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**REGIONAL EMPOWERMENT, SECESSIONISM AND EUROPEAN
INTEGRATION: THE CASES OF CATALONIA AND SCOTLAND**

MA thesis

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Tartu 2018

I have written this Master's thesis independently. All viewpoints of other authors, literary sources and data from elsewhere used for writing this paper have been referenced.

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Abstract

One of the main challenges facing multicultural states in today's globalised world is accommodating the various diverse groups living within them. Especially complex are the claims of minority sub-state nations, which demand greater autonomy and in extreme cases want to separate. Recently several regionalist or nationalist movements have become more assertive, and there has emerged a new dimension to the matter – the movements envision independence within the European Union (EU). If a constituent region of an EU member state were to become independent, it would set a precedent. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between European integration and secessionism in multicultural states. Building on theoretical insights from multi-level governance, new regionalism and rational choice institutionalism, the thesis analyses the international environment created by European integration, the political and economic empowerment of regions in the EU since the Single European Act, as well as the mobilisation of subnational actors, which pursue their regional interests and demand more powers (including independence). The study is conducted using two cases, Catalonia and Scotland, and finds that they have rationally responded to their changed opportunity structures. Thus, the main result of the analysis is that European integration has strengthened secessionism in multinational states with sizeable geographically concentrated indigenous minority groups, by creating a favourable international environment for small states, and strengthening regions and subnational actors economically and politically.

Keywords: European integration, regional empowerment, secessionism, Catalonia, Scotland

Table of contents

Introduction.....	10
1. European integration and the empowering of regions: theoretical perspectives.....	10
1.1. Multi-level governance	10
1.2. New regionalism	15
1.3. Rational choice institutionalism.....	20
1.4. Theoretical expectations.....	26
2. The impact of European integration on secessionism in Catalonia and Scotland.....	28
2.1. Case selection.....	28
2.2. Data and methods.....	31
2.3. The international context created by European integration	34
2.4. The empowerment of regions in the EU	37
2.5. Secessionism in Scotland in the context of European integration	47
2.6. Secessionism in Catalonia in the context of European integration.....	57
Conclusion.....	72
Sources	76

Introduction

In today's globalised world most countries are heterogeneous. Several nation-states in the European Union (EU) accommodate a variety of cultures, ethnicities and nations within their borders, with some states having sizeable minority groups. Each of these groups has its own specific needs and interests, which often lead to demands for recognition of diversity, more inclusiveness and even self-government rights. Thus one of the main challenges facing modern multicultural states is managing those claims and creating a hospitable environment for the various diverse groups living within them.

States have become multicultural through various processes. In the course of state formation, centres which possessed administrative, economic and military resources incorporated into their states different sub-state groups (Piattoni, 2010: 38, 40). Some of these groups included historical, territorially concentrated nations, who were previously self-governed and had a distinct language and culture (Kymlicka, 2003: 10-11). They never became completely integrated into the larger states and thus exist to this day as sub-state nations (Piattoni, 2010: 38). Furthermore, there is another, more common process through which countries have become multicultural. Immigration has transformed societies into heterogeneous entities as they have accepted people from other cultures and ethnicities into their countries (Kymlicka, 2003: 10, 14). Will Kymlicka (2003) defines the two types of diverse states as "multination" and "polyethnic," respectively. Most European states are either or both of them.

Integrating multiple cultures can prove challenging. Disagreements over minority rights are increasingly common (Kymlicka, 2003:1). While in light of the refugee crisis it might seem that satisfying the demands of migrant groups is the most pressing issue facing European countries today, managing the claims of historical national minorities can be even more challenging. Immigrants are mostly seen as requesting funding of their cultural practices and for political institutions and laws to be made more inclusive, so that they could participate in the society better and be accepted as full members of it (Kymlicka, 2003: 7, 10-11). However, the sub-state nations mostly do not want to integrate into larger states, but wish to remain distinct societies (Kymlicka, 2003: 10). Therefore they demand greater autonomy and in extreme cases aspire to secede

(Borgen, 2010: 1010; Kymlicka, 2003: 27). As democratic countries, multicultural states should treat all people living within them equally. States should give minorities the option to preserve their cultural particularities and try to incorporate the differences into collective ends (Rhonheimer, 2013: 321, 323, 326-327). However, if the requests for minority rights do not wane and it is difficult to achieve a common purpose, states might try to regain legitimacy by what David Brown calls a "corporatist" strategy, meaning that states try to actively manage tensions by devolving powers to the nations (Maddens & Vanden Berghe, 2003: 601). However, this can have the opposite effect. It can instead reinforce fragmentation and encourage the sub-state groups to regard themselves as distinct people who have the right to self-determination (Kymlicka, 2003: 9). Thus managing multiple cultures and responding to claims made by indigenous minority groups remains a major challenge for modern states.

National minorities demanding greater autonomy has resulted in several independence movements across Europe. There are currently around twenty to twenty-five considerable independence movements across Europe, including those in the Basque country, Catalonia, Corsica, Flanders and Scotland (Borgen, 2010: 1000, 1010). The movements have long histories and as such are not new. They are mostly peaceful cultural and political movements of communities that do not have their own state (Borgen, 2010: 1010). However, recently several independence movements have become more assertive. They are expressing dissatisfaction with their current situation, pertaining to economic inequalities, cultural and identity related differences and the feeling of being unrepresented politically within their larger states and not having enough autonomy (Patrick, 2016: 200, 201). Thus some of the movements have been campaigning for support for secession (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1117). It has resulted in the independence movements gaining more public support and the success of minority nationalist parties in elections (Borgen, 2010: 1010; Bourne, 2014: 96). People in various cities over Europe have gathered to discuss and rally for separation (Borgen, 2010: 999, 1010). Thus long campaigns for autonomy have led to independence referendums and claims for secession (Bourne, 2014: 95-96; Patrick, 2016:196). So far no constituent regions of EU member states have become independent, therefore if a minority nation were to secede, a precedent would be set.

Moreover, there is a new dimension to the matter – Europe. The secessionist movements have changed their strategies to take advantage of a supranational Europe (Borgen, 2010: 1030). The present-day movements have mobilised on the European arena to lobby for support and they contemplate independence within the EU framework in which there are no barriers and where decision-making is shared with supranational institutions (Bourne, 2014: 101-102, 106; Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1116). Thus independence is not envisioned as being in isolation, but as being an independent state within the EU. The EU is seen as an essential part of independent statehood and is used to support claims for independence (Bourne, 2014: 95; Patrick, 2016: 219). This realisation brings to the fore the relationship between European integration and the secessionist movements. It implies that EU integration might affect separatism in multicultural states.

The objective of this thesis is to analyse the relationship between EU integration and secessionism in Europe's multinational states. The external aspects that influence separatism have been understudied as traditionally, secessionism has been explained with reference to internal causes, such as cultural and identity related differences, as well as economic inequalities (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1116). However, recently scholars have started to pay attention to the role of the EU in secessionism. Some note that integration has empowered regions, but also that full participation in the EU is still limited to nation-states and therefore regions might have an incentive to become independent (Borgen, 2010; Patrick, 2016). However, most scholars emphasise that there is no set process and clear rules for sub-state secession and accession to the EU. They question whether member states would recognise newly independent states, and if and how such entities would be able to join the EU (Patrick, 2016). Thus the EU is seen as having an essential regulating role in independence movements (Borgen, 2010; Patrick, 2016). The prospect of future EU membership is seen as being used as an argument by both the pro- and anti-independence movements and is claimed to influence support for independence, mainly by encouraging or discouraging those with more moderate nationalist attitudes (Bourne, 2014; Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016). In addition, the EU is seen as being used by both camps as an arena for conducting

campaigns and finding allies (Bourne, 2014). Thus the literature implies that the EU potentially has an effect on separatism, but the issue needs further exploration.

This thesis aims to answer the question: "How has EU integration influenced secessionism in multicultural states?". The inquiry builds on theoretical insights derived from multi-level governance frameworks (MLG) and new regionalism, as well as the theory of rational choice institutionalism (RCI). MLG and new regionalism are widely used to study changes occurring in the European system as a result of integration and broadly imply that regions have been empowered in the process. RCI is also commonly applied to European integration and complements the other approaches by explaining the logic behind the behaviour of actors. It suggests that while institutions provide both opportunities and constraints, actors take these into account and behave rationally and strategically to maximise their interests. Thus, based on these theoretical insights this thesis tests the expectation that European integration has strengthened secessionism in multicultural states by (a) creating a favourable international environment for small states, and (b) strengthening regions and subnational actors politically and economically.

To test this expectation, it is essential to provide evidence-based answers to the following questions: 1) what kind of an international environment has European integration produced and how is it favourable for small states? 2) how has the EU empowered regions and subnational actors? and 3) how has the altered international environment and the empowerment of regions influenced the preferences and strategies of groups and movements vying for regional autonomy or independence?. To answer these questions, the thesis takes a qualitative approach and firstly analyses the international environment in Europe in terms of constraints and opportunities for would-be new small states, focusing on the EU's role in providing peace, stability and security, common rules and values, facilitating co-operation with other states, providing access to the single market and to its institutional structures. Secondly, the thesis analyses the empowerment of regions in terms of their involvement in EU level policy-making and the funds they have been allocated since the coming into effect of the Single European Act. Thirdly, to show how the favourable international environment

and the political and economic empowerment of regions has encouraged regional mobilisation up to secessionism, the thesis establishes a connection between the changes caused by European integration and the subsequent mobilisation of sub-state nationalism by analysing key events, public sentiments about autonomy, independence and the EU, as well as the reasoning provided by secessionist actors. It analyses how secessionist actors rationalise and legitimise their vision of independent statehood: why is independence needed, how it can be achieved and what role does the EU have in their visions?

The thesis is divided into two parts. The first presents the theoretical framework of the thesis. It gives an overview of the origin and tenets of multi-level governance, new regionalism and rational choice institutionalism, and discusses the potential of these perspectives to explain how European integration has strengthened secessionism in multicultural states in the EU. The second part of the thesis is dedicated to empirical analysis. It justifies the selection of the cases – Scotland and Catalonia, explains the research tasks, and outlines the data needed to complete the tasks. It provides an overview of the international environment European integration has produced and analyses how the EU has empowered Scotland and Catalonia economically and politically. The following two sections analyse how Scotland and Catalonia have mobilised to pursue regional interests, thus asking for more powers and for independence, and how this relates to their changed opportunity structures, as well as whether they are acting pragmatically. Finally, the thesis concludes with a summary of the findings and reflects upon the relevance of the results.

