU policy-shaping,³¹⁵ I argue that it can be a likely motif for regions with different identity and interests to seek for additional means to influence. Tatham’s opinion coincides with Szeklerland’s former state – “neither unidirectional nor strong enough to

³¹³ Tom Gallagher, “Pro-independence surge in Scotland.”

³¹⁴ *Ibidem.*

³¹⁵ Michaël Tatham, “Devolution and EU policy-shaping: Bridging the gap between Multi-Level Governance and Liberal Intergovernmentalism.” (paper prepared for the 5th ECPR Pan-European Conference on EU Politics, Porto, Portugal, June 23-26, 2010), 1-7.

[...] determine devolution and involvement levels.”³¹⁶ Yet, I think Szeklerland is becoming more unidirectional towards the EU as a trend. As mentioned in state-of-the-arts, MLG literature has predicted greater autonomy from, and bypassing of, central governments by highly devolved regions; yet if those regions are not autonomists, the potential conflicts in between them will be only superficial and easy to compromise on (e.g. in the federal Germany and Austria). I believe Tatham may have researched a general rule that applies to regular national regions, but in the case of autonomist regions fragmentation acts stronger as a ”driver and enabler of territorial mobilisation at the EU level”³¹⁷ and has a great potential to increase independence from the nation state. It generates in autonomist regions conflict on the national level followed by **separate lobbying** within the EU. Therefore, confirming what MLG states, regional unilateral relations with Brussels is connected with conflict between the national government and that region on the EU arena. Tatham also states that “below a certain level of devolution, the relationship between devolution and regional involvement is inexistent” which is proved inapplicable at least by the autonomist Szeklerland. Furthermore, he says that ”greater devolution has caused greater coordination and cooperation at the EU level.”³¹⁸ It may be absolutely valid in the case of regular national regions but as this thesis proves, autonomist regions make a quite different and special case from the general rule. In my view, one of the main characteristics of the relationship between strong-autonomist regions and their national government is an implied perception of it as a zero sum game, **especially** if also associated with separatism. Every country has its own domestic political game but autonomist behaviour is different in the unlikeliness of the game summing more than zero in the majority of the cases (e.g RECHAR).

One of the conclusions in Tatham’s paper was a “lack of a deterministic link between identity/culture on the one hand and territorial devolution of power.”³¹⁹ Although I agree that devolution increases “independence from central governments,”³²⁰ as explained before, the success in acquiring more independence was not the topic of my study. Unlike the author states, my case-study shows that at least in the case of autonomist regions, MLG is correct in assuming that “greater independence in Brussels [understood as outcome of

³¹⁶ Tatham, ”Devolution and EU policy-shaping,” 23.

³¹⁷ *Op. cit.*, 24.

³¹⁸ *Op. cit.*, 24-25.

³¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, 23.

³²⁰ *Op. cit.*, 24.

national fragmentation] and greater conflict on the European scene”³²¹ are in a causal relation. Moreover, Tatham outsources Charlie Jeffery that: “higher devolution levels are in fact associated with greater interaction and cooperation between the state and its regions in their European activities”³²² and states that “while greater devolution has tended to increase the amount of conflict in domestic intergovernmental relations, it has not led to the expected increase in conflict in Brussels; to the contrary, greater devolution has caused greater coordination and cooperation at EU level,”³²³ which is certainly not the case for regions that try more-or-less to become the state itself. Beyond one of the most obvious examples of the contrary, a part of Scotland’s population desiring independence, Szeklerland opened its first representation office in Brussels outraging the Romanian state while domestically it tries to exploit the decentralisation of the public administration.

Therefore, I do not agree that “cultural distinctiveness and historical heritage certainly do not cause devolution or institutionalised involvement.”³²⁴ It is not necessary that they do but if they display clear autonomist and/or separatist features, they are likely to.

Regional actors can mobilize or, in fewer cases, they can also influence policy-making but as proven by the chapter above and in resonance with MLG, the map of sub-national actors influence is highly **heterogeneous**: the three governmental levels are interconnected but the spill-over from one to the others is not uniformly distributed since they own various national and international resources and pre-requisites. Nevertheless, once an agency is put into place under EU context it obviously takes over some roles. A new state of facts comes into being and MLG begins.³²⁵ As Charlie Jeffery states,³²⁶ sub-national actors are passive beneficiaries of spin-offs but I add: only if they are not resourceful and strongly individualized regions themselves and do not fulfil the criteria for influence mentioned in the theoretical chapter³²⁷ to become active beneficiaries.

A stronger say in national European policy matters generally develops if the European policy itself somehow already infringed in the national policy-making³²⁸ (here is the involuntary EU agency that influences autonomist regions); for example Scotland has been

³²¹ Tatham, “Devolution and EU policy-shaping,” 24.

³²² *Ibidem*.

³²³ *Op. cit.*, 25.

³²⁴ *Op. cit.*, 22.

³²⁵ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 107-125.

³²⁶ *Op. cit.*, 122.

³²⁷ *Op. cit.*, 117.

³²⁸ *Op. cit.*, 124.

a receiver of EU funds for years. Such institutionalized practices change agency competencies and power and influence the perspective on democratic accountability - how that society should be ruled and what are the overall governing relationships within that particular state,³²⁹ especially for the population of the autonomist region.

Conceptual framework

After the undertaken research on the financial and institutional influence of the EU on autonomist regions, the conclusions reached confirm the hypothesis and do not necessarily infirm previous study in the field but it has extended the topic further towards a more particular and peculiar study group. More clearly, the extrapolations that results from this research have exceeded the expectations I had in the hypothesis and I hope it will provide a solid starting point for future projects.

The European Union as a platform and as an institution provides both the **re-motivation and means** for autonomist regions in the EU to acquire a more advantageous status quo, approach I would like to conceptualize for easier reading as **M&M**. Yet, these regions find themselves in fairly various stages of resources and influence potential; the stronger the separate identity and administration is, the more likely it is to want or have the capability to use the EU context for an improved status quo **both domestically and within the EU**. Therefore, even if using the EU in this purpose, the goals reached are directly proportional to the resources and the outcome is different as they themselves are different in influence potential, by this confirming the MLG theoretical approach of heterogeneous side-effect of Europeanization, a result of supranational entrepreneurship and institutional learning.³³⁰

NUTS division of any EU country creates a natural overall fragmentation since funds can also be interpreted as an individual race for needed funding but the main difference from this point of view in between regular national regions and autonomist regions is the desire for a bettered status quo that goes beyond regional rivalries within the state and implies taking over important state functions (especially **externally**). As presented in the empirical chapter, the *de facto* state in the UK is, due to devolution, a quasi-federal state despite the unitary *de jure*. Yet, it seems that there is a better status to be achieved even further than federalization as the supporters of independence prove. The difference lies in the different

³²⁹ Piattoni, "Multi-Level Governance in the EU. Does it Work?", 35.

³³⁰ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 116.

identity and the different path to follow for the future, just as in the case of Szeklerland. In such case, the financing of the EU represents a most favourable context, an option that offers a helping structure while keeping enough distance to allow freedom of policy-making and implementation for the national and regional actors.

In conformity with New Regionalist claims, my case-study regions either have or aim at a political path build on different identity both in external and internal politics towards more decision-making and implementation powers. Power sharing leads to stronger tensions in unitary states than in federal one³³¹ but there can be more freedom of manoeuvre even further than federalism. When different interests collide, direct decision-making and direct freedom of manoeuvre becomes incredibly appealing. Autonomist regions are **more likely to react** to the feeling of being discriminated, internationally under-represented³³² or not sufficiently promoted as capable economic areas or to being on a low level in domestic political hierarchy. In such cases, regions fight back with ground mobilization (protests and referendums in Szeklerland and mobilization and independence referendum in Scotland) since their priorities are connected both to the different identity and to other plans of the future.

In the race for a more independent status quo, the difference between succeeding and failing to reach the goal is a question of resources: economic, social and political-importance in domestic politics and in quality of lobbying in Brussels. Again, my research is not on whether they will succeed in acquiring those further advantages or not, but on the EU context explained by MLG which provides a platform for action (an alternative for bypassing state government), opportunity that is in a way or another valued by the autonomists.

My **first conceptualization** is the EU funds representing both re-motivation and means at the same time. Within the EU, non-euro-sceptic autonomist regions are liable to the M&M drift. The directly distributed financial assistance offered by the funds act as a means of increasing independence from the state but also as the very inspiration of it (in the sense of a **highly optimal circumstance** for a long desired action-“when strong regional or national

³³¹ Geoffrey, “Conclusions.” 217.

