

Nordic (Minority) Autonomies and Territorial Management in Europe: Empowerment through Regionalisation?

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Abstract

The participation of traditional minority autonomies is seldom discussed in relation to territorial management in Europe. Yet, several traditional minorities and indigenous people enjoying autonomous powers participate in regional co-operation efforts. This article discusses the involvement of Greenland, the Faroe Islands and the Åland Islands in the development and co-operation of macro-regions. Regional co-operation has long been a corner stone of Europe's integration project, and macro-regions is the latest concept in the effort to strengthen regions economically in the wake of the onset of globalisation and indeed global economic crises. In contradistinction to the perceived notion of traditional minorities as conflict prone trouble-makers, it is argued that in the effort to maintain the peace and overcome persistent challenges common to both majorities and minorities, traditional minorities are increasingly pro-active and working for the survival of their autonomous regions. This is manifested, among other, in the manner in which they participate – albeit unevenly – in regional co-operation aimed at economic development and integration.

Keywords

minorities; regions; autonomy; regional co-operation; integration; Europe; Nordic

1. Introduction

Like in many parts of the world, Nordic policy-makers have been confronted with changes as a result of the globalisation of trade and market integration.¹ Amid the change and turbulence, regions² follow different paths. While some regions do relatively well, others are less successful. Territories with poor links

¹ Foreword to 'NORA Region, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland and Coastal Norway', OECD Territorial Reviews (OECD, 2011).

² "Region" refers in this paper to areas covering parts of several sovereign states, usually defined along the line of natural resources and distinct natural identities. Entities of sovereign states that hold various degrees of self-administration through federalisation, decentralisation or devolution are referred to as 'sub-state regions'. Entities of sovereign states inhabited by special rights minorities that hold collective self-government rights are referred to as "collective autonomies".

to the sources of prosperity, or afflicted by migration, and lagging behind with respect to infrastructure and private investment may find it difficult to keep up with the general trend. Central governments are no longer the sole provider of territorial policy, and the vertical distribution of power between the different tiers of government may shift and need to be reassessed. Decentralisation of fiscal resources may be needed, in order to better respond to the expectations of citizens and improve policy efficiency. Public authorities need to weigh up current challenges, evaluate the strategies pursued in recent years, and define new options. In Europe this has put the focus on regionalisation in terms of the meso level between the state and the local community both intra-state and inter-state.

Collective autonomies and identity groups, such as traditional minorities, are potential participants in the mobilisation towards European regionalisation through regional co-operation.³ If traditional minorities form the majority of a territorial sub-state region with collective autonomy rights, they can mobilise through their own self-governing institutions and on the basis of their collective identity.⁴ Smaller traditional minorities can participate in regional co-operation through representation in relevant institutions depending on the level of the implementation of the normative minority rights regime. Across Europe, smaller traditional minorities are able to participate through a plethora of diverse, formal and informal institutional arrangements.⁵ Either way, in such cases traditional minority identity informs the processes of regional co-operation.

A traditional minority⁶ refers to a group of people that has lived traditionally in a certain sub-state region for many years but who do not identify with the culture of the majority in power in the sub-state region or state.⁷ It refers to national and linguistic minorities defined by the territory where they live because they are long-established and rather fixed to that sub-state region which they see as their homeland. Indigenous peoples are not usually included in this category,

³ See discussion in M. Keating, 'Thirty Years of Territorial Politics', 301–2 *West European Politics* (2008) pp. 60–81.

⁴ M. Žagar, 'Diversity management and integration: From ideas to concepts', 6 *European Yearbook of Minority Issues* (2008) pp. 307–327.

⁵ M. Weller and K. Nobbs (eds.), *Political Participation of Minorities. A Commentary on International Standards and Practice* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2010).

⁶ The term autochthonous is also used to refer to this type of minority.

⁷ The definition of a minority remains contested. For legal discussions, see F. Capotorti, *Study on the Rights of Persons Belonging to Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities* (United Nations, 1979); J. Deschênes, 'Proposal concerning a Definition of the term "Minority"', UN Doc. E/CN.4/Sub.2/1985/31; and J. Packer, 'On the Definition of Minorities', in J. Packer and K. Myntti (eds.), *The Protection of Ethnic and Linguistic Minorities in Europe* (Institute for Human Rights, Turku/Åbo, 1995) pp. 23–65 as well as J. Packer, 'Problems in Defining Minorities', in D. Fottrell and B. Bowring (eds.), *Minority and Group Rights in the New Millennium* (Kluwer International Law, The Hague, 1999) p. 223. For an international relations discussion, see J. J. Preece, *National Minorities and the European Nation-States System* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1998) p. 28.

mainly due to legal specificities of international law,⁸ but from a political analysis perspective, they are often analysed together with autonomous traditional minorities. Either way the autonomous powers are territorially defined even if they are termed “non-territorial”, the difference being whether the minority has some “title” to the sub-state region or not. Traditional minorities with “title” usually constitute a majority in the “title” sub-state region and generally achieve autonomy on this basis, whereas minorities not in the majority but claiming belonging to a sub-state region may enjoy limited “non-territorial” autonomy in specific areas.

This article examines the participation of traditional minority collective autonomies in Nordic regional co-operation. Two collective autonomies in Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland, will be discussed. The Faroe Islands achieved home rule in 1948⁹ and expanded home rule in 2005,¹⁰ whereas Greenland achieved home rule (*hjemmestyre*) in 1979¹¹ and autonomy (*selvstyre*) in 2009,¹² the latter on the basis of the Danish government’s recognition of new international law standards.¹³ In addition, the collective autonomy of the Åland Islands, home to a Swedish speaking group in Finland, will be in focus. The Åland Islands achieved autonomy in 1920¹⁴ and received recognition of status under international law in 1921.¹⁵ Thus, of the three autonomies, Greenland and the Åland Islands enjoy international status. All three autonomies are located in regions that have intensified regional co-operation as a result of increased European integration. The geographic focus is European due to the emerging regionalisation of Europe through the European Union (EU), the Council of Europe and the

⁸) Indigenous peoples usually claim their rights in international law under different instruments than traditional minorities, and with the 2007 UN Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which does not cover traditional minorities, there is a clearly legal distinction between the two types of groups.

⁹) Law No. 137 on Home Rule for the Faroe Islands (Lov om Færøernes Hjemmestyre) of 23 March 1948.

¹⁰) In 2005, the government of the Faroe Island and the government of the Kingdom of Denmark agreed on a new negotiated settlement that is composed of two new arrangements, which in concert establish full internal self-government as well as a certain degree of external self-government. This settlement is not seen or understood to be an exercise or replacement of the right of full self-determination. Website of Foreign Service of the Faroe Islands, <www.mfa.fo/Default.aspx?ID=6622>, visited 30 July 2012.