1. European integration and the empowering of regions: theoretical perspectives

This chapter uses insights from multi-level governance, new regionalism and rational choice institutionalism to construct an argument about how European integration strengthens separatism in Europe. The first part of the chapter is devoted to giving an overview of the origins, main tenets and limitations of the three theoretical approaches. It starts with multi-level governance to describe the institutional context that has developed in the EU. Then it proceeds to new regionalism, which develops the idea of multi-level governance further and explains regional mobilisation. This will be followed by an overview of rational choice institutionalism, which complements the previous approaches by elucidating the logic behind regional mobilisation. The second part of the chapter briefly summarises how the theoretical approaches complement each other and how they could be applied to explain how EU integration has strengthened secessionism in multicultural states. The main expectation emerging from the discussion of theoretical perspectives is that by empowering regions and creating a favourable international environment for small states, EU integration has strengthened separatism among regionally concentrated indigenous minorities.

1.1. Multi-level governance

MLG is an approach that is widely used to study the changes occurring in the European system as a result of regional integration. It was developed in the context of heightened integration that had resulted from the signing of the Single European Act (SEA) in 1986 (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 2; Tortola, 2017: 235). The SEA extended Community powers and the use of qualified majority voting in the Council of the European Union, thus strengthening the Community's supranational dimension (Tortola, 2017: 235). Furthermore, the SEA added impetus to the completion of the internal market (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 2). As the internal market was expected to lead to a more competitive environment and greater territorial disparities, governments agreed to increase structural funding to compensate poorer and backward regions for the anticipated consequences (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 3; Keating, 1998b: 173; Piattoni, 2010: 8). For a better administration of the funds, a reform proposed by the European Commission was adopted in 1988, which entailed a partnership between the Commission and national and subnational governments in designing and implementing the structural policy (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 3; Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 15). The management of the

policy was also agreed to follow the principle of subsidiarity, formally adopted in the Maastricht Treaty, which prescribes that decisions need to be taken at the lowest level possible (Keating, 1998b: 174, 176). Thus developments following the adoption of the SEA embodied a change in the nature and functioning of the Community. These transformations, especially the introduction of partnerships in the administration of structural funds, led Gary Marks to publish in 1993 the article "Structural Policy and Multi-Level Governance in the EC" (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 330; Stepheson, 2013: 820). Marks argued that as a result of dispersing the authority of the central state to subnational and supranational levels, a system of multi-level governance had developed, in which governments at several territorial tiers negotiated with one another (Marks & Hooghe, 2004: 15, 19; Stepheson, 2013: 820). Subsequently, Marks and other scholars have applied the concept of MLG to various EU policies, the overall functioning of the EU and even outside the EU (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 2; Piattoni, 2010: 18, 20). The development of MLG framework has contributed to the research on EU integration by moving the debate further than the traditional argument between the intergovernmentalist and supranationalist theories (George, 2004: 108). Marks noted that the new dynamics in the EU cannot be explained merely in terms of control by member states or by supranational leadership (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 331; Tortola, 2017: 235). The EU is more pluralistic as the subnational level plays an important role in the policy process (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 3). Therefore the multi-level approach is more suitable for studying recent developments in the EU than the traditional intergovernmental or supranational theories.

The main tenet of MLG is that the institutional system in the EU has transformed into a pluralistic one. The conventional structure and hierarchies have been replaced with new arrangements and competences (Piattoni, 2010: 20). It implies that as a result of integration, power has been dispersed across governments at multiple levels – subnational, national and supranational (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 3; Marks & Hooghe, 2004: 19). Furthermore, MLG posits that a variety of non-governmental actors, such as multinational enterprises, employer and labour associations and non-governmental organisations have also become involved in the governance of the EU (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 3; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 332). Thus member states are one among

many actors in the EU and do not monopolise power, but have to cooperate and compromise with others (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 3; Rosamond, 2000: 110; Tortola, 2017: 236). As a result of the integration process new, important actors have emerged.

MLG asserts that the authority of the member states is being challenged. While it does regard states as relevant actors in the EU and suggests that in some policy sectors, such as foreign affairs, they have more control than in others, it posits that European integration has reduced states' power (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 332-333; Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 3; Marks & Hooghe, 2004: 19). It might be that states are voluntarily shifting away some of their tasks to relieve their burden, however it might also be happening due to the forces that have led to MLG, which they are unable to control (Hooghe and Marks, 2001: 71-72). The sovereignty of individual states is firstly reduced by collective decision-making in the EU as they can be outvoted by qualified majority voting in the Council, and although they have veto powers, its use is constrained by pressure from other governments (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 2, 28). For the cooperation to work and integration to proceed states need to compromise. They also rely on the Commission to facilitate compromises and oversee compliance (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 28). As part of the integration process member states have delegated some powers to EU institutions. However, the supranational institutions, that is the European Court of Justice, the Commission and the European Parliament, have autonomous influence in policy-making that does not stem from the authority that was assigned to them by the member states (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 2-3). For instance the European Court of Justice has been active in transforming EU legislation into a supranational one (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 28). As an unanticipated consequence, national governments are incapable of administering the institutions they have created (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 331; Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 28). EU institutions take advantage of integration and multi-level governance to improve their own power position in relation to the member states (Peters & Pierre, 2004: 82). Thus the state is also undermined by actors at other levels of government who are seeking to enhance their own standing (Piattoni, 2010: 36, 250). In addition to active supranational institutions, subnational governments have also become more assertive (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 331). They have realised that in order to not be forced to implement

policies over which they have had no say over, they need to participate on the European level (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 89-90). As subnational actors have become involved in European regional policy, they have been empowered by getting access to the decision-making arenas and consequently to information (Piattoni, 2010: 18; Stepheson, 2013: 824). It has led subnational governments to try to bypass the national level and strengthen their own institutional and negotiating capacities (Stepheson, 2013: 821). Thus the EU integration process has led to the weakening of the state and empowerment and mobilisation of the supra- and subnational levels.

The MLG approach also posits that actors in the EU can connect with each other directly. In the MLG system subnational actors are not nested within states and thus the central governments cannot restrict their interactions with actors outside the state (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 4, 89). It sees subnational actors building transregional associations with each other, but also communicating directly with supranational institutions (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 78; Peters & Pierre, 2004: 83). Subnational actors set up regional offices in Brussels and lobby European Commission and European Parliament members, as they are seen as being more accessible than the Council officials (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 15, 78). However, the relationship is reciprocal. The supranational actors, especially the Commission, are also seeking to balance out the power of member state governments and to strengthen their legitimacy by cooperating with and empowering the regional level (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 78; Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 85). A prime example of this is the reform of the structural policy in 1988, which entailed involving subnational governments in the designing and implementation of the policy. Thus the Commission not only funds the subnational level, but also gives it access to decision-making (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 78). The Commission's objective has been to institutionalise regions in the EU institutional structure (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 15-16). With the creation of the Committee of the Regions (CoR) in the Maastricht Treaty a new channel was created for regions to participate on the EU level (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 90; Tortola, 2017: 236). While the CoR is often regarded to not having much impact, it is emerging as a political actor which supervises the following of the principle of subsidiarity in the EU (Piattoni, 2010: 60-61). Thus the Commission has played a role in institutionalising the regional level in the EU and

empowering subnational governments. By interacting directly with each other, the sub- and supranational levels have developed a mutually profitable relationship.

European integration has thus opened new possibilities for sub-state regions. It has encouraged them to ask for the recognition of the principle of subsidiarity, direct representation in the Council, more power and autonomy, and sometimes even independence (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 78; Piattoni, 2010: 32). Subnational actors see the EU as an opportunity structure (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 1999: 84). The integration process has inadvertently produced a favourable environment for separatist regions. It offers peace, stability, security and access to the single market (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 160, 167; Piattoni, 2010: 8). Hence independence does not seem as big of a risk within the institutional structure of the EU. Thus European integration has strengthened secessionism in some regions.

However, while MLG provides a useful explanation of the changes that have occurred in the European system, it has its weaknesses and has been criticised for them. The main fault of MLG is that it is rather a descriptive approach than a theory of European integration (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 340). However, most authors recognise that the aim was not to create a theory of integration but to explain the developments in the EU (George, 2004: 113). Thus MLG explains how the EU is a complex system but fails to make predictions (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 331; Stepheson, 2013: 818). Furthermore, while MLG posits that in the system with a multiplicity of actors several actors mobilise across levels, it does not elaborate clearly and systematically on which actors are expected to mobilise and why (Piattoni, 2010: 23). Although this is a weakness, it is compensated in this research by incorporating insights from new regionalism and RCI. New regionalist literature explains that actors with better opportunity structures are more likely to mobilise and RCI reasons that actors mobilise because they are rational and aim to achieve their self-interest in specific institutional contexts. In fact, it is sometimes suggested that MLG be supported by other theories to generate hypotheses (George, 2004: 113). It is neutral and therefore compatible with various institutional theories (Stepheson, 2013: 825). However, an additional critique is that while MLG posits that the changed institutional context has provided new channels

of access and influence for subnational actors in the EU, their power potential and autonomy is still limited, especially in areas of high politics such as foreign affairs (George, 2004: 123; Stepheson, 2013: 828). Nonetheless, this does not present a major issue for this research as it can be assumed that the reason why subnational actors are seeking independence is to have more influence and autonomy and the institutional context for that is favourable. Thus MLG still proves useful as it provides an explanation of the new institutional context that has emerged.

So, shortly, the process of EU integration has had an effect on relations between states, regions and the supranational institutions. As a result of integration some of the powers of the state have been transferred up and down to supranational and subnational levels. Although the state remains a formidable actor, it is now one among many actors. The state needs to share authority and compromise with other actors in a multi-level polity. In addition, the state no longer controls completely neither the regions and EU institutions nor their interactions with each other. Subnational and supranational actors have become assertive and mobilised. They have developed a mutually profitable relationship. The Commission funds the regions and institutionalises them in EU policy-making to counterbalance national governments, while the regions take advantage of it by demanding more autonomy from the state and trying to bypass the national level whenever possible. Also, the new international environment that has emerged is favourable for separatist regions. In sum, insights from the multi-level governance literature lend considerable support to the conjecture that European integration has – inadvertently – contributed to subnational regional mobilisation and strengthened separatist tendencies in multinational member states.