³³² ”Decision regarding Szeklerland’s External Relations Service.”

identities, silent or suppressed for many years, are suddenly given a voice”³³³). EU unintentionally created not only an institutional and financial tool and an enhancer but also a potential gate for those who intent to use it in that way. Although the EU structure is certainly not the only usable structure for autonomist regions to become more independent, it represents both the incentive (drive) and a very convenient purpose-achieving tool. As an **analogy** for the M&M concept applied to the EU funds, we shall consider the example of a **lock pick** and a cage - “It is like wanting to leave home without making Daddy angry.”³³⁴ A lock pick is not a key in itself; it could be almost any kind of tool designed for other purposes than the one of opening the cage (e.g. a hair pin). But once the *prisoner* has it in its hand, the lock pick doesn’t become only the mere tool but also the actual reason of inspiration. This first prisoner in the analogy represents autonomist regions; on the other hand the correspondent of a regular national region, due to lack of intentions to leave the cage in the first place, is the prisoner who would not even get the idea to use the hair pin in another purpose; for him the tool is not a lock pick. (Appendix 27) Just as **a tool that extends its usages to our interpretation of it**, the EU structure and funds could, **if intended so by the users**, become an enhancer of more decision-making, national and Community importance and enhanced freedom from national governments even up to the direct detriment of the latter.

The **second conceptualization** I would like to contribute with would be the one of a feedback loop. The feedback loop is a good way of explaining a certain type of bilateral relationship. “From an individual’s viewpoint, a feedback loop exists when my system notices how the world responds to my behaviour and I adjust my behaviour in response to that response, and so on.”³³⁵ (Appendix 28) After the empirical qualitative research case-study on Scotland and Szeklerland, I noticed a fairly direct proportional input-output cycle in the evolution of EU autonomist regions in time in the intermestic zone: EU funds trigger a stronger autonomy which in return triggers real potential for funds customized on the region’s need. By extrapolating on that, we can observe that just as it was the case for Scotland, in Szeklerland an improved position on the domestic arena (a potential separate Szekler EU Region) would bring about a separately financed self-administration from the

³³³ The Economist, “Devolution can be salvation,” *The Economist*, September 18, 1997, <http://www.economist.com/node/157182>.

³³⁴ The Economist, “Europe’s next independent state?” *The Economist*, September 22, 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21563347>.

³³⁵ “What is a Feedback Loop?” The Clean Collection, <http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/articles/227/2/Feedback-loops/Page2.html>.

rest of the country which in turn would result in the feedback loop to an even better and more independent position nationally. As mentioned several times across the thesis, the two studied regions are highly different with regards to the stage of autonomy (from not even an officially acknowledged region to planning an independence referendum) and resources of all kinds. Yet, moving the feedback loop pattern onto Scotland we can assert a strong similarity of process - the 15 years of domestic devolution which coincide with the number of years as a separate EU funds receiving Region³³⁶ (UKM³³⁷) triggered so much regional independence in bilaterally collaborating with the EU that it turned into the project of keeping that practice from the position of a new member state from within the EU Community. Further, the same feedback loop applies to resources and representation: **for** better representation **with** better representation and **for** better resources **with** better resources.

Moreover, since the feedback loop is basically a circle, the process can start in any part of the loop. Although the most common way is that domestic fragmentation brings about mobilization in Brussels, Szeklerland seems to have started at another point in the circle (with mobilization and lobby for specific fragmentation). With an autonomist purpose in view antecedents of regions growing stronger in close connection with the EU creates expectations.³³⁸ Scotland scores more than four times higher in the *Summary of three institutionalised regional involvement indicators and regional authority index scores* than all Romania in any point³³⁹-the stories of successful autonomists lift spirits even in places with close to zero regional authority.

Tatham also states “when devolution levels remain low, institutionalised involvement remains quasi non-existent”³⁴⁰ but that is not the case in the feedback loop applied on an autonomist, where one can start with quasi-institutionalised involvement that can turn into fragmentation. Therefore, regarding his question “if there were no devolution would there be institutionalised regional involvement?”³⁴¹, I believe the answer for autonomists would

³³⁶ The Scottish Government, “Review of Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics (Nuts) Boundaries.” (presented by the Scottish Government, November, 2012), 1.

³³⁷ “First-level NUTS of the European Union,” Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-level_NUTS_of_the_European_Union.

³³⁸ Tatham, “Devolution and EU policy-shaping,” 6.

³³⁹ *Op. cit.*, 30.

³⁴⁰ *Op. cit.*, 21-22.

³⁴¹ *Op. cit.*, 21.

be yes, but not as far as efficient as if it were to enjoy some sort of devolution, fragmentation or regionalization first.

In addition to that, the European Commission and the Regions of the EU are not heading only in the direction of cooperation and potential alliance against the member states; various examples mentioned above proved that their interaction faces both ups and downs. Still, for the regions defined by separate identity the EU represents an incredible breakthrough of a **useful** structure.

Autonomist regions can enjoy different constitutional empowerments and factual rights but while the perceived identity and paths are not in line with the ones of the nation state (for any reasons), such a handy facilitating structure as the EU is likely to be seen as a way towards more regional liberty - a better status quo by taking over state functions or, in an extreme case, political separation. As explained before, a lock pick is a key in the eyes of the target agent.

On the other hand, in what concerns matters of democratic legitimacy, the attitude on that is almost opposite from the majority to the minority of that state. The nation state generally holds responsibility for the country as a whole - too much freedom and lack of cover from the state uncovers poor regions to hits from the free market.³⁴² Plus, in the case of Szeklerland, there is also a minority within the minority: the 25% Romanians living in the area. Also, there is a minority in Scotland that wishes for independence but not within the EU³⁴³ (individual agency of eurosceptic autonomists).

In conclusion, each autonomist region struggles for aims proportional to the available resources. Still, unless they are eurosceptic, they will consider how to make best use of the EU context and financing in by-passing the national government. Compared to Scotland which may “be as viably independent as Denmark, Finland or Ireland, countries of comparable size and wealth,”³⁴⁴ Szeklerland is not particularly resourceful, known and popular, nor did it have EU context until 2007. For that reason many of the battles of influencing EU policy are still only beginning at the national level among which a separate NUTS2 Region represents a vital stake.

³⁴² Keating, “The invention of regions,” 395.

³⁴³ “A Future With Hope,” Scottish Democratic Alliance, <http://scottishdemocraticalliance.org/our-vision>.

³⁴⁴ The Economist, “Devolution can be salvation.”

In short, the theory was not only confirmed but also extended towards this particular direction and I strongly believe that the empirical results and the conclusions can be generalized and extrapolated to **typical** EU disintegrative-autonomist regions.

Regarding assertions on the used methodology, I did not encounter noticeable mismatches with the nature and purpose of the present thesis since “comparison of a [single] case over a long period of time [...] weakens the *ceteris paribus* assumption as other factors – especially the depth of European integration – do not remain constant.”³⁴⁵ Therefore, simultaneously comparing asymmetrical domestic systems gave rise to qualitative findings.

Chapter VI – Conclusion:

To conclude, the findings of this thesis explain how processes of making a stronger separate regional identity by using EU context are observable in different stages. There is a gradual but noticeable direction in which the EU is unintentionally pushing states and regions simply through the existence of its bureaucracies and financing opportunities. MLG “focuses on the spin-off which emerged on interplay between the central state and European institutions and which more or less incidentally dispersed decision-making powers to the sub-national authorities thus empowering them to engage and to influence European policy processes.”³⁴⁶

The EU member states range from strongly centralised unitary states to federal while they experience various administrative and political division between the regional and national level. Typically, unitary states try to bypass the formation of strong regional institutions (like in the case of Romania) while in devolved states the regional governments try to increase their own flexibility in relation to the centre. Also, major different interests between national and sub-national levels are brought by taxation and expenses. Organization of economic growth is not only different in between countries but also within the same country and will eventually develop³⁴⁷ ”patterns of spatial inequality.”³⁴⁸

³⁴⁵ Tatham, ”Devolution and EU policy-shaping,” 21.

³⁴⁶ Geoffrey, ”Conclusions.” 214.

³⁴⁷ Bullmann, ”Introductory Perspectives,” 3-18.

³⁴⁸ *Op. cit.*, 9.

The Europe of Regions-idea goes beyond pure MLG and predicts states to fall replaced by the two other levels. If so, it may be autonomist ones before those characterized by spirit of belonging³⁴⁹ (e.g. in Romania besides Szeklerland no other region seems to seek distancing from the state).