¹¹) Law No. 577 on Home Rule for Greenland (Lov om Grønlands Hjemmestyre) of 29 November 1978.

¹²) Law No. 473 on Autonomy for Greenland (Lov om Grønlands Selvstyre) of 12 June 2009. The term “home rule” was borrowed from the Irish independence movement.

¹³) The difference between home rule (*hjemmestyre*) and autonomy (*selvstyre*) is explained in the legislation as the recognition by the Danish government of the equality of the people of Greenland as a people under international law.

¹⁴) S. Spiliopoulou Åkermark (ed.), ‘Constitutions, Autonomies, and the EU’, 3 *Report from the Åland Islands Peace Institute* (2008).

¹⁵) Decision of the Council of the League of Nations at its 14th meeting on 24 June 1921, *League of Nations Official Journal*, p. 697.

Council of Nordic Ministers' policies on territorial management aimed at territorial cohesion in Europe. The aim of the examination is to assess the degree to which these collective autonomies have been able to use their competences in adjusting to the changes and challenges of the 21st century brought on by globalisation, European integration and regionalisation. This will assist minority research in evaluating whether these autonomy arrangements have been successful in terms of a post-modern view of self-determination and empowerment that sees traditional minorities as a 21st century phenomenon; a phenomenon that sheds the perceived notion of minorities as conflict prone trouble makers.

2. Traditional Minorities as Actors

Two aspects of minority research need clarification. First, minority research on traditional minorities has only recently begun to focus on the regional co-operation aspect.¹⁶ This is because heretofore research has identified the macro-level perspective in terms of government devolving power to minorities to live separate lives.¹⁷ On this notion, traditional minorities are perceived as staying out of politics except for those areas which pertain to their own affairs, affairs usually interpreted as minority education and culture.¹⁸ Although Article 15 of

¹⁶ Exceptions to this statement include M. Keating, *The New Regionalism of Western Europe: Territorial Restructuring and Political Change* (Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, 1998); M. Keating and J. McGarry (eds.), *Minority Nationalism and the Changing International Order* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001); M. Klatt, *Fra modspil til medspil?: grænseoverskridende samarbejde i Sønderjylland-Schleswig 1945–2005* (Institut for Grænseregionsforskning, Aabenraa, 2006); T. H. Malloy, 'Forging Territorial Cohesion in Diversity: Are National Minorities Promoting Fourth-Level Integration?' in M. Weller, D. Blacklock and K. Nobbs (eds.), *The Protection of Minorities in the Wider Europe* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008) pp. 54–91. Ironically, with the prominence that traditional minority sub-state regions have played in Europe's history, policy-making on the management of regions in Europe has never addressed the existence of traditional minorities. See also S. Stephan, 'Regional voices in the European Union – regions with legislative power and multi-level governance. Perspectives for the Åland Islands', 1 *Report from the Åland Islands Peace Institute* (2010); E. Cheney, 'The Impact of European Integration on Minority Nationalist Mobilisation in France' (2009 unpublished PhD thesis on file with author); T. Ahmed, *The Impact of EU Law on Minority Rights* (Hart Publishing, Oxford, 2011).

¹⁷ M. Suksi, *Autonomy, Applications and Implications* (Kluwer International Law, The Hague, 1998); C. Brölmann, M. Zieck and R. Lefebvre (eds.), *Peoples and Minorities in International Law* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Dordrecht, 1993); J. Castellino, *International Law and Self-Determination* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, The Hague, 2000), H. Hannum, *Autonomy, Sovereignty and Self-Determination: The Accommodation of Conflicting Rights*, 2nd edition (University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 1996); T. D. Musgrave, *Self-Determination of National Minorities* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997).

¹⁸ The view was reinforced in 2005 after the local election where the Danish minority Party, SSW, was invited to join coalition talks with the major winner of the election, SPD. The public debate included references to the votes of the members of the SSW as not holding the same

the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities calls for involving national minorities in regional development plans, this provision is nevertheless confined to "plans and programmes likely to affect them directly".¹⁹ Notwithstanding that all members of society tend to participate primarily in political affairs that affect them directly, the explanation of Article 15 does not define what is meant by affairs affecting minorities directly. The paternalistic phrasing contributes to the view that minorities are only concerned with matters related to their culture and education, because it is their cultural identity which provides for the special rights granted.²⁰ However, in the 21st century of globalisation and rapid change, the survival of traditional minorities requires engagement in all areas of public affairs. Survival of group identities is dependent not only on culture and education but also on the preservation of the homeland, the environment, and the economic prosperity of the homeland sub-state region, among other. Therefore, traditional minorities act on issues in the same manner as majorities.

Secondly, as the focus of minority research has been on the protection of minority identity, it has overlooked minority action. In so doing, traditional minorities have been analysed as objects of law rather than subjects of society.²¹ Not seeing traditional minorities as subjects prevents seeing them as actors. By participating in regional co-operation, they are actors on policy in addition to being objects of law. Like all political actors, they look for diversified and integrated tools. If the tools do not exist, actors will notice, and in the absence of government engagement, actors may create the political environment needed for developing the required tools. This is commonly seen in territorial management in the EU where subsidiarity provides a basis for redefinition of local development strategies. Subsidiarity may have created the institutional framework, but competition for development creates the spaces for politics, be it development for improvement or for prosperity. If traditional minorities see opportunities to influence development on their terms and in their autonomous sub-state region, they mobilise independently or in co-operation with elite actors. This is seen with regard to a number of traditional minorities in autonomous

moral value as those of the other parties because the SSW is exempted from the 5 per cent threshold to enter the local parliament, the *Landtag*. In the 2012 election, the SSW was in the same position, however, with better luck. The SSW is now in coalition with the governing parties, and it holds one cabinet post. Nevertheless, during the election campaign, the 2005 rhetoric reappeared on the scene several times.

¹⁹ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Explanatory Report, ETS 157 of February 1995, Section 80.

²⁰ T. H. Malloy, 'Convergence in European Policy Making: What Do Article 15 (FCNM) and the EU Regional Policy Have in Common?', 23 *ECMI Issue Brief* (European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, 2010).

²¹ T. H. Malloy, 'National Minorities in the 21st Century Europe: New Discourses, New Narratives?', 23 *ECMI Issue Brief* (European Centre for Minority Issues, Flensburg, 2010).

entities as well as non-autonomous ones.²² Traditional minorities need, therefore, to be assessed as independent actors in territorial management at the regional level.