1.2. New regionalism

As work on multi-level governance implied that an institutional context had developed in Europe in which regions had a newfound role, regional studies scholars got on the bandwagon. Numerous studies on regions help advance MLG by analysing the impact of European integration on them and their subsequent mobilisation (Le Galès & Lequesne, 1998: 2-3; Stepheson, 2013: 821). In the 1990s several authors began writing about a new wave and type of regionalism. Michael Keating (1998b: 72, 78) noted that from the late 1980s and from around the end of the Cold War there was a re-emergence

of regionalism. This was around the same time that MLG developed in Europe and when regions became involved in the policy process. Keating (1998b: 161) noted that regions had become a part of European politics. Some authors referred to a "Europe of the Regions", implying that regions had become the main actors in the European arena, whereas others took a more conservative view of a "Europe with regions", suggesting that while regions were emerging and playing a major role, states remained important (Le Galès, 1998: 239; Karolewski, 2007: 30). Nonetheless, studies on new regionalism implied that regions matter.

This new environment and role of regions differs greatly from their earlier position. In the nineteenth century central governments attempted to integrate regions into the state and achieve territorial unity (Keating, 1998a: 12; Keating, 1998b: 54-55). Thus regions did not have a distinct role then. However, after the Second World War the improvement of relations between Western European states enabled them to loosen control over their territories (Le Galès & Lequesne, 1998: 1). By the 1970s scholars had begun writing about regionalism (Karolewski, 2007: 9). They noted that states were decentralising and reinforcing regional levels of government (Le Galès & Lequesne, 1998: 1). The region was seen as the most suitable level to tackle territorial disparities and inefficiency (Keating, 1998a: 12; Le Galès & Lequesne, 1998: 2). Thus regionalisation was a depoliticised attempt to develop and modernise the state (Keating, 1998a: 14). In the post World War II time the state granted the regions subsidies and provided the link between the subnational actors and the international market and institutions (Keating, 1998b: 78). Thus many regions were Eurosceptic and anticipated that an open market would make them more vulnerable and integration would shift policy-making further away (Keating, 1998b: 163). However, regionalisation had an important impact on regions. Political issues became increasingly discussed in a regional frame, thus politicising regionalism (Keating, 1998a: 13). This led to the strengthening of societies, regional identities and nationalist movements (Keating, 1998b: 54; Piattoni, 2010: 44). Regions mobilised and claimed greater political autonomy from states (Le Galès, 1998: 244; Piattoni, 2010: 44). Therefore regionalism came to be defined as a political movement and a set of demands (Keating, 1998b: 104). Thus within the post World War II context regions emerged as a result of states'

development policies and depoliticised decentralisation, which in turn led to regionalism and subnational governments claiming more power from states.

However, the emerged regionalism still differed from the new regionalism that developed around the late 1980s and 1990s. The new regionalism was enabled by a changing environment. Economic globalisation and especially European market integration had led to a rise in transnational companies, increased capital mobility and deregulation, as well as the establishment of trading rules and competition policies (Keating, 1998b: 73, 75; Le Galès, 1998: 240). Thus states lost the tools, including subsidies and tariffs, with which to manage their economies and eliminate regional inequalities (Keating, 1998a: 17; Keating, 1998b: 73). Hence the economies became more dependent on the market and as the regional level is more flexible, it became the basis of economic action (Karolewski, 2007: 20; Lovering, 2004: 328). The regions were now responsible themselves for attracting investments and gaining market shares and competed with other regions for it (Keating, 1998b: 74, 78). In addition, as stated by MLG scholars, with EU integration some decision-making power has shifted to supranational institutions and thus the link between regions and states has been weakened and regions have become dependent not only on the state, but also on the EU (Keating, 1998b: 75, 186). As Keating (1998a: 25) puts it: "there is no independence in the present-day world, only strategies for managing dependencies". Therefore the state is no longer seen as satisfying the regional needs well enough and thus regions have constituted themselves as actors (Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 77, 118). They have defined a "regional interest", which represents their preferences better (Keating, 1998b: 165; Piattoni, 2010: 48). To pursue their interests, regions have mobilised. There are now various forms of political mobilisation with regions acting not only within the nation-state, but also in the EU framework (Keating, 1998b: 72; Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 78). They have mostly overcome their Euroscepticism and have come to view the EU as something that can be used in their favour (Keating, 1998b: 163). Thus with European integration a new context has developed, in which regions rely and depend less on the state and where they have constituted themselves as actors, who have mobilised to pursue their own interests in multiple arenas.

Regions mobilise in the EU with different goals. The main objectives include gaining funds from the EU, promoting themselves internationally, seeking support for their minority cultures and languages, legitimising their nationalist movements, requesting more autonomy and the application of subsidiarity, as well as becoming members of the European Union as independent states (Karolewski, 2007: 24; Keating, 1998a: 15; Keating, 1998b: 163-164). While all these demands and movements are regarded to be part of new regionalism, the line between regionalism and nationalism has become less clear (Keating, 1998b: 107). In the traditional sense, both aim at achieving greater autonomy, with nationalism being more extreme as the end goal is independence. However, as noted earlier, there is no complete independence in the present day as economies are dependent on the international market and some authority has shifted to the supranational level. Thus in the changed context the meaning of independence is different. Independence in the present day does not mean being in isolation. Hence independence within the institutional structure of the EU seems more feasible for secessionist regions. The political objective however is not given, but requires the pre-existence of a territorially distinguishable regional or national sentiment (Keating, 1998b: 186; Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 76). Thus those regions with regionalist or nationalist movements seek more autonomy or independence within the EU.

However, the likelihood and the success of regional mobilisation depend on the regions' qualities and opportunity structures. The groups more prone to mobilisation are those that have a developed and active civil society, previous experience of collective action, as well as a distinct regional media and political parties or regional strands of national parties as these frame issues in a regional scale and create a common political space (Karolewski, 2007: 22; Keating, 1998a: 21-22; Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 67). Furthermore, power structures – that is economic and political capabilities – either limit or provide possibilities for action (Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 84). Political opportunities and constraints vary from state to state and depend on institutional arrangements (Karolewski, 2007: 22; Keating, 1998a: 15). Usually power has been divided in a zero-sum manner between the state and the regions, however with European integration the political space has changed (Keating, 1998a: 24; Lähtenmäki-Smith, 1999: 78). With the EU a new level has been added to the power relations and it

provides regions with new opportunities and incentives for mobilisation (Karolewski, 2007: 22; Keating, 1998b: 107). As mentioned earlier, the development of MLG has involved regions in decision-making and policy implementation and has given them more resources, such as funds, connections and access to information. As regions are no longer nested within states they have opportunities to act beyond the state. For many the EU has become the focal point of mobilisation (Karolewski, 2007: 21). However, those that have stronger links and organisational resources are better situated to pursue their political objectives on the European arena (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 1999: 67). The opportunity structures are important and mostly it is the more powerful regions that mobilise (Lähteenmäki-Smith, 1999: 67, 84). Thus regions in Europe vary in their power structures. However, the possibilities have increased and many have mobilised.

While new regionalism provides an insightful explanation of the impact of European integration on regions and their subsequent mobilisation, it does have weaknesses. New regionalism is criticised for similar issues as MLG as it elaborates on MLG. It too is said to not offer a foundational theory, but rather a collection of assumptions about similar developments (Lovering, 2004: 329). One postulate that new regionalism makes is that there has been a reinforcement of regional levels in the EU (Le Galès, 1998: 242). That is criticised as developments vary across countries and regions and thus there is no uniform level of regional government (Le Galès, 1998: 242). Some regions are able to constitute themselves as actors, whereas others have little autonomy (Keating, 1998a: 28; Le Galès, 1998: 244). With the exception of the historical nations of Wales, Scotland and regions in Spain, Belgium and Germany, regions are rather powerless (Le Galès, 1998: 244). As noted earlier, it depends on the opportunity structures the actors have – subnational actors with more resources are more likely to mobilise. Thus new regionalism is based on the experience of more powerful regions (Lovering, 2004: 336). Therefore new regionalism could improve by also taking into account the experience of weaker regions (Lovering, 2004: 336). While overall this limitation reduces the explanatory power of the new regionalist approach, it does not undermine this thesis, as it focuses on prosperous and capable regions with a comparatively strong sense of nationhood. Critics of new regionalism have also pointed out that while regions' role has indeed changed, they have not replaced states or become equal competitors to them

(Keating, 1998a: 25). Thus the critics imply that a "Europe of the Regions" has not developed. However, many new regionalist scholars have admitted the continuing relevance of nation states. Furthermore, the aim of this research is to analyse the effect of integration on regions and their subsequent mobilisation, not so much to compare the relative powers of states and regions in the EU. Thus the limitations and weaknesses of new regionalism do not affect this research significantly.

Thus new regionalism enables us to explain how European integration has strengthened secessionism in regions. Shortly, regional studies scholars imply that European integration has had an impact on regions, resulting in the emergence of new regionalism. It has reduced states' control over their economies, regional planning and decision-making and thus made regions less reliant on states and prompted them to constitute themselves as actors. The EU has given regions incentives and created opportunity structures to mobilise on the European arena. Consequently, those with greater economic and political capabilities pursue their regional interests, including greater autonomy and even independence, with considerable success within the EU.

1.3. Rational choice institutionalism

The theory of rational choice institutionalism complements the previous approaches by elucidating the logic behind why subnational actors have mobilised in the changed institutional context in the EU. It is one of the strands of the new institutionalist theory, which developed around the 1980s and early 1990s (Rosamond, 2000: 114). Neo-institutionalism emerged as a contesting theory to the behavioural approach that had dominated since the 1960s and 1970s (Schmidt, 2009: 125; Torfing, 2001: 281). While the behaviouralist turn asserted that political outcomes were a result of the behaviour of individuals who were autonomous from institutions, institutionalist scholars, in particular James March and Johan Olsen, found that while individuals make decisions, they are affected by the political institutions of which they are a part of (Peters, 2000: 26, 41; Rosamond, 2000: 114). Thus, with improvements, such as taking into account informal institutions, they revived "old institutionalism" that had existed before the behaviouralist turn and that analysed the impact of formal institutions on societies (Peters, 2000: 3, 6, 15, 17; Torfing, 2001: 281). While new institutionalism did not originate in EU studies, it has been widely applied to study the EU as a polity and the

process of European integration (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 194; Pollack, 2004: 137). Thus it is a suitable theory for studying the effects the EU has on the conduct of secessionist regions.