Certain regions perceive **European integration as a process that reduces the cost of their independence**; the more practical ones use Europe as a context to promote their nationalist desires and find supporters and sympathisers. In the process of decentralisation and Europeanization, regions try to influence the EU in their favour, in the case of autonomist ones, even against the interest of their nation state. In a too decentralized Europe, it would become difficult for the EU to protect its cohesion.³⁵⁰

In the media and public discourse, EU funds are mainly presented as a necessary tool for enhancing claims for more freedom of manoeuvre. Moreover, the funds are strongly proving MLG, including the possibility of bypassing the national level, if intended – “effectiveness of sub-national regions mostly depends on the quality of their institutional infrastructure and their ability to take action.”³⁵¹

In general, as explained by the spill over effect of MLG, there is no contradiction between the pursuit of national sovereignty and adhesion to a more closely united Europe. Most autonomist regions only seek more extensive self-government rather than outright secession. Some seek more unity with co-nationals in a neighbouring state. Even those that want a state of their own are tactically flexible enough to settle, in the near term, for something short of full independence³⁵² especially in “a unitary administration [which] will be eroded by the cooperation in between the EC and regional levels.”³⁵³ Nevertheless, the EU offers regionalization for the purpose of financing. There is a side category of eurosceptic autonomists (like for example Catalonia of seventeen years ago); it believed in “internal colonialism” and considered the EU simply a “rich man’s club.”³⁵⁴ After almost two decades though, and partially following the Scottish endeavour of seeking unilateral

³⁴⁹ Tatham, “Devolution and EU policy-shaping,” 30.

³⁵⁰ Öner, *Relations between*, 46-48.

³⁵¹ *Op. cit.*, 39.

³⁵² Barber, “Europe: Stretched at the seams.”

³⁵³ Bache and Flinders, *Multi-level Governance*, 101.

³⁵⁴ Öner, *Relations between*, 39.

EU membership in the detriment of loosing state protection³⁵⁵, Catalonia may be one of the next cases that will prove the conclusions of this thesis (having "lack of financial autonomy" for a rich region as one of the main reasons for secession). In the prospect of their tax money supporting uncompetitive regions³⁵⁶, unilateral EU membership gains support: "In Catalonia, secessionism, European unionism, and globalism are deeply intertwined."³⁵⁷ Even an initially eurosceptic autonomist region eventually discovered the EU context as favourable and useful³⁵⁸ - such topic makes a great intriguing topic for a next research.

Being a typical separate identity autonomist region is related to ethnic/cultural characteristics and has a more complex definition than simple regional peculiarity (like French Bretagne or Germany's Bavaria or Saxony³⁵⁹). Still it is crucial to mention that there is a thin line between being merely a region with certain peculiarities and strong autonomist or even separatist tendencies, since a region is not equally autonomist throughout time. Peculiarities may be stronger or milder but they start mattering only when associated with the main characteristics of autonomist: **culturally distinctness/historic regionalism, disadvantaging finances, radically different political plans and lack of freedom of manoeuvre, all ending up in actions of distancing**. Maybe a new trend "may in time engender a new set of economics-driven loyalties that weaken the pull of the old nation-states."³⁶⁰ A third possibility for the future is for certain states to become a either symmetrical or asymmetrical federation; a vast number of people living in autonomist regions prefer that as a middle ground also since an event like a potential No outcome at the Scottish referendum would leave the region in little possibility of future complains.³⁶¹ "As a matter of fact, some form of asymmetric federalism has been one of the most

³⁵⁵ Alex Henderson, "2012: A historic year for independence movements from Scotland to Catalonia?" *Alba Social*, February 23, 2013, <http://www.albasocial.co.uk/2012-a-historic-year-for-independence-movements-from-scotland-to-catalonia/>.

³⁵⁶ The Economist, "Europe's next independent state?"

³⁵⁷ Marta Poblet and Pompeu Casanovas, "Catalonia: independent but united with Europe?" *The Conversation*, September 13, 2012, <http://theconversation.com/catalonia-independent-but-united-with-europe-9516>.

³⁵⁸ The Economist, "Europe's next independent state?"

³⁵⁹ The Economist, "Devolution can be salvation."

³⁶⁰ *Ibidem*.

³⁶¹ The Economist, "Europe's next independent state?"

pervasive proposals in Catalan politics.”³⁶² Some scholars believe that decentralisation across Europe it has rather kept countries together than broken them up.³⁶³

The research on autonomist regions of the EU is certainly not exhausted; only after a first precedent (such as the conclusions after the Scotland referendum), can we start a deeper scholarly research and infirm or confirm this thesis’ findings based on GT’s fit.

President Charles de Gaulle, one of the founding fathers of the EU, said that there is no other form for Europe to be in than the one of the states.³⁶⁴ But “European integration in relation to the nation-states can be envisioned as a centrifugal one.”³⁶⁵ Also, “European governance has had a role on regions in different policy fields. Out of all, the most notable was the European Regional Policy which boosted the region’s position in the emerging European political system; it is illustrated by a broadening debate on subsidiary, growing regional activity in the international arena and the establishment of new institutions.”³⁶⁶ In that sense, Regions have learned to think individually since EU funds could boost economic productivity, decrease social inequalities and upstart modernization on a broad level.³⁶⁷

It is hoped that the findings of this thesis on autonomist regions could be used not only in scholarly purposes but potentially by administrative and political institutions, as a sample of broader approach to a topic that unfortunately may seem only as a bunch of singular cases instead of a complex process systematically correlating itself with the EU. Expansions of the topic could be related to further research about EU autonomists (for e.g. changes in perception from a socio-constructivist point of view or using taxonomy for classification of autonomists). But what I would truly envision to study for further articles or hopefully a PHD is a comparison of EU autonomists with Canada’s autonomists: “EU-Canada from a separatist point of view”.

³⁶² Poblet and Casanovas, “Catalonia: independent but united with Europe?”

³⁶³ The Economist, “Devolution can be salvation.”

³⁶⁴ Bullmann, “Introductory Perspectives,” 3-18.

³⁶⁵ Jeffery, “Regional information offices.” 185.

³⁶⁶ Bullmann, “Introductory Perspectives,” 11.

³⁶⁷ John, “Europeanization in a centralized state.” 133.

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[tarare-privind-serviciul-de-relatii-externe-al-tinutului-secuiesc&catid=11%3Ahatározatok&Itemid=15&lang=ro.](http://www.sznt.ro/ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=267%3Adeklaratie-privind-extinderea-intern-a-uniunii-europene&catid=11%3Ahatározatok&Itemid=15&lang=ro)

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Appendices:

Appendix 1:



³⁶⁸ "Politica de coeziune 2007-2013," European Commission, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/atlas2007/fiche/ro_ro.pdf.