3. Multi-Directional Management

Territorial management rests on a number of assumptions about multiplication. With regard to the EU territory, multi-level governance is based on the subsidiarity principle which assumes that decisions are taken at the level where they are relevant. Multi-national power exchange based on member state status assumes that central governments represent the joint decision-making power. Increasingly a multi-actor approach based on intra-state sub-state regional decentralisation is assumed. Multi-identity is thus assumed and promoted based on territorial alignment and empowerment. However, scholars have questioned the mono-directional understanding of the EU polity-building as flawed in terms of seeing the power exchange as *ex post* from supra-to-state-to-sub-state region. Sub-state regions are not only implementing policies, they are also mobilising around their own ideas of polity-design. Mobilising sub-state regions of all types seek to influence EU polity-building *ex ante* by creating new spaces for politics that empower public and private actors alike. The mono-directional paradigm is in fact multi-directional involving centre-periphery vertical power exchanges. I term this phenomenon multi-directional management (MDM).

The argument for seeing traditional minorities and collective autonomies as actors in regional co-operation is based on a new research framework for re-examining Europeanization processes.²³ Studying “EU political capacity” in terms of both a social construction and a resource for regional actors in developing their strategies of engagement, the new research framework argues that since existing institutional dimensions have been extensively studied with mixed results through the lens of “multi-level governance”, research has been unable to go beyond deterministic approaches and find new ways of understanding the relationship between European integration and regional governance.²⁴ The new framework therefore focuses on processes of change as exemplified in regional *ex post* and *ex ante* strategies of EU engagement based on interactions between formal and informal policy-making, as well as on identity construction and

²²) Most notably, traditional minority institutions from, *inter alia*, Cornwall, Brittany, Corsica, Schleswig-Holstein, Galizia, the Basque country, Denmark, Friesland, Scotland and Catalonia have mobilised through the European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament. The Åland party, Åland's Future, is also a member.

²³) C. Carter and R. Pasquier, “The Europeanization of Regions as “Spaces for Politics”: A Research Agenda”, 20:3 *Regional and Federal Studies* (2010) pp. 295–314.

²⁴) *Ibid.*, pp. 306–307.

ideologies about EU polity-building. Representations of territory are thus at the core of this agenda.

The new research framework puts emphasis on four political processes of change. First, the analysis of the politicisation of regional territory involves studying regional actors and the way in which they use the notion of the sub-state region's territory in their strategies. Of importance is to describe territorial ideologies as well as linkages to EU integration while also identifying other types of European inter-dependence. Describing both actors and visions provides the researcher with opportunities to identify new dynamics of both *ex post* and *ex ante* strategies for regional EU integration and ultimately for assessing regional EU capacity.²⁵ Secondly, the existence and application of ideologies of EU polity-design in regional governance means that regional actors may hold "a certain vision of the integration project, albeit a latent (and contested) one" and consequently projected Europeanization might be facilitated by an imagined understanding of the effects of European integration.²⁶ Questioning whether regional actors have such a vision about the common good of EU integration, or whether they see it as a problem,²⁷ exposes the extent to which regional strategies are a result of *ex post* or *ex ante* processes and whether *ex ante* processes are based on the existence of an ideological drive.

Thirdly, the process of mediation through the forging and mobilisation of intra-regional networks in which actors develop a vision for future development strategies may also explain how policy makers adapt to social and economic changes. Questioning whether actors seek greater empowerment in the overall EU integration process, as distinct from within specific policy areas, may be discerned through the study of variables, including networks and partnerships between local governments, socio-economic actors, as well as interest and industry organisations in various policy fields.²⁸ Questions to answer are whether these linkages merely problematize regional development and/or seek to legitimise their own position through references to territory. And fourthly, inter-governmental arenas as well as the set of rules and policy procedures which shape inter-actions between sub-state regions and central governments determine actor's choices.²⁹ Relevant is how these actors may influence EU processes within member states in terms of formal and informal co-operation, and how power is assigned not only through delegation of competences but through patterns of regulation. The issue of territory is again here relevant.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 307–308.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 308–309.

²⁷ C. Jeffery, 'Sub-national Mobilization and European Integration: Does it make any difference?', 38:1 *Journal of Common Market Studies* (2002) pp. 1–23.

²⁸ Local actor capacity-building includes a variety of types of representative actors, such as local administrations, political parties, trade unions, cultural movements, environmental associations and other interest groups as well as firms.

²⁹ Carter and Pasquier, *supra* note 22, pp. 309–310.

In most European countries traditional minorities are seen as cultural movements seeking to preserve their cultural heritage through cultural action, such as education, sports and entertainment, but increasingly they also seek influence in other sectors of society.³⁰ And in the case of collective autonomies, this aim is part and parcel of the *raison d'être* of collective autonomy survival. The new research framework thus provides tools for the study of the participation of collective autonomies and traditional minorities in regional co-operation aimed at development.³¹ In particular, this is because of the focus on local actor capacity building in relation to mobilisation towards new institutionalisations of regional governance rather than on existing institutional dimensions. Of particular interests are new modes of regional co-operation that have sprung up with the changes brought on by globalisation and European integration. Before analysing new modes of regional co-operation, a brief overview of the developments in territorial management in Europe is offered in the next section.

4. Territorial Management in Europe

The integration of sub-state regions started basically with the establishment by the European Economic Community (EEC) of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in 1975. Like many of the instruments of territorial integration, the ERDF aimed to redress the regional imbalances that were perceived an obstacle to continental development. It operated at the project level and remains today one of the main instruments of the EU's Regional Policy. With the arrival of Greece, Spain and Portugal as members, a need arose to focus on structure in addition to the imbalances. The 1986 Single Act set the stage for what became the Structural Funds through the adoption of the Cohesion Policy. The Cohesion Policy began the process towards the involvement of regional actors and the introduction of the principle of subsidiarity.

Parallel to this process the Council of Europe also adopted instruments in support of regional integration based on subsidiarity. The 1980 European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities, also known as the Madrid Convention, aimed to achieve a greater

³⁰ The Danish-Frisian political party in Schleswig-Holstein, the Südschleswiger Wählerverband (SSW), is an example of a minority party which has reformed its political programme from addressing mainly minority rights and protection to including in its platform regional aspects of politics, such as the environment and economic development. See 'Competence Analysis: Minorities as Standortfaktor in the German-Danish border region. Working with each other, for each other' (European Academy and Schleswig-Holstein Landtag, Bolzano-Bozen/Kiel, 2007).