New institutionalism argues that institutions affect political outcomes. It sees institutions as a context in which intentional political action takes place and which embodies the distributional bias that has been built into a society (Rosamond, 2000: 114; Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 1-2). Thus institutions structure actions and influence outcomes (Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 2). However, neo-institutionalism actually consists of several strands – sociological, historical and rational choice institutionalism (Hall & Taylor, 1996). The three strands developed quite separately and have divergent definitions of institutions and expectations about how institutions affect the behaviour of actors and how institutions persist (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 937, 939; Pollack, 2004: 137-138). They range from deeply embedded values, norms and a logic of appropriateness to historical regularities and path-dependency, to informal practices and formal rules and rational behaviour (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 5, 7; Schmidt, 2009: 138). However, there is common ground between the three strands (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 3). Therefore recently scholars have sought to foster dialogue between the different institutionalisms and reconcile them (Schmidt, 2009: 125-126, 132). The three strands are all valuable as each explains different aspects of social reality (Schmidt, 2009: 139). Thus, while new institutionalism implies that institutions affect outcomes, it offers a variety of explanations for it.

This research utilises the rational choice institutionalism approach. RCI originates in the studies of American scholars on Congressional behaviour, who discovered that there was stability in decision-making, although based on the traditional rational choice theory they expected instability caused by the plurality of legislators' interests and issues (Schmidt, 2009: 126). Therefore, rational choice theorists analysed the potential effect of institutions, which led them to discover that Congressional institutions affected the availability of alternatives and information and thus reduced collective action problems (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 943). This has motivated scholars to apply RCI to manifold phenomena as well as to other institutional contexts, such as the EU (Hall &

Taylor, 1996: 944; Pollack, 2004: 138). The first to use RCI for the analysis of the EU was Fritz Scharpf, who in his articles (1985, 1988) on joint-decision traps noted that decision-making rules affected the integration process (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 2; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 195). Thereafter RCI has been used widely to study the working of EU institutions and their impact on policy outputs (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 195; Pollack, 2004: 141). Thus it is also suitable for analysing how EU institutions affect subnational actors.

RCI starts with the assumption that rational actors behave strategically in pursuit of their self-interest. It presumes that actors try to maximise their goals and thus calculate and behave instrumentally (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 944-945). Interests are fixed and formed exogenously as RCI sees institutions as an intervening variable (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 7; Torfing, 2001: 283). This implies that while actors operate within institutional structures, their preferences are not determined by institutions, but instead institutions affect the choice of strategy and the outcome of their actions. From the perspective of RCI, institutions are formed by actors to aid them in achieving their objectives (Pollack, 2004: 141). This stems from the non-cooperative game theory's influence on RCI, which posits that decision-making is an interdependent process (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 10-11). Without institutions actors have no guarantee about others' behaviour and thus face collective action dilemmas, such as the "prisoners dilemma" and the "tragedy of the commons", which lead them to sub-optimal outcomes (Schmidt, 2009: 126). As institutions offer information and provide monitoring and enforcement mechanisms, they reduce the risks that would usually come with cooperation, known as transaction costs (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 195; Hall & Taylor, 1996: 939; Rosamond, 2000: 116). Thus institutions provide a framework for interaction, competition and cooperation, in which actors are better situated to adjust their behaviour to the expected behaviour of others and thus produce better outcomes (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 11; Hall & Taylor, 1996: 945). As created institutions provide benefits for actors also in the future, they continue to exist (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 945). However, institutions are more than the accumulation of actors' interests and powers (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 195). Principal-agent theories imply that delegation of powers to agents leads to their autonomous influence and unintended

consequences (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 197, 201; Schmidt, 2009: 126-127). This holds true in the case of the EU as member states have created the institution to solve collective action problems and profit from cooperation, but the EU has become a supranational actor with its own agenda and influence. Thus RCI asserts that rational actors, in the pursuit of their interests, operate within institutional contexts, which affect outcomes by structuring their interactions and having some autonomous influence.

Institutions also have an impact on actors by empowering or constraining them in their actions. RCI posits that institutions provide rules, procedures and practices, which distribute power among actors and influence behaviour (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 11; Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 195; Peters, 2000: 46). On the one hand, institutions can deter actors from actions that they would otherwise take, or they pursue their self-interest in a different way than what they would prefer to, since rules limit the options available for actors (Peters, 2000: 44; Rosamond, 2000: 116; Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 3). On the other hand, however, institutions can encourage actors to mobilise to maximise their goals (Peters, 2000: 19). Institutions provide channels, which otherwise would not exist and rules, such as equal voting power, enable actors to pursue objectives that would be unlikely under different conditions (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 5; Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 3). Thus institutions offer opportunities for actors (Eilstrup-Sangiovanni, 2006: 195). RCI assumes that actors acknowledge the constraints and opportunities that exist for them and respond rationally (Peters, 2000: 46; Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 15). Actors are seen to weigh the pros and cons of different actions and to take the routes that enable them to achieve their goals to the fullest (Torfing, 2001: 283). Thus actors form strategies and adapt their behaviour to use the institutions to their advantage (Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 15). They might also try to influence the rules of the institutions (Rosamond, 2000: 115). Thus institutions constrain or provide opportunities for actors, who react rationally to their context so as to reach their goals.

Thus RCI posits that institutions, such as the EU, influence the opportunities available for sub-state actors and in this way affect the strategies regions take for maximising their interests. The EU has provided regions with new resources that they use

strategically (Bourne, 2014: 100). The EU has encouraged regions to mobilise as it has empowered them by involving them in decision-making and implementation. However, many, especially the secessionist regions, find that their opportunities and influence are still constrained compared to nation states in the EU and therefore desire independence (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1118). They find that the EU's institutional structure offers them opportunities for becoming independent and thus achieving their objectives better. The pro-independence movements find that peace in Europe, as well as its internal market reduce the risk and cost of separation and of being a small state (Bourne, 2014: 95, 99; Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1117). They argue that as independent they would be economically better off and often justify it with examples of other prosperous small European countries (Bourne, 2014: 111; Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1117). However, as the EU is central to independent statehood, its accession rules affect the strategies regions take (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1118; Patrick, 2016: 219). The EU tends to treat it as an internal issue of the state and supports territorial integrity (Patrick, 2016: 197; Bourne, 2014: 100). The EU fears secession would destabilise several European states with separatist regions (Patrick, 2016: 223). Therefore EU officials have stated that the new states would have to reapply for membership, which would require agreement from all member states, including the state they were a part of (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1118-1119). Thus unilateral separation is ruled out (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1119). Independence without EU membership would not be rational as it would be less beneficial. However, as currently there is no set procedure for sub-state independence, it is unclear how European actors would really act in case of secession (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1119; Patrick, 2016: 197). Therefore those contemplating independence are weighing different options available and form strategies that would benefit them the most, including ways through which they could have an uninterrupted accession to the EU (Bourne, 2014: 96; Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1115). Thus the EU provides opportunities and constraints, which affect the choice of strategy and the outcome of regions' actions.

However, there are problems with some of RCI's assumptions. In addition to the critique of rival theories, which dismiss the basic claim about rationality altogether, issues can be identified with RCI's assumptions about human motivation (Eilstrup-

Sangiovanni, 2006: 197; Hall & Taylor, 1996: 950). Some point out that it fails to explain exceptional cases when actors do not behave rationally (Schmidt, 2009: 127). Furthermore, as RCI posits that preferences are fixed and given exogenously, it does not take into account the effects of socialisation and learning (Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 183). However, Schneider and Aspinwall (2001: 183) argue that it is necessary for rationalists to keep interests constant to be able to explain the effects of changing institutional contexts on actors. While it is reasonable to keep interests constant, there are issues with them. Interests can be complex and thus scholars may not take into account all of their facets (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 950-951). As most RCI analyses are quantitative, this has led to conflicting results since the predictions are influenced by small changes (Aspinwall, & Schneider, 2000: 23; Hall & Taylor, 1996: 951). Therefore RCI scholars sometimes adjust the theory according to their results (Schneider & Aspinwall, 2001: 15). However, this research is qualitative and thus is able to consider more carefully the complex interests. Furthermore, RCI proves useful as it combines the intentionality of actors with their opportunity structures, thus enabling a better explanation of political outcomes (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 951). However, there are further issues identified regarding RCI's assumptions about the creation of institutions. It deduces the origin of institutions from their consequences and assumes that they are created purposefully by relatively equal actors, who can control the process (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 952). However, this is problematic as not all actors are of equal power in all situations and there can be unintended consequences (Hall & Taylor, 1996: 952-953). It is true that the origins of institutions cannot be explained completely by their present functions as principal-agent theories imply there are unintended consequences. However, this fits this research as the aim is not to explain the origin of institutions, but rather it takes into account the unintended consequences of transferring power from states to subnational and supranational actors and their subsequent mobilisation. Thus RCI provides a useful framework for explaining the effects of the changed institutional context on the actions of subnational actors.

Shortly, the theory of rational choice institutionalism enables us to explain the mobilisation of subnational actors in the EU. It asserts that actors pursue their self-interest. However, as different actors are interconnected, they rely on institutions, such

as the EU, to structure those interactions. Since there are unintended consequences from delegation to agents, they acquire autonomous influence. As noted earlier by MLG and new regionalist scholars, the supranational institutions, in particular the Commission, pursue their independent agendas which the states are unable to control. Furthermore, institutions structure power relations among actors and constrain them or provide opportunities. Thus actors behave rationally and use structures strategically. Therefore, subnational actors are expected to take advantage of the institutional context provided by the EU and mobilise to achieve their interests.

1.4. Theoretical expectations

MLG, new regionalism and RCI each offer a useful framework for explaining how EU integration has strengthened secessionism in the nations of multicultural states. Furthermore, rather than viewing the three as contesting approaches, it is useful to use insights from all of them. They complement each other well as MLG offers an explanation about the changed institutional context that has developed in the EU, while new regionalism advances the idea of MLG further by clarifying the impact of European integration on regions and RCI elucidates the logic behind the actions and strategies of separatist regions. Thus based on the three approaches a comprehensive theoretical framework for analysis can be constructed.