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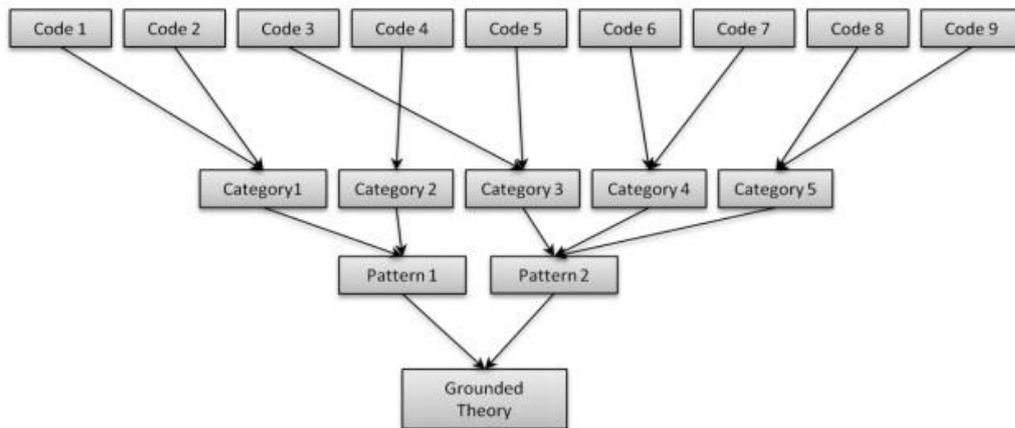
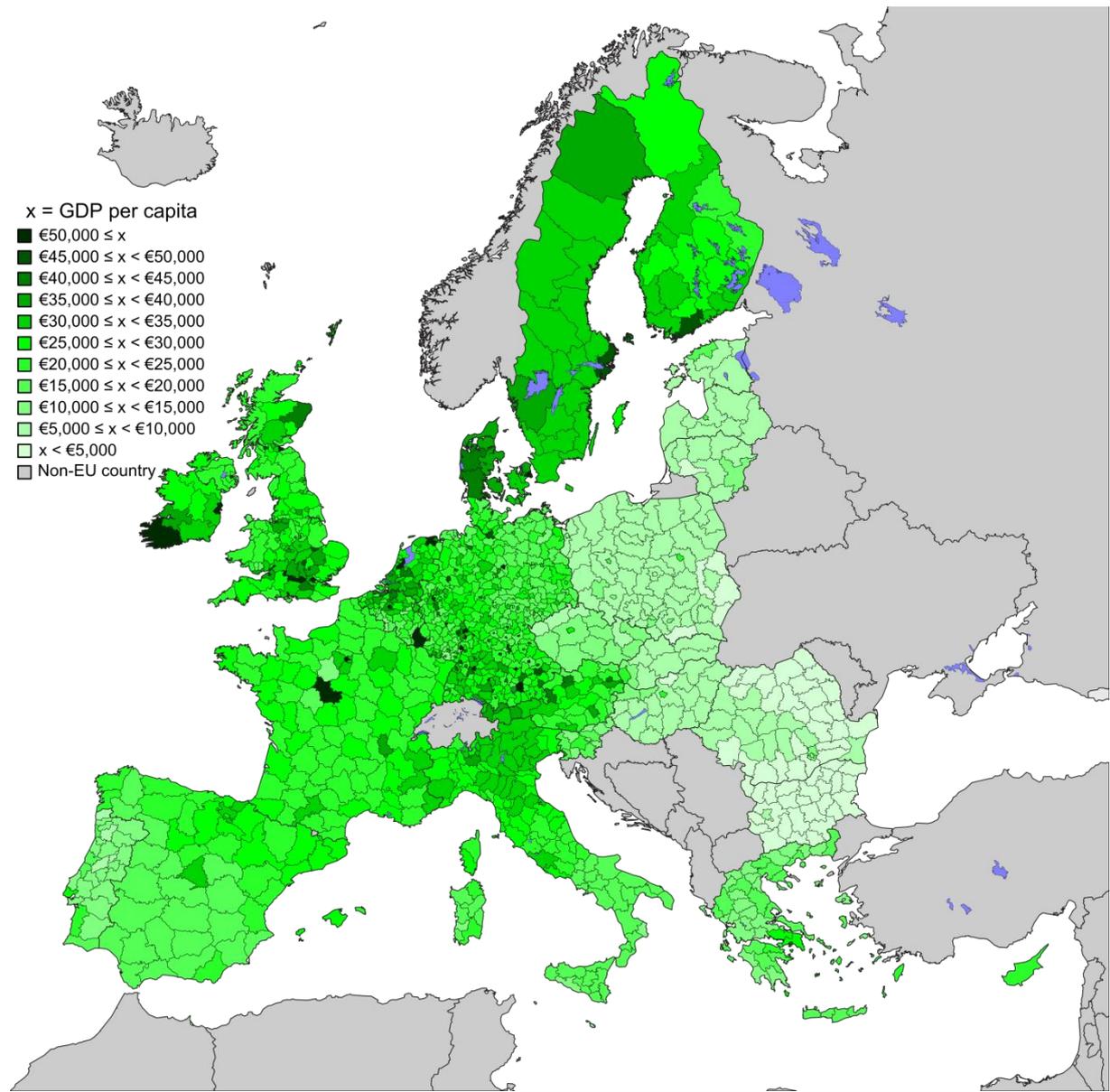


Figure 3: Workflow of Grounded Theory methodology

370

³⁶⁹ Mediere Net, "SNC supports the regionalisation only if "Szeklerland" is created."

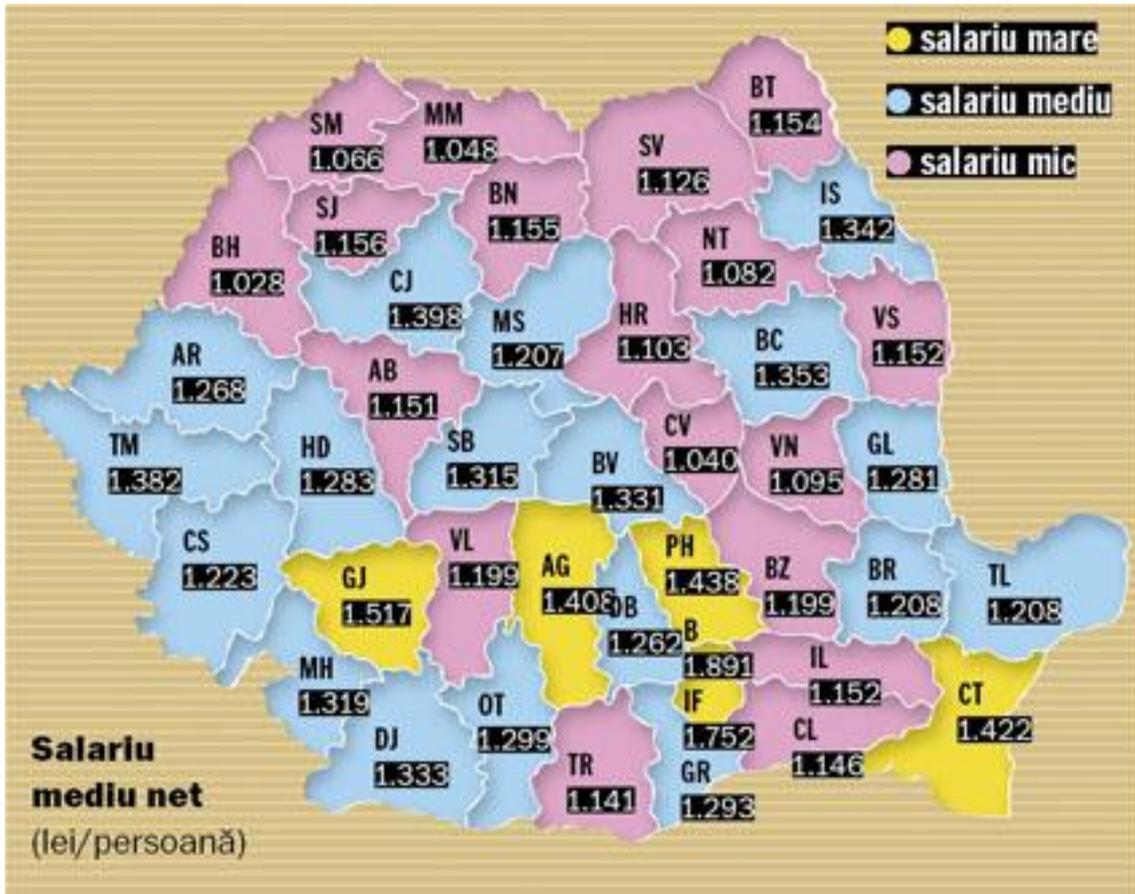
³⁷⁰ Khandkar, "Open Coding," 5.



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³⁷¹ “Map of GDP per capita in the EU in 2007 (NUTS 3),” Wikipedia Commons, [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Map_of_GDP_per_capita_in_the_EU_in_2007_\(NUTS_3\).png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/9/90/Map_of_GDP_per_capita_in_the_EU_in_2007_(NUTS_3).png).