³¹ T. H. Malloy, 'Creating New Spaces for Politics? The Role of National Minorities in Building Capacity of Cross-border Regions', 20:3 *Regional and Federal Studies* (2010) pp. 335–351. See also Malloy, *supra* note 15.

unity between the members of the Council of Europe and to promote inter-state co-operation.³² It set the stage for the establishment of the so-called Euro-regions aimed at institutionalising cross-border co-operation through contracts and agreements. There are currently 109 Euro-regions listed in the EU alone.³³ Euro-regions are not legal entities and do not hold any political power except for the power of its member units. Most implement objectives through externally funded projects often EU instruments, such as the INTERREG. Many have established assemblies or annual conferences through which goals and objectives are set. Most have small secretariats funded by the member units. Traditional minorities participate in Euro-regions throughout Europe either as members, observers or by implementing projects.

The Council of Europe's 1985 Charter of Local Self-Government aims to achieve a greater unity between member states for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles of their common heritage.³⁴ The Charter proposes agreements in the administrative field and at the local level because local authorities are seen as the main foundations of democratic societies, and because the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that Council of Europe member states should share. More importantly, local self-government is seen as a right that is best exercised at the local level because the existence of local authorities with real responsibilities can provide an administration which is both effective and close to the citizen. Thus, safeguarding and reinforcing local self-government was seen as an important contribution to the construction of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and the decentralisation of power. Of course, the Charter presupposed the existence of local authorities endowed with democratically constituted decision-making bodies and possessing a degree of autonomy with regard to their responsibilities, such as the self-governance of the Nordic collective autonomies. The Charter resulted in the establishment of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe (CLRAE) in 1994 which monitors the implementation of the instrument. None of the Nordic collective autonomies discussed in this paper have seats or observer status in the CLRAE.

The 1992 Maastricht Treaty and the inclusion of the principle of subsidiarity in the Treaty gave the impetus to the member states to make sure that all territorial levels of Europe become more autonomous in EU decision-making.³⁵ The subsidiarity principle holds that decisions are taken as close as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made as to whether action at Community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at state, sub-state or

³²) *CETS* 106 of 21 May 1980.

³³) For a list of Euro-regions, see < www.euregio.nrw.de/links.html >, visited 30 July 2012.

³⁴) *CETS* 122 of 15 October 1985.

³⁵) Now the Treaty on European Union (TEU). The Maastricht Treaty was signed on 7 February 1992.

local level. Specifically, it is the principle whereby the Union does not take action except in the areas which fall within its exclusive competence and in so far that it is more effective than action taken at state, sub-state or local level. It is closely connected to the principles of proportionality and necessity, which require that any action by the Union should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the objectives of the Treaty. The inclusion of the principle of subsidiarity in the Treaty was to some extent a reaction to the debate on the “democratic deficit” in the EU. Although the jury is still out on this, subsequent treaties have adopted other measures to eliminate the deficit,³⁶ and if the political integration project is indeed sincere, the EU will likely have to continue to address the deficit for years to come.

At the same time as the Maastricht Treaty was negotiated in Brussels, a separate inter-governmental initiative was being negotiated in the Alpine region. The Alpine Convention was opened for signatures in 1991 and entered into force in 1995.³⁷ It comprises the Alpine states of Austria, Germany, France, Italy, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Slovenia and Switzerland. The EU is now also party to the Convention. The Alpine Convention has identified a number of areas of priority and set a number of objectives, including mainly issues related to the physical protection and promotion of the mountains of the Alps. The Alpine Convention does address culture and identity in Article 2(2)(a) which holds that the parties to the Convention

shall take appropriate measures in particular in the ... [area of] population and culture the objective is to respect, preserve and promote the cultural and social independence of the indigenous population and to guarantee the basis for their living standards, in particular environmentally sound settlement and economic development, and promote mutual understanding and cooperation between Alpine and extra Alpine populations.³⁸

Moreover, a Declaration on “Population and Culture” was adopted in 2006 declaring that the parties to the Convention are “committed to preserving and promoting cultural diversity in the Alps as well as to building bridges and fostering dialogue between cultures”.³⁹ The Alpine Convention was the first macro-type region institutionalised in Europe without being called a macro-region. It is an

³⁶ Most recently Article 11 of the TEU, a civil society dialogue provision that entitles no less than one million citizens who are nationals of a significant number of member states to take the initiative of inviting the European Commission, within the framework of its powers, to submit any appropriate proposal on matters where citizens consider that a legal act of the Union is required for the purpose of implementing the Treaties.

³⁷ Framework Convention of 7 November 1991, *see* <www.alpconv.org/en/convention/default.aspx>, visited 30 July 2012.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Declaration on “Population and Culture” of November 2006, Preamble, second paragraph.

initiative which has seen the involvement of the collective autonomous sub-state region of the Province of Bolzano-Bozen (South Tyrol) which is home to the traditional minority of German-speakers in Italy.

The Maastricht Treaty also established the Committee of the Regions in 1994 which is an advisory body to the EU legislative and executive institutions. Much was expected from this body, but its limited powers did not provide much impetus for power exchange, and with the exception of the traditional minority collective autonomies, such as Scotland and the Åland Islands, there seems no intentions of including smaller traditional minorities in the Committee.⁴⁰ The Committee is a good example of the deterministic view of multilevel governance as a top-down process that reaches out to sub-state regions rather than a forum for bottom-up influence. The emphasis is on institutionalised level-politics and *ex post* processes as opposed to *ex ante* co-operation. The powers of the Committee have been strengthened somewhat with subsequent treaties, and with the (reformed) Lisbon Treaty the need to hear the Committee in policy processes has been mainstreamed into EU policy-making. It is still, however, too early to consider it a power exchange tool, and it remains to be seen how traditional minorities can use this instrument.

Another macro-type region involving traditional minorities was conceptualised by the Nordic Council of Ministers in 1996. The so-called NORA Region (North Atlantic Co-operation),⁴¹ which is an inter-governmental organisation under the Nordic Council of Ministers, includes the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, and Coastal Norway.⁴² The NORA members are associated by their geographical location and by shared characteristics, common challenges and historical, institutional and cultural links. NORA's goal is to contribute to the creation of a vital and dynamic North Atlantic region, characterised by a strong and sustainable economy. To reach this goal, NORA supports collaboration between businesses and research and development organisations in the region. NORA's main objectives and focus areas are set out in NORA's strategic programme. The Nordic Council of Ministers finances NORA, supplemented by grants from the member countries. The NORA committee, which is comprised of 12 members, three from each of the four members of the NORA Region, decides the main focus areas for NORA's activities. These focus areas are set out in multiple-year strategic programmes. NORA's main secretariat is located in Tórshavn, the Faroe Islands.

⁴⁰ Keating, *supra* note 15, p. 72. The nature of the membership of the Committee is determined by each member state according to its adopted system of territorial division.

⁴¹ See <www.nora.fo/en/index.php?pid=76>.