Building on the arguments of MLG, new regionalism and RCI, it can be expected that as a result of European integration relations between the regions, the state and the EU have changed. Powers of the state have been transferred up and down to supranational and subnational levels, states have less control over their economies, regional planning and decision-making, as well as over the nations within them, EU institutions and the connections between them. It is an unintended consequence of delegating powers to the EU that supranational institutions pursue their independent agendas. The Commission in particular funds the regions and institutionalises them in EU policy-making. This has made regions less reliant on states and provided opportunities for mobilising in the European arena. EU integration has given autonomy or independence-seeking nations a favourable environment and incentives for pursuing their regional interests. As rational actors, the regions take advantage of it by demanding more autonomy from the state and trying to bypass it to enhance their own position. Those with greater economic and

political capabilities may find independence to be more profitable and attainable and thus seek to pursue independence within the EU. Shortly, secessionist regions in the EU have adjusted their strategies to the new institutional context.

Following the assumptions of MLG, new regionalism and RCI, this research sets out to analyse the proposition that EU integration has strengthened secessionism in the nations of multicultural states as a result of strengthening regions and creating a favourable environment for small states within its institutional framework. If this was true, one would expect to observe that: 1) the international environment European integration has produced is favourable for small states, in terms of providing peace and stability, common rules and values, facilitating co-operation with other states, providing access to the single market and representation in its institutional structures; 2) the regions have been empowered in economic terms and participation in EU level policy-making; 3) the discourses used by secessionist groups and their leaders contain arguments and evidence that reveal the perceived importance of the EU in enabling or facilitating aspirations related to independence, regional empowerment and autonomy. The theoretical expectations are illustrated in Figure 1 below:

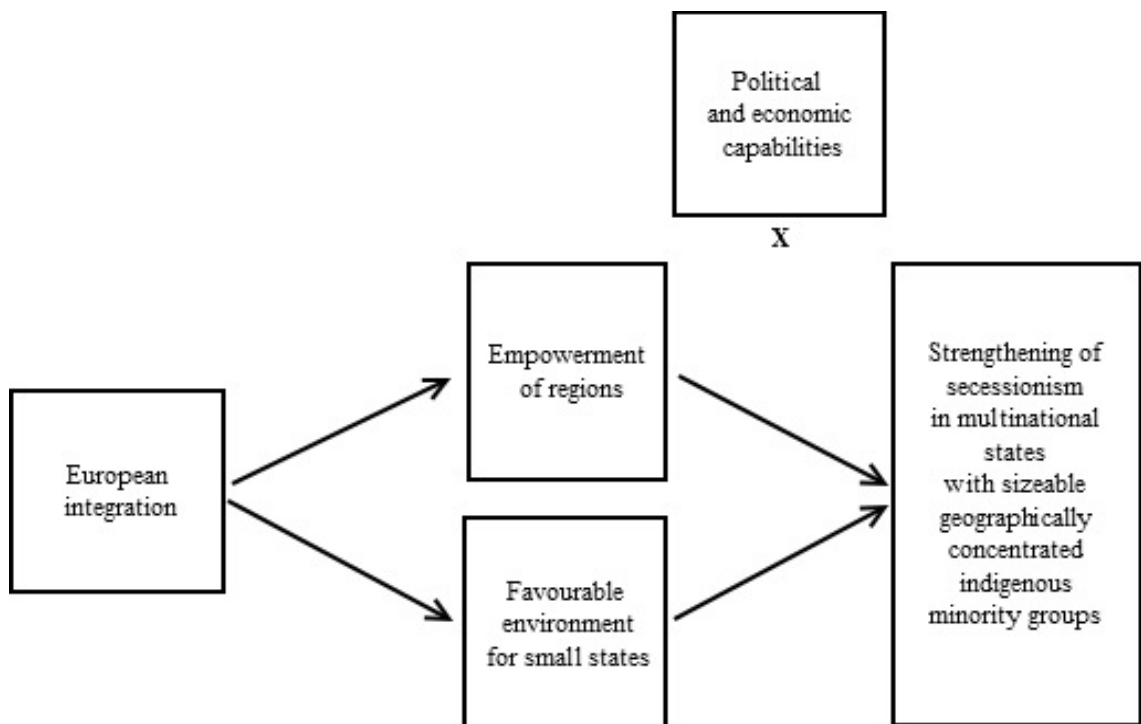


Figure 1. Expected causal link between European integration and the strengthening of secessionism

2. The impact of European integration on secessionism in Catalonia and Scotland

This chapter is dedicated to an empirical analysis of how European integration strengthens secessionism in the nations of multicultural states. Firstly, it justifies the suitability of the selected cases – Catalonia and Scotland – for this research project. Secondly, the chapter provides an overview of the research tasks and the data needed for accomplishing these tasks. Third, the chapter gives an overview of the international environment that European integration has produced, in order to set the context in which to view independence movements. Fourth, the chapter analyses how the EU has more directly empowered the regions, and how MLG has developed in the union. It is followed by sections which analyse how Scotland and Catalonia have mobilised to pursue their interests, demanding more powers (ultimately including independence), and whether such mobilisation can be regarded as a rational choice, given the institutional context in the EU.

2.1. Case selection

The cases used for this research should be historical nations within EU member states, which have pre-existing nationalist movements, as well as considerable economic and political capabilities. Historical nations with nationalist movements have the legitimacy needed for secession. Furthermore, stronger regions have greater opportunities and incentives for mobilising and are therefore more likely to respond to changes in their opportunity structures. Thus, to research this topic, a qualitative small n study is conducted using two cases: Catalonia and Scotland. They have two of the most prominent independence movements within the EU currently and they fit the criteria well.

The populations of the two regions can be regarded as national minorities within multination states. Catalonia and Scotland are historical, territorially concentrated nations which were once independent but have been incorporated into larger states. Scotland was united with England in 1707 under Great Britain (which later became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) with the signing of the Act of Union (Patrick, 2016: 200). However, it was allowed to keep its legal and educational

systems and have seats in the House of Commons (Patrick, 2016: 200). Thus Scotland has maintained its separate identity. Catalonia had been an autonomous part of the Crown of Aragon for centuries with its own language, culture and tax system, but was dissolved as a separate state in 1716 as a result of the War of the Spanish Succession (Patrick, 2016: 202). Although in the beginning of the 1930s, with the Spanish Parliament's permission, it managed to restore its autonomy and gain responsibility over natural resources and public policy issues, its institutions were abolished and culture and language outlawed in 1938 by dictator Francisco Franco (Borgen, 2010: 1017). Nonetheless, with the death of Franco in 1975 the dictatorship in Spain ended and Catalonia's language, culture and identity as distinct people managed to persist (Borgen, 2010: 1016-1017). Today both regions constitute nations of significant size, with Scotland having a population of 5.4 million and Catalonia 7.5 million people (The Statistical Institute of Catalonia, 2017; Scotland, 2017). In Scotland 62% claim to have a "Scottish only" identity, while 18% hold "Scottish and British identities only" (Scotland's Census, 2014). In Catalonia 21.7% identify themselves as "only Catalan", whereas 18.6% feel "more Catalan than Spanish" and 41% feel "equally Spanish and Catalan" (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018). Thus populations in both regions have relatively high regional identities. Therefore neither Scotland nor Catalonia have been completely integrated into the larger states and they constitute minority sub-state nations in the present day.

Both Catalonia and Scotland have extensive powers. Scotland has devolved powers and a separate parliament since the Scotland Act of 1998 (Patrick, 2016: 195, 201). Thus the United Kingdom has responded to the democratic will of the Scottish people. Similarly, Spain has gone through a process of democratisation and decentralisation. Catalonia restored its institutions of self-government with the 1979 Statute of Autonomy and in 2006 amended the Statute to define itself as a nation (Patrick, 2016: 203). However, while Catalan autonomy is recognised by the Spanish Constitution, in 2010 its Constitutional Court removed the amendment on Catalonia being a nation (Borgen, 2010: 999). Nonetheless, both nations have been doing relatively well. In addition to political power, they have economic wealth. Scotland has great oil reserves, a higher per capita gross domestic product and a lower unemployment rate than the rest of Great

Britain (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1121; Patrick, 2016: 201). Likewise, Catalonia is the richest region in Spain (Patrick, 2016: 203-204). Thus Scotland and Catalonia can be regarded as powerful regions.

Both minority nations have independence movements with long traditions. The Catalan movement dates back to the beginning of the dictatorship in 1938, while the current Scottish movement was established with the Scottish National Party (SNP) in 1934 (Patrick, 2016:196, 201). However, both regions have recently become more separatist. In the 2011 Scottish Parliamentary election the SNP won significantly more votes than in previous rounds of elections and gained 69 of the 129 seats (Herbert et al., 2011: 3). Thus SNP gained support for an independence referendum (Herbert et al., 2011: 7). The British Government allowed Scotland to hold the referendum (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1121). Thus, in 2014 the Scottish people voted on the issue, and while the pro-independence side was strong, 55% voted for staying in the UK (Bourne, 2014: 95). Nonetheless, in light of the UK leaving the EU, a new one is being considered. In addition, in the 2016 Scottish Parliament elections, the SNP again won the most number of seats (63 out of the 129 seats) (Aiton et al., 2016: 3). Thus there is continuing strong support for the party that stands for Scottish independence. Similarly to Scotland, Catalonia has taken moves towards independence. However, unlike the British Government allowing Scotland to hold a referendum, the Spanish Government has not approved or supported Catalonia's efforts. In 2014 Catalonia held a referendum, however it was non-binding as it was not recognised by the Spanish Government (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1121; Patrick, 2016: 196). Also, the Catalan President Artur Mas and two other Catalan politicians were prosecuted for organising the referendum (Patrick, 2016: 196). However, the referendum showed great support for an independent state (80%) (Patrick, 2016: 196). Thus Catalan leaders have been determined to continue their fight for independence. The process took off with the 2015 Catalan Parliamentary elections, in which the pro-independence parties won 62 out of the 135 seats and announced they will form an independent Catalan state (Patrick, 2016: 216). Thus in October 2017 Catalonia held a referendum not supported by the Spanish Government. The results were controversial as they showed 90% support for secession, but voter turnout was 43% and the elections were not supervised by an independent

body (Torres, 2017). Nonetheless, Catalonia's president of the time found it gave them a mandate to pursue separatism (Torres, 2017). The Spanish Government reacted by taking control over the region and announcing early elections (Torres, 2018). In addition, the court is investigating people for organising the event, which led president Puigdemont to flee to Brussels (Torres, 2018). The new elections gave separatist parties 70 seats, however, they are currently pursuing more moderate ways to self-determination and are in a difficult search for a new president (Torres, 2018). Thus the situation in Catalonia is complex and it remains to be seen where this leads.