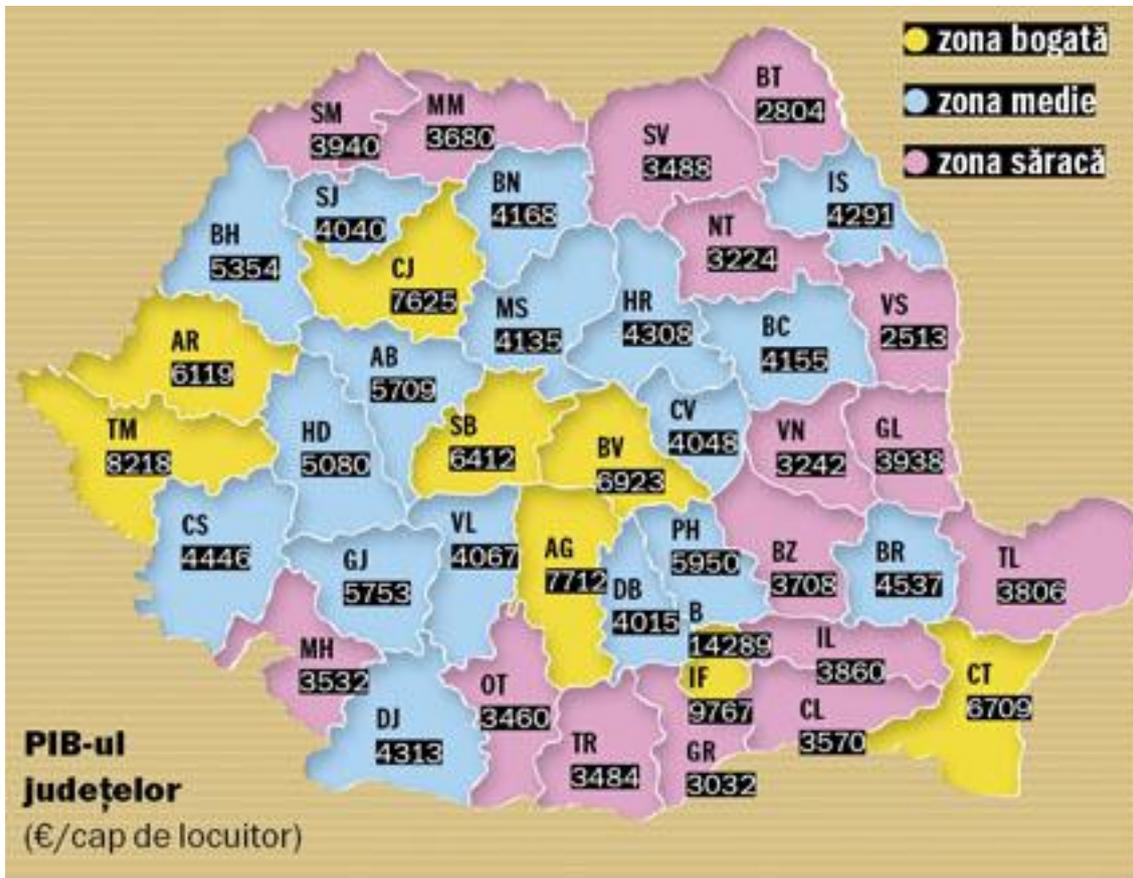
Average net salary:



372

³⁷² "Harta salariu," Romania libera, <http://www.romanalibera.ro/usr/imagini/2011/04/04/175338-hartasalriu.jpg>.

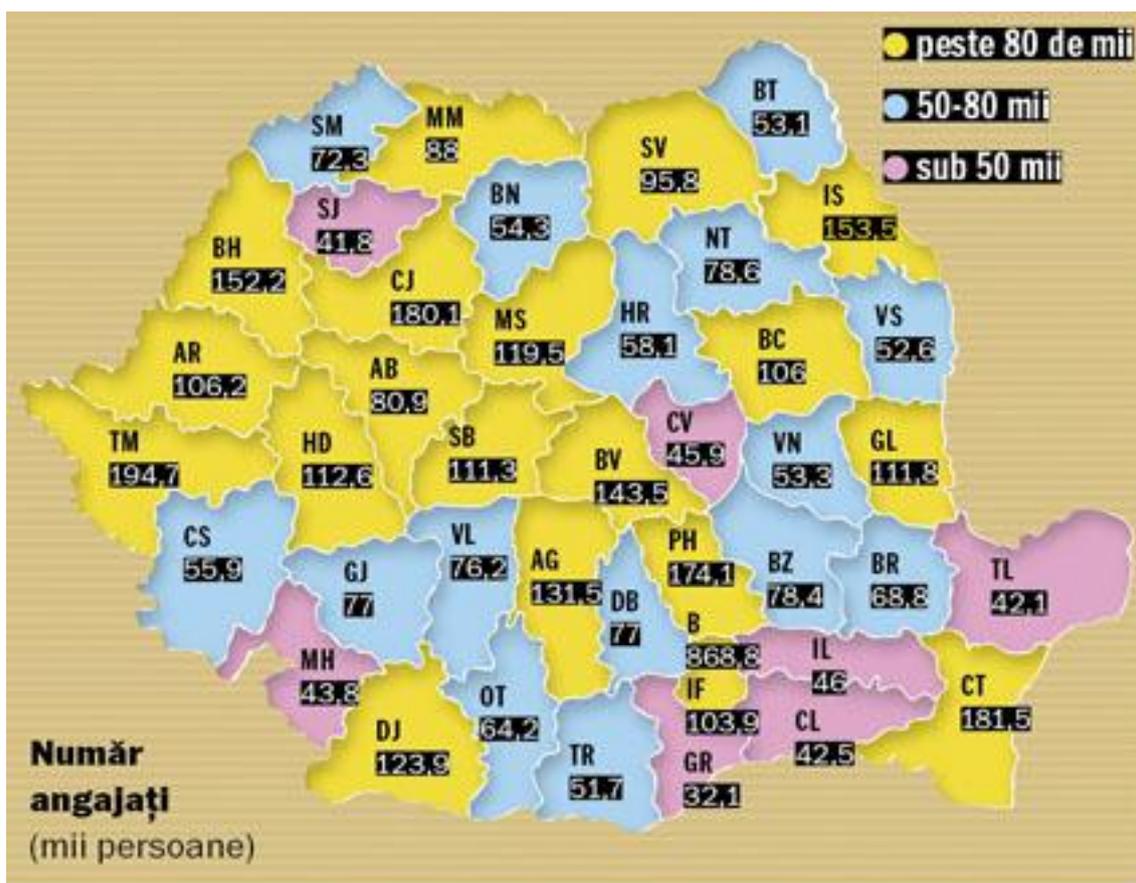
GDP Euros/capita:



373

³⁷³ "Harta PIB," Romania libera, <http://www.romanalibera.ro/usr/imagini/2011/04/04/175336-hartapib.jpg>.

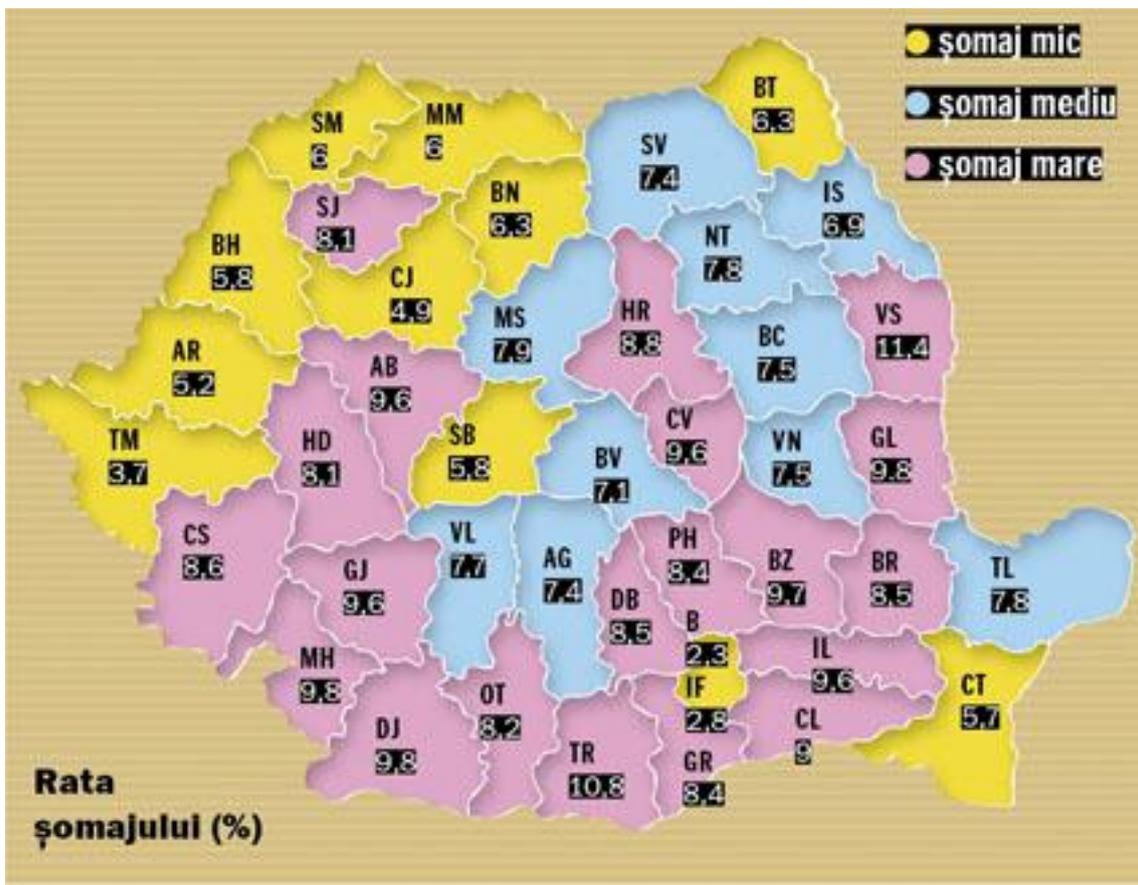
Number of employees/1000 people:



374

³⁷⁴ "Harta angajati," Romania libera, <http://www.romaniailibera.ro/usr/imagini/2011/04/04/175335-hartaangajati.jpg>.