⁴² The nine coastal counties of Norway, from Finnmark in the north to Rogaland in the south, and Svalbard. The archipelago of Svalbard is a region of the Kingdom of Norway which does not have autonomy but is endowed with certain rights of demilitarisation, according to the Svalbard Treaty of 9 February 1920.

The 2000 Lisbon Strategy aimed at improving Europe's competitive advantage *vis-a-vis* the United States but was not initially a tool to strengthen regional development. Only later was the regional aspect seen as a contributing factor in this goal, or rather lack thereof. The Strategy introduced the idea of a knowledge-based economy as opposed to the traditional production based structure, and innovation was to be a main tool. Eventually, the Strategy became focused primarily on sustainable growth and employment thus derailing the Strategy from its original focus. This may have been caused by the fact that many sub-state regions still had not developed into areas of sustainable growth and full employment motors. Traditional minorities and collective autonomies were not seen as independent actors in this Strategy. The Strategy was a ten year strategy and has now been supplanted by the so-called Europe 2020 Strategy, titled Europe's Growth and Jobs Agenda, which aims at smart, sustainable, inclusive growth. It remains to be seen if collective autonomies and traditional minorities are able to become relevant for the inclusive aim of this Strategy.

The implementation of the principle of subsidiarity may have received the strongest impetus with the 2006 adoption of the European Grouping of Territorial Co-operation (EGTC).⁴³ This is a little known instrument, and it was not well received initially by the member states because the EGTC invites sub-state regions to form legal entities across sovereign borders. The idea of the European Commission was, however, that EGTCs would be more flexible to deal with the issues of economic and regional development. The main obstacle to sub-state regions that wish to enter into EGTC is the constitutionality of the legal instrument. Some have overcome this. As of February 2012 there exist 15 EGTCs in the EU.⁴⁴ EGTCs have numerous aims, including culture and cultural heritage protection. A number of traditional minority sub-state regions are participating in EGTCs, for instance the Province of Bolzano, smaller minorities in the Danube Region, in the Gorizia EGTC and in one named Gallizia/Portugal. There are no EGTCs in Scandinavia as yet.

In 2007, the EU consolidated a number of policy areas and fostered a full blown Regional Policy to replace the various policies on cohesion. With the three specific objectives of (1) convergence focusing of the least developed sub-state regions, (2) regional competitiveness and employment, and (3) territorial co-operation which focuses on cross-border sub-state regions, the Regional Policy budget for 2007–2013 constitutes more than one third of the EU's overall budget, or some EUR 347 billion.⁴⁵ Of this, 24 per cent towards innovation, 22 per cent each towards

⁴³ Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC), *Official Journal L* 210 of 31 July 2006.

⁴⁴ For a list of EGTCs, see <www.interact-eu.net/egtc/egtc/30/16>.

⁴⁵ 35.7 per cent. See <ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/funding/index_en.cfm>, visited 30 July 2012.

transport and human resources, 19 per cent towards environment and 13 per cent towards other sectors. The Regional Policy budget is dispensed through the three main instruments, the EDF, the European Social Fund, and the Cohesion Fund. Clearly, traditional minorities benefit from these funds, especially through the INTERREG programme. However, there is no strategic or deliberate aim of the Regional Policy to target traditional minorities or collective autonomies. Granted there is no competence provision in EU law to programme traditional minority involvement in regional policies, and although Article 2 of the (reformed) Lisbon Treaty provides for respecting the rights of persons belonging to minorities, this wording restricts action to normative initiatives under the competences of the Justice and Home Affairs.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, traditional minorities are able to participate in the management of the INTERREG funds through representation in local INTERREG commissions.⁴⁷

Finally, the latest approach in the EU to regionalisation of territorial management is the so-called macro-region. Macro-regions are strictly speaking meso-size and meso-level in terms of EU integration, if one sees the central EU institutions and member states as the macro level and local institutions as the micro level. The term has most likely been adopted because macro-regions comprise sub-state regions of member states. Macro-regions in the EU are constituted top-down even if the motive is to mobilise local actors. The phenomenon emerged first in connection the Baltic Sea Region as a result of independent regional co-operation having been established there during the Europeanization process of the Region prior to the 2004 EU enlargement which included the Baltic States.⁴⁸ The regional co-operation had developed on the basis of a plethora of transnational networks which ironically became less active after the enlargement. To re-launch the co-operation, especially in view of the environmental issues related to decades of Soviet industrial waste being dumped in the Sea, the Baltic Intergroup in the European Parliament proposed a specific strategy for the Region. Helped along by the Swedish government's Presidency, a Baltic Sea Region Strategy was adopted in December 2009. Unfortunately, traditional minorities have not been active in this process (see next section). It has now become a blueprint for other macro-regions, most notably the Danube Region Strategy adopted in 2011 and the on-going work on a Mediterranean Strategy. Debates are also held as to whether to convert the Alpine Convention into a macro-region.

⁴⁶ See also Ahmed, *supra* note 15.

⁴⁷ In the Danish-German border region, the two national minorities, the Danish minority in Schleswig-Holstein and the German minority in Southern Denmark, have seats on the INTERREG Commission. Members list of 24 August 2011 available at <www.interreg4a.de/wm236764>, visited 30 July 2012.

⁴⁸ C. Schymik and P. Krumrey, 'EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. Core Europe in the Northern Periphery?', Working Paper FG 1, 2009/08, April 2009 (SWP Berlin).

The 2011 Danube Region Strategy should also be seen in the light of enlargement, not only the 2004 expansion of the EU but also the 2007 one which involved Romania and Bulgaria. The members of the Danube Region Strategy are Germany (Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria), Austria, the Slovak Republic, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, the Republic of Moldova and the Ukraine.⁴⁹ And similar to the Baltic Sea Region Strategy, the Danube Region Strategy has a strong post-Soviet component which includes both ecological concerns and security. The overall aim of the Danube Region Strategy has been stated as “by 2020, all citizens of the Region should enjoy better prospects of higher education, employment and prosperity in their own home area. The Strategy should make this a truly 21st Century region, secure and confident, and one of the most attractive in Europe.”⁵⁰ It remains to be seen how traditional minorities in the Danube Region will participate in the Strategy. More research is needed before it is known as to their influence on the development of the Strategy.