However, in addition to being more assertive, both independence movements have included Europe in their programmes. The SNP is widely using the slogan of "independence in Europe", while Catalonia is promoting itself as "a new state in Europe" (Bourne, 2014: 106; Lähteenmäki-Smith, 1999: 74). Thus both movements envision becoming members of the EU in the event of independence (Bourne, 2014: 96). Catalonia and Scotland have been connected to the EU for a while. They have been integrated into the union through Spain (member since 1986) and the UK (member since 1973). During this time they have both benefitted from the EU's regional policy. They have received regional funds, as well as been given access to policy-making on the EU level via the creation of the CoR (Borgen, 2010: 1025; Tortola, 2017: 236). Scotland and Catalonia have been made more competitive and prosperous via financial support, as well as been empowered by being institutionalised into EU policy-making. Thus the regions have a reinforced regional identity, stronger economy and they are better positioned to compete on the EU level. Therefore, Catalonia and Scotland are suitable cases for analysing the connection between strengthened secessionism and EU integration. Although the two regions have a difference in terms of the opportunities provided by their state for self-determination, they nonetheless are cases that show strong mobilisation.

2.2. Data and methods

This thesis takes a qualitative approach in order to show how European integration has strengthened demands for more power and/or independence in Scotland and Catalonia. It establishes a connection between the changes caused by European integration to Scotland's and Catalonia's opportunity structures and the subsequent mobilisation in the

regions. This is done by analysing the timeline of key events, as well as the reasoning of secessionist actors.

Firstly, to provide a context for analysing the possibility of Catalonia and Scotland becoming independent states within the union, it is necessary to give an overview of the international environment European integration has created. It aims to show that Europe is prosperous, peaceful, secure, stable and organised, as well as that the EU institutional framework fosters co-operation and is favourable for small states.

Secondly, the task is to establish how European integration has more directly empowered regions, in particular Scotland and Catalonia, and how some powers of the member states have been transferred to subnational (and supranational) levels, thus creating MLG in the EU. For this the impact of European regional policy on Scotland and Catalonia is analysed, including the funds they have received and how they have been involved as partners in policy-making. Furthermore, this section analyses how the EU has provided Scotland and Catalonia access to EU decision-making and implementation through the subsidiarity principle, the Council, the European Parliament, and the CoR.

The third objective is to establish how the changed international environment and the political and economic empowerment of Scotland and Catalonia have encouraged them to pursue their interests on multiple arenas, ask for more powers as well as for independence. To do this, the chapter examines the timeline of regional mobilisation, the dynamic between the central government and the region, the attitudes of the public towards greater autonomy and independence as well as the EU, and the secessionist movements' reasoning on why independence is needed, how it could be achieved and what role the EU has in those arguments and visions. Such an analysis allows us to better comprehend the emergence of regionalism in Scotland and Catalonia, and establish links between regional mobilisation and European integration.

Thus, material about the empowerment and mobilisation of Scotland and Catalonia, as well as their dynamic with the central governments since the SEA is collected. This

information can be mainly found from the official websites of EU institutions, as well as the regions' and their central governments' webpages. Data on public opinion is mainly derived from regional election results, as well as from opinion polls, such as those conducted by ScotCen Social Research and the Centre for Opinion Studies of the Generalitat of Catalonia (CEO). Data used from the ScotCen Social Research covers Scottish social attitudes since the time it was collected (from the 1999 devolution) to its latest publication in 2017, with data presented up to 2016 (Curtice, 2017: 3). Data on Catalan public opinion over time is collected from the CEO's first wave political opinion barometres, ranging from the first one published in 2005 to the latest published (at the time of writing) in 2017. Additional information is provided by the CEO's latest 2018 political context survey. For statements on independence, the discourses of secessionist ruling parties and their leaders are scrutinised, as they are the ones that have brought independence to the agenda. Thus in case of Scotland the focus is on the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Scottish first ministers Alex Salmond and Nicola Sturgeon. The discourse is collected from the Scottish Government's, the Scottish Parliament's and the SNP's websites. In case of Catalonia the focus is on its presidents Artur Mas and Carles Puigdemont, who have led the main secessionist party coalitions Convergence and Union (CiU), Together for Yes (JxSí) and Junts per Catalunya. The statements are collected from the Catalan Generalitat's webpage.

In general, inferences about the role of EU integration in regional mobilisation and the rise of separatism can be made based on this information. However, the validity of this research is affected by its limited scope. This thesis is not able to discuss all facets of deep-rooted issues in Catalonia and Scotland. In addition, the separatist actors might provide inaccurate information or bend it in their favour, thus threatening the reliability of this research. Nonetheless, by using different types of data from various sources, the shortcomings should be compensated. Also, while there are some concerns regarding language barriers for data on Catalonia, it does not present a severe limitation as the escalation of the crisis has drawn great international attention and thus there exists enough English language material on the issue.

2.3. The international context created by European integration

European integration started in the post-World War II context with the aim of promoting peace and prosperity in Europe and forming a strong front against the communist threat. The plan was to repress nationalism and alleviate tensions between European countries, especially Germany and France, by creating a supranational institution that would curb realist anarchy and domesticate international relations (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 52). For this the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) was established in 1951 between France, Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg. The countries integrated their markets for coal and steel under the supranational ECSC, thus making them interdependent and therefore rendering war unreasonable. It also helped recover the European economy (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 69). The ECSC laid the foundation for further integration within the framework that is known since 1993 as the EU (Nobel Media AB, n.d.). Through signing new treaties, subsequent reforms and accepting new members, European integration has widened and deepened. The EU has transformed from a community of six countries to a union with currently 28 member states. Over the years, border controls have been eliminated between the Schengen Area countries, there is free movement for people, goods, services and capital within the single market and there is a common currency for the Eurozone countries. Areas for cooperation have widened, even to include foreign, security and defence policies. In addition, the union has developed a body of law that practically serves as its constitution (Claes & De Visser, 2012: 86). Furthermore, the powers of the directly elected European Parliament and the supranational Commission have been increased, along with the usage of QMV in the Council, thereby reducing the power of the nation states and strengthening supranationalism in the EU. Thus as a result of integration the EU has gone through a major transformation.

In the present day, the EU provides an organised, stable, safe and peaceful environment. European integration has managed to an extent domesticate international relations (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 89). Member state governments have voluntarily delegated or lost some of their powers and decisions are made by actors from different levels (Hoppe, 2007: 71). Therefore, the EU is regarded to be more than an international organisation (Piattoni, 2010: 1). It is rather a political system that is governed and where

actors operate collectively based on certain norms and rules (Bache & Flinders, 2004: 3; George, 2004: 113; Patrick, 2016: 210). The core values and rules are laid down in the two main treaties: the Treaty on European Union (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). For example, Article 2 TEU states the basic values of the EU such as freedom, democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights and minorities, and in Article 3(1) TEU the EU sets its aim to promoting peace and its values (European Union, 2016). A supranational Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) interprets the common law and oversees its application (Claes & De Visser, 2012: 108). Also, if a member state were to fail to fulfill its commitments, it would face economic and political sanctions (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 6). For example, as set out in Article 7 TEU, if there is a risk that a member state would breach the values stated in Article 2, it could be denied certain rights, such as voting rights in the Council (European Union, 2016). Thus the EU has managed to control the actions of member states (Patrick, 2016: 210). It was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize 2012 "for over six decades contributed to the advancement of peace and reconciliation, democracy and human rights in Europe" (Nobel Media AB, n.d.). Thus integration has managed to transform Europe from a realist anarchy into a peaceful and organised community.

The international environment that the EU provides is favourable for small states. While size and capabilities are central to security in an anarchic self-help system, there is no need to fear invasion or create or seek protection from large states in the peaceful, stable and highly institutionalised environment prevalent in the EU today (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1117). The EU is also committed to providing an area of security and protecting its external borders as set out in Article 3(2) TEU (European Union, 2016). Also, member states cooperate on defense and security matters. They share their spending plans and there is a European Defence Fund for common research and development in the area (Strategic Communications, 2018). Twenty-five member states have shown commitment to increased cooperation by joining the Permanent Structured Cooperation (Strategic Communications, 2018). Thus, in addition to providing a secure environment, the EU facilitates cooperation, which makes the states as a collective stronger. Secondly, economic integration has reduced the negative aspects of being a small state (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1117). The internal market provides for the free movement

of people, goods, services and capital and opens up a large market for smaller states (Muro & Vlaskamp, 2016: 1117). Thus small states are not isolated and can take advantage of the integrated market. It improves member states' economic welfare (Hooghe & Marks, 2001: 47). Furthermore, Article 3(3) TEU provides for cohesion and solidarity among member states, while respecting their cultural diversity (European Union, 2016). This means that weaker regions are compensated for the negative effects of an open market and that small nations need not be afraid of losing their identities in integration. Furthermore, integration has increased political interaction among member states (Hoppe, 2007: 67). The EU has created institutions for cooperation, which can be regarded to be favourable for small countries. Article 4(2) TEU puts the member states on an equal standing (European Union, 2016). Thus there is equally one member from each state in the European Council, the Council, the Commission and the CJEU. Therefore, a representative of a small country such as Luxembourg or Cyprus is on the same level with those of the larger states (Piattoni, 2010: 40). For example, the heads of state or government of all states negotiate in the European Council and decide by consensus. While in reality some states are more influential than the others, the institutions open possibilities that would not otherwise exist. Also, the EU has created rules that support small states. Thus, in the European Parliament the guarantee of a minimum number of representatives gives smaller states greater representation, as a Maltese citizens' vote is 12 times bigger than that of a German citizen (Bengoetxea, 2012: 245). In addition, in the Council a double majority (55% of the members of the Council and 65% of the population of the union) is required for a decision to be taken by QMV, and there is a possibility for a minority (at least four Council members) to block decisions, so that the smaller states would not be overridden (Bengoetxea, 2012: 245; European Union, 2016). In general, the EU's rules are favourable for small states, as they are common to all member states, regardless of size, and the EU offers enforcement mechanisms, ensuring that each country follows the rules. Thus, the supranationality of the EU is advantageous to small countries.