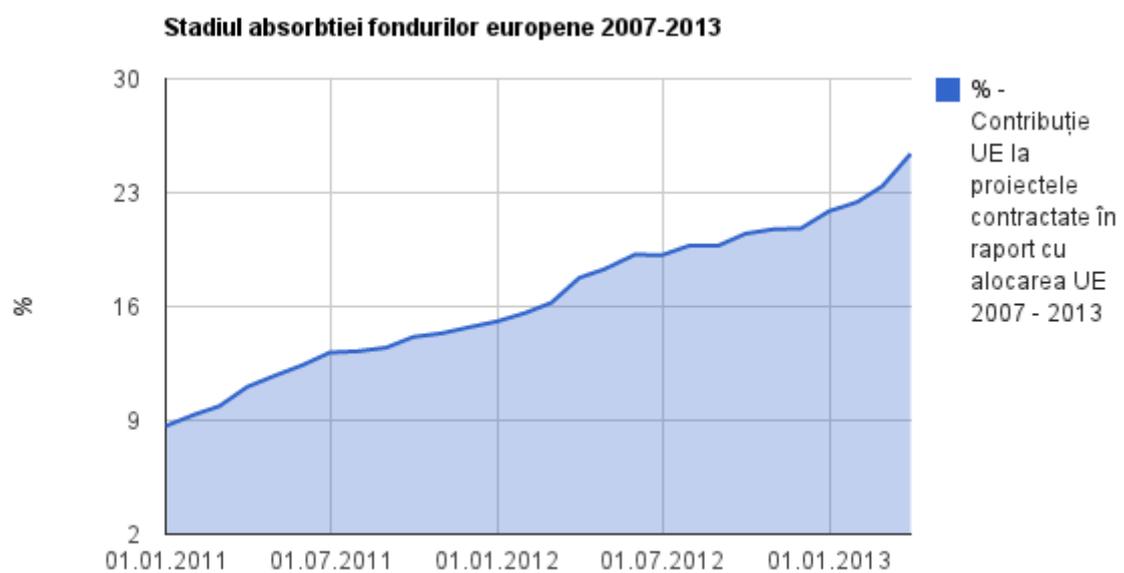
Per cent unemployment rate:



375

³⁷⁵ "Harta şomaj," Romania libera, <http://www.romanioliberal.ro/usr/imagini/2011/04/04/175339-hartasomaj.jpg>.

Appendix 9:



³⁷⁶ "EU Structural Instruments and absorption of EU funds in Romania," EU Finantare Info, http://www.eufinantare.info/Instrumente_structurale_UE.html.

Religion map:



378

³⁷⁸ “Europe religion map,” Wikipedia Commons, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/2/23/Europe_religion_map_en.png.

Appendix 12:



379

³⁷⁹ “Romania Historic regions,” Wikipedia,
http://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fi%C8%99ier:Romania_historic_regions.svg.

Source: "Yes Scotland," Facebook Page, <https://www.facebook.com/YesScotland>.



Will an independent Scotland be FINANCIALLY SECURE?

YES. SCOTLAND HAS MORE THAN £1 TRILLION OF OIL & GAS IN ITS WATERS, AND 25% OF EUROPE'S OFFSHORE RENEWABLES POTENTIAL

Yes <http://scoty.es/firmfoundations> #fairerfutures

380



A YES VOTE FOR INDEPENDENCE IN 2014 IS THE ONLY WAY TO GUARANTEE SCOTLAND'S FUTURE IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

"We will give the British people a referendum with a very simple in or out choice to stay in the EU on...new terms; or come out altogether. It will be an in/out referendum."

- David Cameron, Prime Minister

Yes <http://scoty.es/EUquestions> #factsnotfear

381

³⁸⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=551739944836920&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

³⁸¹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=556340637710184&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

ISN'T SCOTLAND SUBSIDISED BY THE UK?



NO. OVER THE PAST
30 YEARS, SCOTLAND
HAS CONTRIBUTED
£19 BILLION
OVER AND ABOVE
"ITS SHARE"

<http://scoty.es/wecanaffordit>

YesScotland

#FAIRERFUTURES

382

³⁸² <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=552098848134363&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

WESTMINSTER ISN'T WORKING

MORE THAN 20% OF
SCOTTISH CHILDREN
LIVE IN POVERTY.

IN COMPARABLE COUNTRIES
(NORWAY AND DENMARK)
THAT FIGURE IS ONLY 10%

 <http://scoty.es/yesSTUC>

#YESFAIRER

383

In an independent Scotland

Q. Will Scotland continue to be a member of the EU?

A. Scotland will not be forced out of the European Union. We will negotiate our terms of membership from within

 <http://scoty.es/EUquestions>

#factsnotfear

384

³⁸³ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=574300102580904&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

³⁸⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=550339468310301&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

SCOTLAND HAS ONE OF THE BEST SETS OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS OF ANY NATION IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD

SCOTLAND'S DEFICIT: 5.4%
WORLD'S 36 RICHEST ECONOMIES: 6.5%
AVERAGE G7 DEFICIT: 7.8%
UK DEFICIT: 8.5%

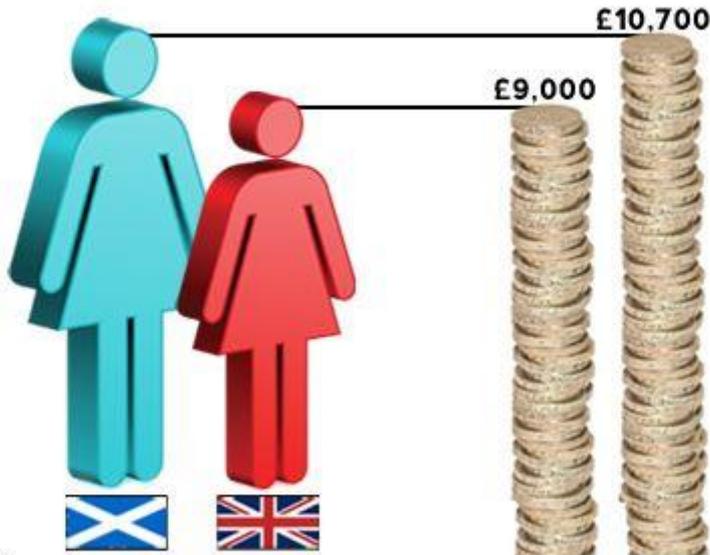


WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/YESSCOTLAND

#YESFAIRER

385

AVERAGE TAX GENERATED PER PERSON 2011/12



SCOTLAND MORE THAN PAYS ITS WAY



WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/YESSCOTLAND

#YESFAIRER

386

³⁸⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=580089788668602&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

³⁸⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=580604485283799&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

WESTMINSTER ISN'T WORKING



www.facebook.com/YesScotland

#womensday

387

WHAT SAVINGS COULD AN INDEPENDENT SCOTLAND MAKE?

WE WOULD NO LONGER HAVE TO PAY FOR WESTMINSTER. MPs, THE LORDS AND THE SCOTLAND OFFICE COST SCOTLAND £50,000,000 EVERY YEAR (THAT INCLUDES THEIR EXPENSES, OF COURSE)

Yes #FAIRERFUTURES

388

³⁸⁷ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=581016378575943&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

³⁸⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=556954687648779&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>



Scotland is one of the world's most energy-rich countries, yet 900,000 Scottish households face fuel poverty.

Yes

Source: Energy Action Scotland - <http://www.eas.org.uk/page.php?id=1664>

389

³⁸⁹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=536821022995479&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

SCOTLAND'S FINANCES ARE STRONGER THAN THE UK'S

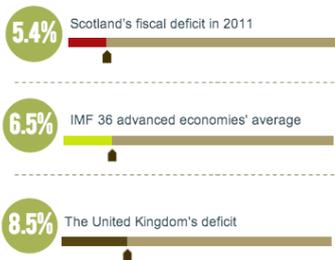
Government figures show that in 2011/12 Scotland's public finances were in better shape than the UK's. Scotland ran a current budget surplus in 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2008/09. The UK last ran a current budget surplus in 2001/02.