5. Nordic Autonomies and Regional Co-operation

The need to go beyond the normative perspective of territorial management and regional governance to assess whether traditional minorities and collective autonomies participate in existing as well as new modes of regional co-operation makes MDM relevant. In fact, the multi-directional nature of MDM in terms of the fair exchange of power distribution maintains a normative perspective if one sees the power exchange process as a democratic tool. Collective autonomy in the management of human affairs and political institutions in culturally diverse societies may be categorised analytically around two idealistic functions. First, the normative function recognises the democratic right of individuals and/or groups of individuals to have self-determination on issues related to polity-design and management of society, be it public or civil society related. It acknowledges the social and moral value of individuals and/or groups of individuals that they have the autonomous freedom and capacity to determine the course of society management, and it ensures that individuals and/or groups of individuals will not be assimilated culturally against their will. It affords them a democratic voice and determination over affairs pertaining to the protection and preservation of their culture. Secondly, the instrumental or utilitarian function

⁴⁹) The sub-state regions along the Danube.

⁵⁰) Council conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region 3083rd General Affairs Council meeting Brussels, 13 April 2011 and ‘European Union Strategy for Danube Region’, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions of 8 December 2010.

provides central state authorities with a polity-design tool to ensure sovereign unity across cultural lines and boundaries as well as with the ability to comply with normative frameworks on minority rights. Moreover, it provides state authorities with the ability to ensure delivery of adequate and relevant services in those specific areas that pertain to the protection and preservation of cultural identities and heritage while providing non-dominant groups with the guarantee that delivery of services in those specific areas is adequate and relevant. On the assumption of individual and group agency, the normative and instrumental functions represent not only the moral justification for protection of collective identities, but also the political justification for differentiated society and territorial management.

5.1. *The NORA Region*

The NORA Region is one of the world's most peripheral areas, but at the same time one with considerable opportunities and economic potential.⁵¹ Its population is unevenly distributed and increasingly concentrated. The Region as a whole suffers from outmigration and brain drain. A recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) report recommends that measures to encourage the return of migrants need to be accompanied by a broadening of economic opportunities. New place-based opportunities need to be found. ICTs can improve the framework for business development and increase the efficiency of public service delivery. Improving accessibility is crucial for the development of the Region. Better connectivity, co-operation and regional development are mutually reinforcing processes. Sustainable development of fisheries will be essential for the Region's long-term competitiveness. In that regard, research and innovation are crucial for improving the efficiency and sustainability of the fishery sector. Regional co-operation is required to ensure sustainable management of the sector and can be the basis of exchange of know-how, research and expertise. Further development of the mining and oil sectors would benefit from stabilisation measures but would have to be carried out under the strictest environmental regulations.

The OECD also argued that NORA territories could gain from diversifying their productive base. Higher value added and niche products from the marine sector could be further developed. The rich ecosystems of the NORA Region present opportunities for expanding high value-added natural tourism and cruise tourism. Joint regional efforts to promote regional tourism could have a greater impact. The NORA Region could become a knowledge hub in niche areas. Regional co-operation can facilitate a greater international role for NORA in R&D.

⁵¹) NORA Region, *supra* note 1.

Further regional exchanges could help upgrade education and training in the Region. Climate change will have adverse consequences but may also create economic opportunities for some. Regional co-operation can enable a better understanding of climate change and better tools for adaptation. Preparation of a regional development strategy would help to focus territorial co-operation efforts. Co-operation in the Region confronts barriers that underscore the need for a regional institution. The role of NORA as an institutional facilitator of co-operation could be further refined, and its profile could be raised. A “variable geometry” approach to regional co-operation is likely to be desirable.⁵² In order to sustain broad support for co-operation across the NORA Region, it is crucial to evaluate and demonstrate its benefits.

Culturally, the territories of the NORA Region are unique and distinct territories. They share deep historical ties, a strong network of international links and long traditions of co-operation and a range of common development opportunities and challenges. Thus, informal co-operative activities commonly existed before formalised institutional channels for interaction were created, and joint structures have played a secondary role. Within the NORA Region and the wider Nordic area, contemporary co-operation arrangements have a strong basis in a shared cultural heritage and linguistic kinship, and are founded upon shared values in relation to democracy, justice and the rule of law. Thus, common societal and cultural links lie at the heart of co-operation in the Region, and formal political relations gradually developed as needed to manage problems.⁵³ This path of development distinguishes the NORA Region from the experience of the EU macro-regions, where co-operation and integration efforts have often been initiated “top-down”, based on political interaction and decision making at the central level. On the other hand, this means that the NORA Region co-operation has not led to the levels of integration that the EU macro-regions pursue. However, territorial co-operation is not an easy option. As well as offering a basis for co-operative work, regional commonalities imply that NORA territories compete in many sectors, *e.g.* fisheries. Moreover, notwithstanding their shared characteristics, the Region’s territories differ and they are separated by large distances, so that determining the focus of co-operation and achieving commitment can be complex. According to the OECD report, regional co-operation can increase the profile and “voice” of NORA territories and help them to reach “critical mass” in key areas of economic activity.⁵⁴

The participation of the two Danish collective autonomies not only in the NORA Region co-operation but also in the other Nordic institutions functions

⁵²) *Ibid.*, p. 25.

⁵³) B. Sundelius and C. Wiklund, ‘The Nordic Community: The Ugly Duckling of Regional co-operation’, 18:1 *Journal of Common Market Studies* (1979) pp. 59–71.

⁵⁴) *Ibid.*, p. 202.

well. This is in part due to the Åland Document which was adopted by the ministers for Nordic co-operation in September 2007.⁵⁵ The Document, which is considered a “soft law” document, recognised the right of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and the Åland Islands to participate in the work of common Nordic institutions and co-operation bodies on the same terms as member countries. As an illustration of this higher relevance, the Faroe Islands chaired Nordic co-operation on fisheries in 2010. However, of the members of the NORA Region, Norway alone has effectively economic sovereignty. Iceland has since 2008 been under the International Monetary Fund’s surveillance due to its default on banking responsibilities with a public debt still hovering above 100 per cent of GDP.⁵⁶ Twelve per cent of the Faroe Islands’ GDP and 57 per cent of Greenland’s GDP come from Danish subsidies. The Nordic Council of Ministers finances the projects of the NORA Region, which means that effectively this is a co-operation between Denmark and Norway, two states which still have economic sovereignty. As such, Denmark is an indirect member of the NORA Region.

Denmark has a long history of including traditional minorities in sub-state territories in its sovereignty. In the 20th century, decolonisation was a factor in forcing Denmark to grant autonomy to the remaining sub-state entities.⁵⁷ In addition to the above mentioned post World War II home rule arrangements of the Faroe Islands and Greenland, Iceland, which used to be part of the Kingdom of Denmark, became a union state of the Kingdom in 1918⁵⁸ and a fully independent republic in 1944. The people of these collective autonomies are all traditional minorities or indigenous peoples in the sense of speaking different languages than the majority, belonging to distinct cultures that are different than the dominant culture of the state, and expressing a wish to be considered separate from mainstream society. Both Greenland and the Faroe Islands have pursued independence politics over the last decades with no major results so far.⁵⁹ Both Greenland and the Faroe Islands stand outside the EU integration co-operation but maintain close ties through treaties and representational offices.