Shortly, European integration has transformed the political and economic situation in Europe. The EU now provides a peaceful, stable, secure and organised environment, in which states can cooperate. This environment is favourable for small states and has

given them opportunities, such as access to the internal market and institutions, that would not otherwise exist. Thus, this provides the context for analysing the prospect of Catalonia and Scotland becoming independent small states within the EU.

2.4. The empowerment of regions in the EU

In addition to creating a favourable environment for small states, which makes it possible to consider Catalonia and Scotland as viable independent small states within the EU, the EU has had a more direct impact on regions. When integration started the Community was state-centric, however over time power has been dispersed not only to the supranational level, but also to the subnational level.

Regional policy

As noted by MLG scholars, the turning point was the signing of the SEA (1986), which led to the reform of the structural funds. Set up in 1958 and 1975 respectively, the European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), - known as the structural funds, were created to minimise the structural differences between member states (European Commission, 2014b: 4, 6-7). The ESF aids in improving the skills of jobseekers and helping workers adapt to changes, thus increasing the employment rate in member states (European Commission, 2014b: 7). The ERDF, mainly advocated by the UK since it saw its contributions to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) go to other member states, is designed to aid less developed regions (Lecarte, 2017; Piattoni, 2010: 131). However, the funds did not add much value as central governments, which were the managers of the funds, used them to replace their own regional spending (Keating, 1998b: 173). Since the completion of the single market with the SEA was to lead to enhanced competitiveness, which would benefit the stronger states and regions, and as the Community had accepted less developed southern European countries Greece (1981), Spain (1986) and Portugal (1986), a reform was needed to avoid negative effects and further inequalities (European Commission, 2014b: 4; Piattoni, 2010: 104). Thus in 1988 a reform proposed by the Commission enhanced its influence over the funds and helped develop a genuine regional policy, which would help all regions reach their potential (European Commission, 2014b: 3; Keating, 1998b: 173). To improve the funds' effectiveness, the Commission set key priorities that they would be used for, focused them on the poorest

regions and required the funds to be used as additional to national spending (European Commission, n.d.). Furthermore, it assigned the funds to multi-annual programmes instead of ad hoc projects (European Commission, n.d.). These programmes were to be designed, implemented and monitored in partnership with the Commission, member states and regions (European Commission, n.d.). Over the years the partnership has been strengthened by involving civil society and non-governmental organisations in the implementation process as well (European Commission, 2005: 3, 12). Thus projects reflect the needs of regions better and regional policy has become more legitimate (European Commission, n.d.; European Commission, 2005: 3). As a result, the Commission has also enhanced its own legitimacy and position vis-à-vis the member states and has acquired autonomous influence. Simultaneously, the regions' institutional capacities have been advanced, they have been given access to information and to contacts with other levels of government (European Commission, 2005: 4). Thus the reform of the structural funds has introduced an element of MLG into the EU and the EU has become more diverse.

Over the years the regional policy of the EU has developed into an important and effective tool. Today the ESF and ERDF, along with the Cohesion Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) constitute the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIFs) (European Commission, 2014b: 6). The ESIFs are the main instrument of the regional policy, with the Cohesion Fund focusing on supporting environmental projects and transport networks, the EAFRD aiding rural areas and the EMFF assisting fisheries and aquaculture (European Commission, 2014b: 6). For the 2014-2020 planning period the ESIFs are worth over one third of the EU budget (European Commission, 2014b: 4, 15). However, due to the 2004 enlargement, which saw ten relatively weak countries join the union, thus increasing the population of the EU by 20% and gross domestic product (GDP) only by 5%, a great proportion of the funds were directed towards the new member states (213 billion euros to the existing members states versus 22 billion euros to the new members during 2004-2007) (European Commission, 2014b: 4). Nonetheless, several regions have benefited from the funds and regional policy and continue to do so.

Scotland has benefited from the funds for over four decades (McIver et al., 2015: 22). For instance, during the 1994-1999 planning period 85% of Scotland's population was eligible for structural funds and still during the 2014-2020 period Scotland's Northern part is regarded as a transition region (GDP/head between $\geq 75\%$ and $<90\%$ of EU average) and Southern part as a more developed region (GDP/head $\geq 90\%$ of EU average), which benefit from the ESIFs (European Commission, 2014b: 3; Lähteenmäki-Smith, 1999: 120). In the current period Scotland will get over 900 million euros from the structural funds to reduce poverty and increase employment, as well as to promote innovation and growth (Scottish National Party, n.d.b). Importantly to Scotland, as 78% of its land area is agricultural, it will also receive 4096 million euros from the CAP first pillar (which is funded from the EU budget) and 478 million from the second pillar (which is jointly financed by the member states and the EAFRD) to support farmers and the rural economy (McIver, et al., 2015: 46-47). It will help them produce food for domestic consumption, as well as for export and thus sustain rural communities, especially the less favoured hill areas (Scottish National Party, n.d.c). Likewise, Scotland will receive 108 million euros (44% of the UK allocation) from the EMFF to support sustainable fishing and diversify coastal economies (McIver, et al., 2015: 49; McIver & Wakefield, 2016: 13). This is important as areas such as Aberdeenshire and the Western Isles depend largely on fishing, with Scotland being the largest producer of the Atlantic salmon in the EU (McIver, et al., 2015: 49-50). Lastly, for Scotland it is also a great opportunity to compete for transnational competitive funds, such as the Horizon 2020 programme, which supports research and innovation and that benefits Scottish universities (McIver & Wakefield, 2016: 3). In general, the funds are beneficial for Scotland. For instance, during the previous programming period (2007-2013) the funds helped create over 40.000 jobs and get 100.000 people employed (Scottish National Party, n.d.b). Moreover, for Scotland the funds are relevant as compared to its population per cent, it receives a bigger share of the funds than the rest of the UK (McIver & Wakefield, 2016: 3). Thus EU funds have offered Scotland wide-ranging support. As a result Scotland has been economically empowered.

In addition to improving Scotland's economic status, the structural funds have promoted its political capabilities. Prior to the reform, the management of the funds in the UK was centralised and they were used as a substitute for national spending (Bache, 2004: 169, 174). Mainly it was down to the Conservative government, especially Thatcher's government, which wanted to keep the public sector, including the local government, as minimal (Bache, 2004: 168). Thus the UK Government resisted the reform of the structural funds. As regards the partnership principle, the central government officials in regional offices continued to be in control of meetings and decision-making (Bache, 2004: 169). Similarly, the UK Government resisted the additionality principle, which led the Commission to freeze funds aimed for coal-mining areas, including those in Scotland, from 1992 until 1993 (Piattoni, 2010: 112-113). Eventually, as a result of joint pressure from the Commission and local authorities, the central government agreed to use the funds as additional spending (Piattoni, 2010: 113-114). However, the Commission's intent was not to undermine the national government as such, but to implement the regional policy properly (Piattoni, 2010: 112). Nonetheless, it contributed to the development of MLG. While the Labour government in office since 1997 was more positive towards the EU and the regional level, the central government remained in control over processing the funds (Bache, 2004: 168, 172, 176). Thus, for example, CAP funds are allocated to the UK and then distributed on to the administrations of the regions (McIver, et al., 2015: 46). This has empowered Scotland, as its government is responsible for administering the funds, however since the UK Government distributes the funds, the Scottish Government finds it receives an unfair share of the funds (McIver, et al., 2015: 16; Scottish National Party, n.d.c). Thus, it can be said that Scotland has been empowered, both economically and politically, but its position could still be improved.

Similarly, Catalonia has profited from EU regional policy since the end of the 1980s. Over the period of 1989-2013 it got 10.012 million euros from the structural funds and the Cohesion Fund (European Commission [EC] Representation in Barcelona & Generalitat de Catalunya [Generalitat], 2015: 2, 8). The funds have helped protect the environment, advance research and innovation, develop businesses and infrastructure, improve peoples' skills, as well as contributed to territorial cooperation (Generalitat de

Catalunya, 2015a: 4-5; EC Representation in Barcelona & Generalitat, 2015: 2). For instance, from 2007 to 2013 Catalonia took part of the Spain-France Programme, which the ERDF supported with 169 million euros, of which around 33.39 million went to projects in Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015a: 5-6). Thus the structural policy has enabled subnational authorities, such as Catalonia, to foster relations with other subnational authorities, which would have been unlikely otherwise (Piattoni, 2010: 108). In general EU funds have offered Catalonia wide-ranging support. The funds have aided in improving Catalonia's GDP per capita, economic productivity, unemployment rate, foreign direct investment (FDI) and the internationalisation of Catalan enterprises (IDOM, 2005: 5-6). Thus, over years its share of the Cohesion Fund has been decreased and during 2014-2020 it no longer qualifies, since it is regarded to be a more developed region (European Commission, 2014b: 3; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015a: 1). During the 2014-2020 period Catalonia will receive over 304.742 million euros from the ESF, over 808.433 million from the ERDF and 348.500 million from the EAFRD (European Commission, 2014a: 6, 8-9). In addition, Catalonia, like Scotland, bids for competitive funds. Ten small and innovative Catalan companies have managed to get support from the Horizon 2020 programme to support their growth (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016b). Furthermore, the structural funds have enhanced the relationship between the different administrative levels in Spain (European Commission, 2005: 5). For instance, the management of the ERDF for the 2007-2014 programme involved the General Administration of the State, the Government of Catalonia (the Generalitat) and local administration, while the management of the ESF involved the General Administration of the State and the Generalitat (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015a: 2). Thus the partnership principle is used for the administration of the funds and MLG has developed. Catalonia's Government is responsible for administering European funds in areas of its competence and for helping Catalonia's public and private institutions, as well as individuals to access the funds (Parlament de Catalunya, 2014: 9). Thus, like Scotland, Catalonia has been empowered economically and politically as a result of the regional policy of the EU.