SCOTLAND HAS ONE OF THE BEST SETS OF NATIONAL ACCOUNTS OF ANY COUNTRY IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD

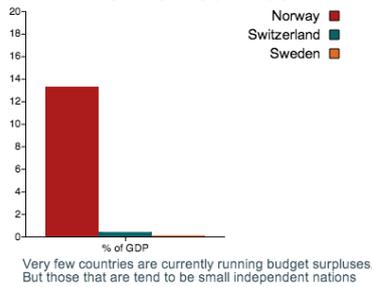


OUR LOW DEFICIT

IMF Comparison 2011 – Fiscal Deficits as % of Wealth (GDP)



WHO HAS A SURPLUS?



PUBLIC SPENDING AS % OF GDP



This means that Scotland is better able to afford public services than the UK



£12.6BN
Over the period 07/08 to 11/12 Scotland's finances were stronger than the UK's by £12.6 billion



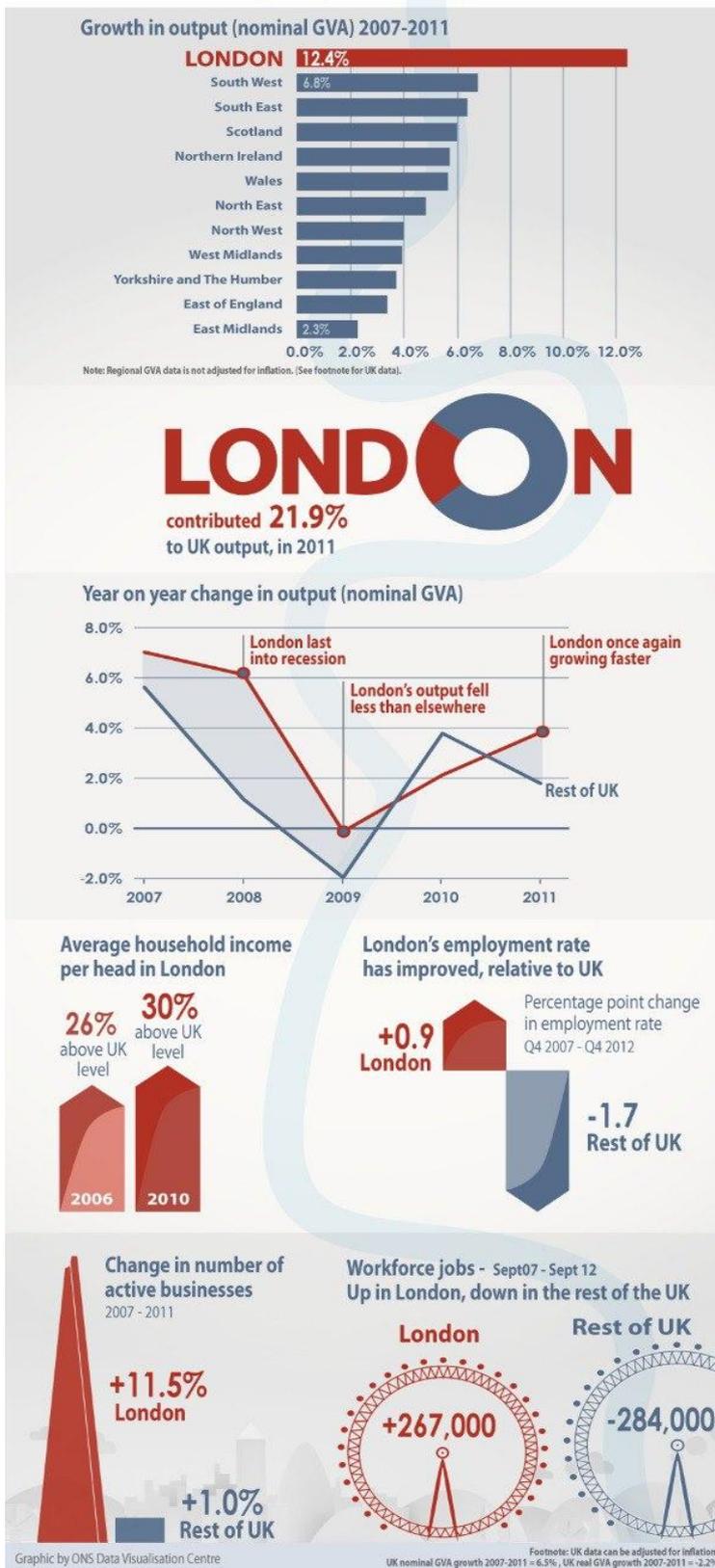
15% HIGHER
Scotland's wealth (or Gross Domestic Product) per head of population is 15% higher than the UK average



75% LOWER
In Scotland's first year as an independent country, our deficit is projected to be 75% lower than it was in 2010/2011

[Facebook.com/YesScotland](https://www.facebook.com/YesScotland/) / @YesScotland

London's economy outperforming the rest of the UK



391

³⁹¹ <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=584249158252665&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

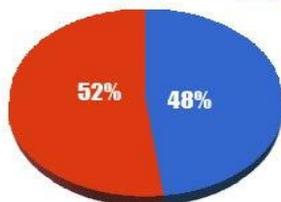
FROM THE IRAQ WAR TO THE BEDROOM TAX

WESTMINSTER ISN'T WORKING FOR SCOTLAND

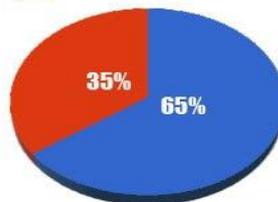
How MPs voted on the Iraq War

AMENDMENT TO IRAQ WAR MOTION, "CASE FOR WAR NOT ESTABLISHED"
~ 18TH MARCH 2003

■ AYE ■ No



Scotland's MPs



Westminster

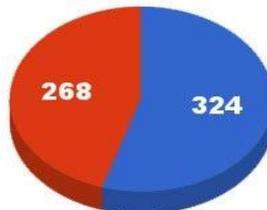
How MPs voted on the benefits cut

~ 8TH JAN 2013

■ voted in favour ■ voted against



Scotland's MPs



Westminster

How MPs voted on the Bedroom Tax

~ 21ST FEB 2013

■ voted in favour ■ voted against



Scotland's MPs



Westminster

Scotland's MPs voted against going to war in Iraq.....Westminster imposed it
Scotland's MPs voted against the benefits cut.....Westminster imposed it
Scotland overwhelmingly rejected the Bedroom TaxWestminster imposed it

**SCOTLAND OPPOSED THEM
WESTMINSTER IMPOSED THEM**



WWW.YESSCOTLAND.NET/QUESTIONS

#YES

392

³⁹² <https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=587542107923370&set=pb.410177615659821.-2207520000.1363972613&type=3&theater>

The MoD Isn't Working

We all acknowledge the commitment and dedication of our armed forces - and owe them a massive debt of gratitude. But what about those in charge?



MOD FAILING SCOTLAND

<p>1 Job cuts</p> <p>Between 2000 and 2012, there has been a 36% cut in defence personnel in Scotland compared to 20% across the UK</p>	<p>3 Broken promises</p> <p>Westminster promised that up to 7,000 troops would be redeployed to Scotland from Germany. Instead only 600 will be.</p>
<p>2 £7bn shortfall</p> <p>Over 10 years the MoD has spent £7 billion less in Scotland than our taxpayers contributed to the UK defence budget</p>	<p>4 £163 million</p> <p>The vast majority of Scots don't want Trident nuclear weapons - as shown by a recent poll but they cost us £163 million a year</p>

WHAT THEY SAY

"Our Armed Forces - admired across the world - have been overstretched, deployed too often without appropriate planning, with the wrong equipment, in the wrong numbers and without a clear strategy. In the past, unfunded spending pledges created a fundamental mismatch between aspiration and resources. This is the result of the failure to take the bold decisions needed to adjust our defence plans to face the realities of our ever changing world"

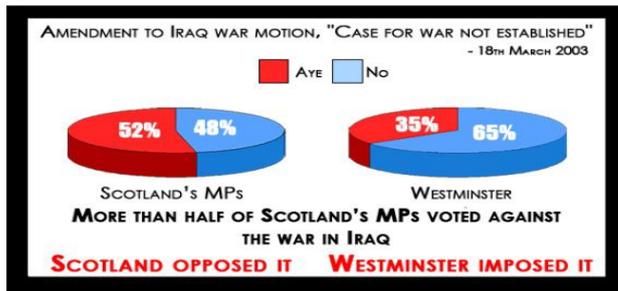
David Cameron and Nick Clegg - Foreword to the UK Strategic Defence and Security Review

"Generations of our troops are losing increased pension payments permanently. It is wrong that a man in his late 80s who jumped out of a landing craft at Normandy in 1944 is having his pension payments cut to pay for the Tories' economic policy. Our service personnel are being cut by 30,000. Those serving on the frontline have been sacked by email. War widows are losing hundreds of thousands over the course of their lifetimes. Morale is in freefall. With each passing day we know that our Forces and their families deserve better."