⁵⁵ The document is named after the location where it was adopted and is described on <www.norden.org/en/about-nordic-co-operation/agreements/other-decision-documents-and-declarations/>, visited 30 July 2012.

⁵⁶ In 2011 estimated at 130 per cent of GDP.

⁵⁷ Other Danish sub-state entities or union states have included the Duchy of Schleswig and Holstein from 1240 to 1867, Norway from 1537 to 1814 as well as the southern part of Sweden from the 12th century to 1658. Denmark also had overseas colonies in the West Indies and off the coast of Africa.

⁵⁸ Danish-Icelandic Act of Union of 1 December 1918. The Act had a 25 year sunset clause which Iceland used to hold a referendum in 1944. The referendum voted 99.5 per cent in favour of severing ties with Denmark.

⁵⁹ M. Ackren, ‘The Faroe Islands: Options for Independence’, 1:2 *Island Studies Journal* (2006) pp. 223–238.

Greenland originally joined the EEC with Denmark in 1973. But, after disputes over fishing rights, a referendum was held in November 1985 that approved Greenland's withdrawal. Since 1985, relations with the EU have been regulated by an agreement between the Greenlandic and Danish governments and the EU.⁶⁰ Greenland is part of the EU's Overseas Countries and Territories (OCT). The OCTs are closely associated with the EU.⁶¹ With this status, the territory is eligible for aid from the EU. Until 31 December 2006, all Community financial assistance to Greenland (EUR 42.8 million a year) was channelled through the Fisheries Agreement between the Community and Greenland. Since then, outside fisheries, Community financial assistance to Greenland amounts to EUR 25 million a year from 2007 until 2013. This amount is to be used as budget support for the Greenland Education Programme, which involves a reform of Greenland's entire education and training sector. This was established in the Programming Document for the Sustainable Development of Greenland, adopted by the Commission in June 2007. The Greenlandic government is seeking to further strengthen its co-operation with the EU across a range of areas, in particular on the environment, research and food safety.⁶² The Greenland government maintains a representational office in Brussels as well as in Copenhagen.

The EU's official relationship with the Faroe Islands is regulated by two bilateral agreements – a bilateral fisheries agreement from 1977⁶³ and a free trade agreement from 1991,⁶⁴ last revised in 1998. In 1974, a year after Denmark joined the EEC, the Faroese Parliament decided by a unanimous vote not to apply for EU membership. Instead, an interim trade agreement was concluded between the Faroe Islands and the European Commission. This interim trade agreement was replaced in 1991 by the formal agreement on trade between the Faroe Islands and the EC which contained several restrictions on the quantities of Faroese goods that were to enter the Community free of duty (especially fisheries products). After negotiations, a protocol on market access was replaced in 1998. With this

⁶⁰) Treaty amending, with regard to Greenland, the Treaties establishing the European Communities of 13 March 1985.

⁶¹) 21 OCTs depend constitutionally on four of the European Union (EU) Member States: Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. OCT nationals are European citizens. However, these countries do not form part of EU territory. Accordingly, they are not directly subject to EU law, but they benefit from associate status conferred on them by the Treaty of Lisbon. The aim of this association is principally to contribute to their economic and social development. European Commission website <europa.eu/legislation_summaries/development/overseas_countries_territories/index_en.htm>, visited 30 July 2012.

⁶²) NORA Region, *supra* note 1.

⁶³) Agreement on fisheries between the European Economic Community, of the one part, and the Government of Denmark and the Home Government of the Faeroe Islands, of the other part, *Official Journal L* 226, 29 August 1980, p. 0012–0015.

⁶⁴) Agreement between the European Economic Community of the one part and the Government of Denmark and the Home Government of the Faroe Islands of the other part, *Official Journal L* 371, 31 December 1991, p. 0002–0120.

revision, many but not all of the original restrictions were removed, enabling the Faroe Islands to export most of its fish products to the EU market. The Faroe Islands maintain representational offices in Copenhagen, Brussels, Reykjavik and London.

5.2. *The Baltic Sea Region*

The 2009 Baltic Sea Region Strategy originally had four areas of priorities, environment, economy, infrastructure, and safety and security. These have now been reorganised around three objectives, “save the sea”, “connect the region”, and “increase prosperity”.⁶⁵ The objectives are to be achieved through horizontal actions comprising of sub-themes related to the objectives. Culture in terms of multilingualism and cultural heritage is grouped in the horizontal action on education, youth, tourism and health, and is addressed mainly in terms of transport infrastructure to connect visitors to the cultural sites as well as human capital, *i.e.* the promotion of human capital will preserve the cultures around the Baltic Sea. There is no mention of diversity or the cultural heritage of the Region even though a recent study has described very well the wealth of culture and cultural heritage of the Region.⁶⁶ The Baltic Sea Strategy was developed in close co-operation with the European Commission through a public consultation process which yielded 110 written contributions of which 47 are publically available.⁶⁷ Among the public contributions none were submitted by traditional minorities or collective autonomies, such as the Åland Island's government.

The participation of the Åland Islands' government in regional co-operation is governed by the Act of the Autonomy of Åland as well as its Protocol with the EU,⁶⁸ and it is guided by its ability to act as an agent in inter-governmental relations and to muster regional entrepreneurship.⁶⁹ In terms of Nordic co-operation the aforementioned Åland Document also recognises the right of the Åland Islands to participate. However, the main focus of the Åland government seems to be on the EU. The Åland Island government participates in the Conference of Presidents of the Regions with Legislative Power (RegLeg) established in 1999 as a lobby group *vis-a-vis* the EU with the aim to enhance the powers of the Committee of the Regions. Moreover, the Åland Parliament is represented in the Conference

⁶⁵ See <www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/pages/priorities>, visited 30 July 2012.

⁶⁶ B. Henningsen, 'On Identity – No Identity. An Essay on the Constructions, Possibilities and Necessities for Understanding a European Macro Region: The Baltic Sea' (Baltic Development Forum, Copenhagen, 2011). The study argues very interestingly that the only common identity denominator of the Region is the Gothic architecture that is so prevalent in all the countries around the Baltic Sea.

⁶⁷ Schymik and Krumrey, *supra* note 48.

⁶⁸ Spiliopoulou Åkermarck, *supra* note 14.