Jim Murphy, Shadow Defence Minister, speech to Labour party conference

WASTING MONEY

<p>Six years</p> <p>For the past six years, auditors have refused to sign off the MoD's accounts</p>	<p>£3.6bn wasted</p> <p>£3.6 billion spent on building Nimrod aircraft which were scrapped before completion</p>	<p>£6.6bn wasted</p> <p>Public Accounts Committee criticised the MoD for having £6.6bn of unused gear</p>
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Being independent means Scotland can make its own decisions about its defence and spending priorities - and will never again be dragged into a war it opposes

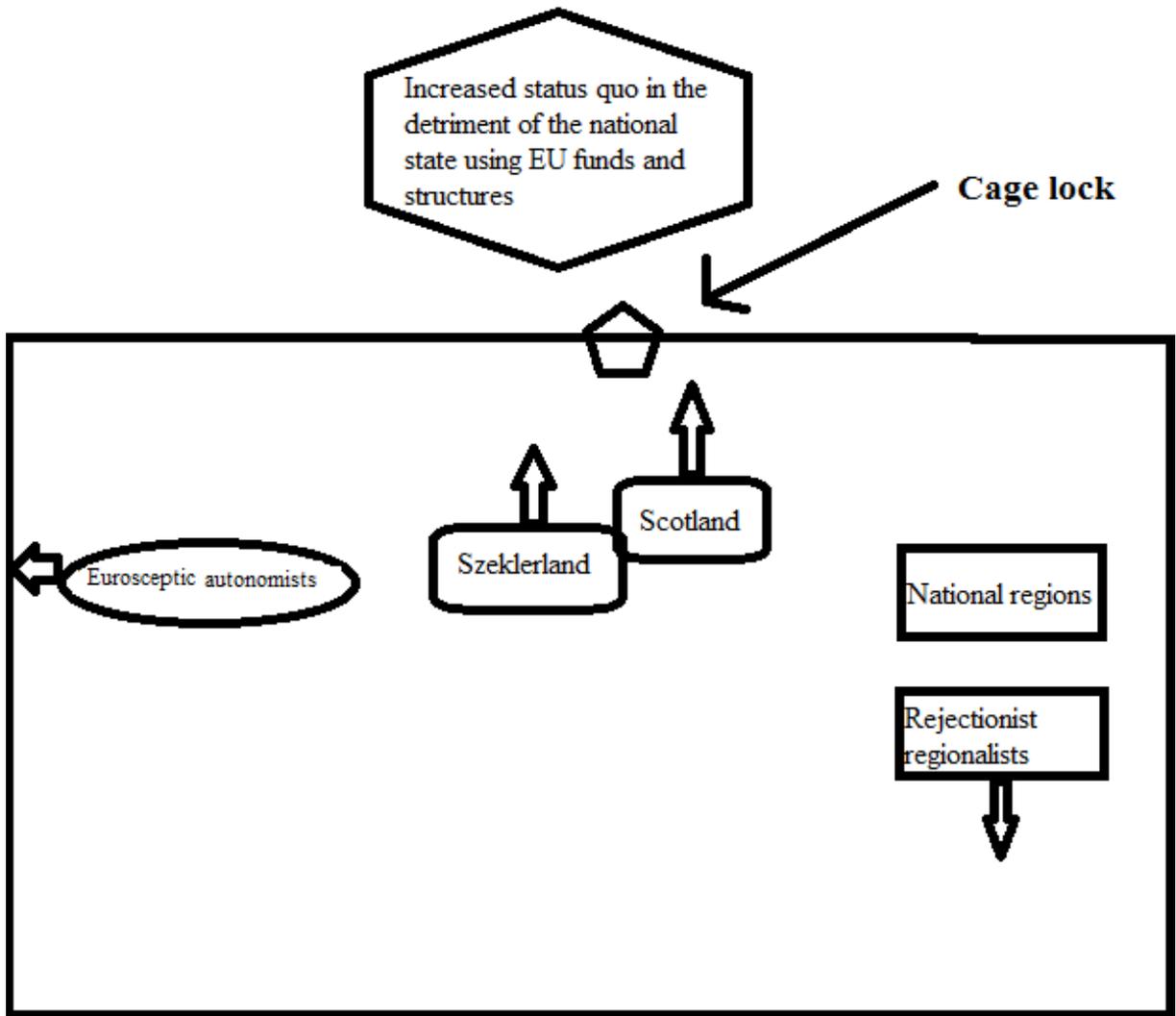
YesScotland

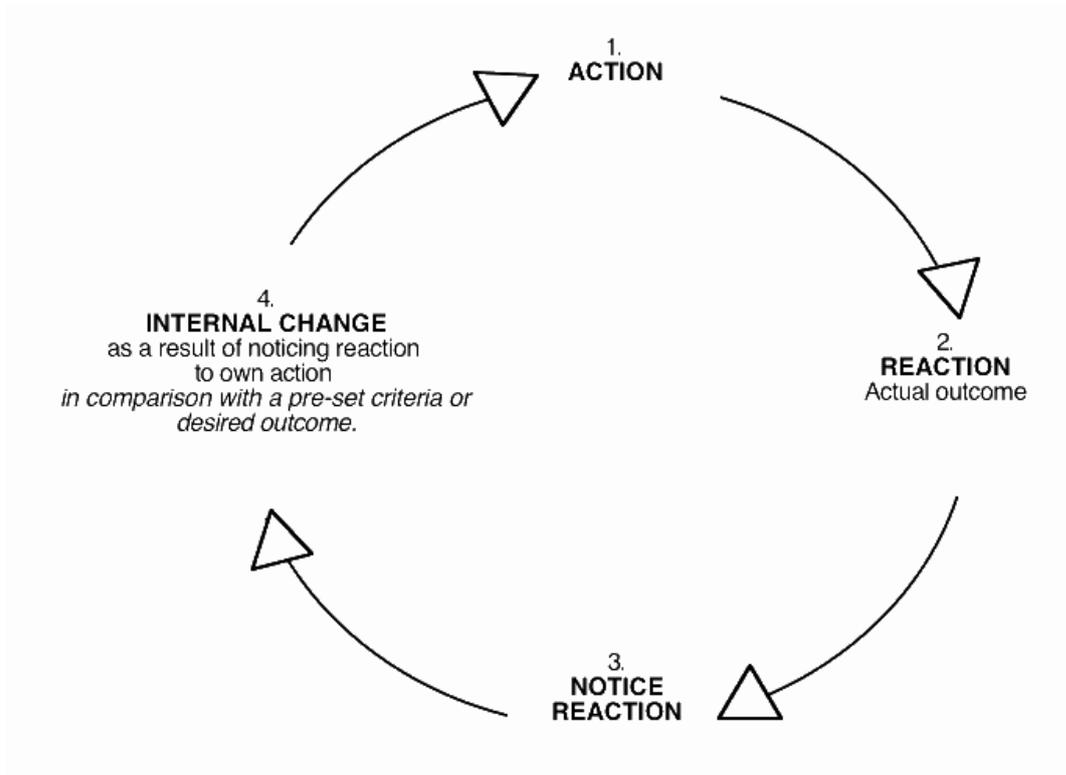
SCOTLAND'S SHARE OF TRIDENT'S ANNUAL RUNNING COST IS £163 MILLION. THAT MONEY COULD PAY TO:

- TRAIN 3,880 NURSES, OR
- TRAIN 4,527 TEACHERS, OR
- BUILD 13-20 PRIMARY SCHOOLS

(AND IT'S £250M IF WE INCLUDE THE TRIDENT REPLACEMENT COST)

Yes <http://scot.yesadifferentscotland> #YESFAIRER





³⁹⁴ “Feedback loops,” Cleanlanguage,
http://www.cleanlanguage.co.uk/articles/content_images/Feedback-loops-1.gif.