⁶⁹ Stephan, *supra* note 16.

of Chairmen of the Legislative Federal State Parliaments of Europe (CALRE) established in 1998 with the aim to monitor the EU's implementation of the subsidiarity principle. And as noted above, the Åland government has a seat and a substitute in the Committee of the Regions. In fact, the Åland government considers the Committee of the Regions its best platform for becoming involved in EU matters. Through the Committee work, the government has been able to network – albeit it indirectly – with institutions in the Baltic Sea Region.⁷⁰ The Åland Island Fisheries Association did participate in the European Commission's Regional Advisory Council for the Baltic Sea established in 2006. There are currently no MEPs from Åland, and the Åland government does not have an office in Brussels but is represented via the Finnish Representation to the EU where one diplomatic officer is from the Islands. When the Åland government wishes to achieve results in the European Parliament, it approaches Swedish MEPs and since 2009 it has worked directly with a Finnish MEP elected for the Swedish People's party.⁷¹ The Åland government maintains offices in both Helsinki and Stockholm.

According to observers, the Åland Islands are not active enough in inter-governmental relations and networks, such as the Baltic Sea Region Strategy.⁷² The entrepreneurial spirit is available but not developed. The Åland Islands are not, however, lacking in development results. The Åland Islands rank high above Finnish sub-state regions in GDP.⁷³ They have the lowest unemployment of all Finnish sub-state regions, and in terms of disparity in education, Åland is on average. However, with regard to R&D as percentage of GDP, the Åland Islands are at the very bottom. Nevertheless, in terms of number of businesses per capita they rank the highest. The GDP of Åland is based on high rate of commuting; thus, it is the second highest area in Finland for commuters. With respect to demography, the Åland Islands rank average, and in terms of school closures, they rank very low. The Åland Islands receive a percentage of the state tax revenues every year, fixed in Chapter 7 of the Autonomy Act. They are also exempt from EU tax regulations. There seems, therefore, to be a disparity between the level of development of the Islands and their level of engagement outside the Islands.

In comparison to the Åland Islands' minimal participation in the Baltic Sea Region Strategy, the involvement of the Province of Bolzano-Bozen in the Alpine Convention is striking. While the main secretariat of the Convention is based in Innsbruck, its operational office is located in Bolzano-Bozen, the capital of the Province of Bolzano-Bozen. The Province constitutes together with the Province of Trentino the "Region of Alto Adige-Trentino", which is a federal unit of Italy. It is the northern area of the federal unit, which is home to 75 per cent German

⁷⁰) *Ibid.*, p. 33.

⁷¹) I am thankful to a reviewer who made me aware of this new development.

⁷²) *Ibid.*

⁷³) OECD Territorial Review Finland (OECD, 2005).

speaking Italians, a traditional minority. In 1972, the Region Alto Adige-Trentino began to see the honest implementation by the Italian government of the Autonomy Act which had been agreed years earlier in a bilateral treaty in 1946 as part of the settlement of World War II.⁷⁴ The Province of Bolzano-Bozen was still rather poor in 1972, and the ERDF had not even been established. At the time poverty drove many families in the mountain area to immigrate to the Americas. With the Autonomy Act, Alto Adige-Trentino was awarded control over 90 per cent of its tax revenue. As a result, during the first decade of the 21st century, it has come to represent the best numbers in the Italian economy, be it on GDP, unemployment rate, or birth rate.⁷⁵ The great development variable has been the flow of funds from the EU's Structural Funds, and the increasing ability of the local politicians to act, to get their own politicians elected to the European Parliament and to put pressure on the decision-makers in Brussels. The Province of Bolzano-Bozen has its own office in Brussels and teams up with the Province of Trentino in many issues. And in the potential next step for the Alpine Convention, the conversion to a macro-region, the Province is also active. At a meeting addressing the issue in Brussels in October 2010, the Director for Regional Planning of the government of the provincial government was a main speaker.⁷⁶ If the Alpine Convention becomes a macro-region with EU support, the Province of Bolzano-Bozen may have had an important role in this.

6. Conclusions

As always research leaves more questions to be answered. The research presented in this article only provides opportunities for rudimentary conclusions. Much more research of the participation of the three collective autonomies in regional co-operation needs to be undertaken. Questions as to how independent they are as regional actors can only be assessed through in-depth case studies. And the participation of traditional minorities in the various European instruments of territorial management also needs to be supported empirically before valid conclusions are made. However, at the general level it is possible to argue that traditional minorities and collective autonomies are actively involved in the territorial management of Europe. Instruments such as the Euro-regions, the Alpine Convention, the EGTCs and the Regional Policy funds involve minority participation.

⁷⁴) The best overview of the collective autonomy arrangement for the Province of Bolzano-Bozen is provided in J. Woelk, F. Palermo and J. Marko, *Tolerance through Law. Self-Governance and Group Rights in South Tyrol* (Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, Leiden, 2008).

⁷⁵) 'South Tyrol in Figures', Report 8 Provincial Statistics Institute (Autonomous Province of South Tyrol, Bolzano-Bozen, 2011).

⁷⁶) 'Towards an Alpine Macro Region', Seminar Program, 8th European Week of Regions and Cities, Brussels 4–7 October 2010.

Institutions such as the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Europe, the Committee of the Regions and the NORA Region include traditional minorities with collective autonomy rights. The EU's Lisbon Strategy and the Baltic Sea Region Strategy appeared, however, to exclude traditional minorities.

At the specific level of the three collective autonomies examined, the conclusions must also be taken as basic and in need of further exploration. Similarity is only found in the area of accessing EU funds. All three autonomies are able to participate in EU financial instruments. This is important because economic development is a major driver behind regionalisation in Europe. In raw figures, however, there is a disparity between the three. Whereas both the Faroe Islands and Greenland are hugely dependent on Danish subsidies, 12 and 57 per cent of GDP respectively, the Åland Islands appear far more self-sustained within the Finnish economy, according to the OECD. In terms of participation in regional governance, on the other hand, the Faroe Islands and Greenland seem more successful than the Åland Islands. The Faroe Islands and Greenland appear to participate effectively in the NORA Region, whereas the participation of the Åland Islands seems restricted to the Committee of the Regions even though the Baltic Sea Region Strategy was an obvious arena for participation. All three participate though in the major Nordic fora, such as the Nordic Council of Ministers.

On this basis, and with the caveat that much more research is needed, one could argue that the link between competences and effective participation in regional co-operation show positive results for the Faroe Islands and Greenland but negative results for the Åland Islands. This is astounding given the perceived view of the Åland Islands autonomy as one of the most successful in Europe. Unlike the Faroe Islands and Greenland which have had to fight for international recognition at the decolonisation front and in constant tension with the coloniser, the Åland Islands have had international backing for almost a century. It would appear that the Åland Islands do not as yet fit the post-modern paradigm of self-determination and empowerment which sees traditional minorities as a 21st century phenomenon that sheds the perceived notion of minorities as conflict prone trouble makers.