Subsidiarity

While the regional policy functioned according to the principle of subsidiarity as decision-making and implementation was brought as close to the citizens as possible, the principle was formalised with the Maastricht Treaty in 1993. It required that decisions be made at the least centralised way, however it did not explicitly refer to regions (Bengoetxea, 2012: 237; European Commission, 2014b: 4). Regions were added to the formulation with the Lisbon Treaty that is in force since 2009 (Skoutaris, 2012: 226). Now article 5(3) TEU provides that in areas where the EU does not have exclusive competence, it can act only when the member states – that is the central or regional and local level – prove unable to do so at a sufficient level (European Union, 2016). Thus there is now a direct reference to the regions in the principle. Furthermore, Article 2 of Protocol No 2 on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality requires the Commission to consult widely before proposing legislative acts, including taking into account the regional and local levels (European Union, 2016). This formalises the regions in decision-making and empowers them. In addition, Article 6 of the protocol gives national parliaments the power to issue opinions on whether draft legislative acts comply with the subsidiarity principle and in doing so they can consult regional parliaments with legislative powers (European Union, 2016). Thus, regions are given information early and they can participate in decision-making at an effective stage (Skoutaris, 2012: 212). In Spain the national Parliament forwards draft legislative acts to regional parliaments, whose opinions it must include in its opinion that it sends to the EU, although it has no obligation to take their opinions into account in the national opinion (The European Institute of Public Administration [EIPA], the Centre for European Policy Studies [CEPS] & the Centre for Strategy & Evaluation Services [CSES], 2016). In Catalonia, the Catalan Parliament is responsible for monitoring the principle of subsidiarity as well as the EU's draft legislations that are in its interests or affect the powers of the Generalitat, which transposes and implements EU legislation (Parlament de Catalunya, 2014: 1, 4). Thus the Generalitat can issue opinions to the Spanish Government also on other EU matters that affect its powers or interests (Parlament de Catalunya, 2014: 5). Therefore, although Catalonia's positions are not binding for the Spanish central positions, it has been empowered as it has been given access to information and a channel for issuing opinions, as well as the power to

implement EU legislation. In the UK, the central government is obliged to forward the devolved administrations information on all EU draft legislations and even meetings, which relate to issues that affect devolved responsibilities (Cabinet Office, 2012: 29). It also involves the devolved administrations in forming the UK position at the Joint Ministerial Committee (Cabinet Office, 2012: 9, 13). Thus the Scottish Parliament has been given powers to monitor European matters, and the Scottish Parliament and Government are responsible for implementing EU legislation in devolved matters, such as agriculture, fisheries and the environment (Carter & McLeod, 2005: 75; McIver, et al., 2015: 16). Therefore, like Catalonia, Scotland has been empowered to monitor and implement EU legislation. Thus again, with the principle of subsidiarity, MLG has strengthened in the EU.

Involvement in EU institutions

In addition to bringing decision-making and implementation to the lowest possible levels, regions have been given access to EU institutions since the Maastricht Treaty. Firstly, the Maastricht Treaty amended the provision on the Council of Ministers, which consists of representatives of the member states. When before each state had to delegate "one of its members", meaning ministers of the central government, then after the EU treaty Article 16(2) TEU states that the members of the Council should be "at ministerial level" and be allowed to vote for its member state (European Union, 2016; Van Nuffel, 2012: 196-197). Thus a minister from a regional government can take part in the Council directly and not rely on the central government for information or influence in the EU (Hopkins, 2002: 197-198). While regional ministers must represent the member state, not the region, this provision opens up the Council to other actors other than the central government officials (Hooghe, & Marks, 2001: 83). In Spain the involvement of the autonomous communities has been increased over time, since the creation of the Conference on Issues Related to the European Union (CARUE), which met for the first time in 1989 (Ministerio de la Presidencia y para las Administraciones Territoriales [MPR], n.d.a). As this comes a year after the structural funds reform, it can be implied that the Commission's initiative opened the way for regions' participation in Community affairs. A year after the Maastricht Treaty, the CARUE established sectoral conferences for the communities' participation in European affairs, thus developing

Spanish positions before EU institutions (MPR, n.d.a). Also in the same year, in 1994, the Constitutional Court ruled that all issues with an external dimension cannot be regarded as the exclusive competence of the Spanish state (Parlament de Catalunya, 2014:1). Thus the autonomous communities could participate in the EU. Finally, in 2004 the CARUE agreed to involve the autonomous communities in the Council by including one regional government member in the Spanish delegation, who would coordinate its position with the central government and all autonomous communities (MPR, n.d.a). Thus the Catalan Generalitat takes part not only in the formation of the Spanish position before the EU, but also participates in the Spanish delegation to the Council in matters, where it has legislative powers (Parlament de Catalunya, 2014: 9). In case of the UK, before devolution the territorial offices of the central government represented the interests of the regions on European affairs (Keating, 1998b: 168). Thus, as the first regional elections in Scotland were in 1999, the provision for regional governments to be able to take part in the Council did not have great impact in Scotland from its establishment. While Scotland's interests were lobbied for, they were secondary to the central government's position (Keating, 1998b: 168). However, since devolution Scottish ministers can attend the Council meetings in areas that are devolved or which impact on them or are of importance to Scotland (Cabinet Office, 2012: 22-23). However, Scotland too has to coordinate its position with other devolved administrations and the central government (Cabinet Office, 2012: 23, 32). Furthermore, the UK minister decides on a case-by-case basis, who will attend the Council, as well as the positions taken at negotiations (Cabinet Office, 2012: 32-33). Thus the UK Government retains strong control. Therefore, while Scotland and Catalonia have been empowered by getting direct access to one of the main legislative bodies of the EU, they must represent the member states as a whole and coordinate their positions with other regions and the central government.

Regional politicians can also participate in the other legislative body of the EU – the European Parliament. In countries where members of European Parliament (MEPs) are elected in regional circumscriptions or where regional parties participate in European Parliament elections, regional politicians are implicitly the representatives of their regions and thus represent the regions' interests (Van Nuffel, 2012: 199). In the

European Parliament they can also support and receive support from other regional MEPs with similar interests (Van Nuffel, 2012: 199). Thus, for instance, the European Free Alliance (EFA) is an organisation that unites 40 nationalist, regionalist and autonomist parties, which are representatives of stateless nations, regions and minorities in the EU (European Free Alliance [EFA], 2016). Since 2004 it is a European Political Party recognised and funded by the European Parliament (EFA, 2016). The EFA promotes diversity, democracy, MLG, devolution, regionalism, autonomy, self-determination, nationalism, as well as independence and internal enlargement of the EU (EFA, 2016). Thus subnational actors are able to build transregional groups with each other to support their causes. Scotland has currently 6 MEPs (out of the UK's 73 MEPs) (European Parliament, n.d.b). Two of them are from the Scottish National Party (SNP) and also take part in the EFA (European Parliament, n.d.b; The Greens/EFA in the European Parliament [EP], 2018). Thus Scotland has politicians to represent its interests directly in the EU. Furthermore, as the SNP is the party that stands for Scottish independence, two MEPs are able to promote Scotland's independence on the EU level and seek support from the EFA for that. Similarly, Catalonia has 9 MEPs to represent its interests in the EU (out of Spain's 54 MEPs) (European Parliament, n.d.a; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014b). Two of them were from the Convergence and Union (CiU) nationalist alliance, which was dissolved in 2015 (now one MEP is unassigned and the other is part of the Catalan European Democratic Party [PDeCAT], which is also a nationalist party), two MEPs are from the nationalist Republican Left of Catalonia (ERC) and one MEP is from the pro-independence Initiative for Catalonia Greens (ICV) party (European Parliament, n.d.a; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014b). Thus in total Catalonia has five members from nationalist parties in the European Parliament, two of whom are also members of the EFA (European Parliament, n.d.a; The Greens/EFA in the EP, 2018). Therefore, subnational actors are no longer nested within states and can connect with EU level institutions and other regions directly.

Finally, regions are involved on the EU level through the Committee of the Regions (CoR). It was created with the Maastricht Treaty as an assembly of regional and local authorities that advises EU institutions (Bux, 2018). The members of the CoR are diverse. The criteria is for the members to have political mandate – thus the members

can be regional presidents, mayors or elected representatives (European Union, n.d.c). Usually the representatives from federal or regionalised countries are from the regional level, while representatives of unitary states are from the local level (Skoutaris, 2012: 224). Spain delegates to the CoR 17 members from the 17 autonomous communities and four from local authorities (Ministerio de la Presidencia y para las Administraciones Territoriales, n.d.b). The UK delegates 24 members, with Scotland having two members – one member of Parliament and one councillor (Bux, 2018; European Union, n.d.b). The CoR can issue an opinion on EU legislation in areas that affect regions and cities, including cohesion, the environment, transport and social affairs to name a few (European Union, n.d.c). Its main task is to ensure that MLG, subsidiarity and proximity are followed in EU laws (European Union, n.d.c). The CoR was strengthened with the Lisbon Treaty by making it mandatory for the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament to consult it during the whole lawmaking process (European Union, n.d.d). In addition, the CoR was given the right to refer to the Court of Justice cases, where it finds that it was not consulted properly or where the principle of subsidiarity has been infringed (European Union, n.d.d). However, while the CoR has been strengthened, it is still not on a par with the Commission, the Council or the European Parliament. It remains a consultative body. Furthermore, the diversity of CoR's members means it is difficult to find common interests (Van Nuffel, 2012: 199). It is especially disappointing for regions that are able to participate in the EU legislative process (Hopkins, 2002: 204). Therefore, the regions from Austria, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, the UK, and island regions from Portugal and Finland have had annual meetings since 2000 under the Conference of European Regions with Legislative Power (REGLEG) (Borgen, 2010: 1022-1023; Jeffery, 2005: 38-39). REGLEG allows them to exchange information and have a common voice before EU institutions (Borgen, 2010: 1023). Thus, while regions have been institutionalised into the EU, stronger regions, especially regions with legislative powers, still find they could have greater influence on the EU level.

Shortly, the EU has empowered secessionist regions and inadvertently given them incentives to mobilise. By funding regions, the EU has made them more competitive and by institutionalising subnational actors in the EU, they have been given access to

information, decision-making and implementation. Regions are no longer nested within member states and can connect directly with EU level actors and other subnational actors. Thus regions are able to pursue their own interests on the EU level. Although central governments are still powerful, especially in foreign affairs, and the Europe of the Regions notion has not been realised, significant powers that used to rest with the member states have been transferred to the supranational and subnational levels. Thus the EU has become more diverse and elements of MLG are present in its functioning.

2.5. Secessionism in Scotland in the context of European integration

Although Scotland has a long tradition of nationalism, claims for autonomy from the state strengthened in the 1970s. Devolution had been promoted since the 1920s and 1930s, and the SNP had been in existence since 1934, however it was only 40 years after its creation that the SNP received noticeable support in elections (Scottish National Party, n.d.d; Swenden, 2006: 34). Political issues had become discussed in a regional frame and the nationalist movement had strengthened. It was the first time that general issues were not enough for statewide parties to gain votes from Scotland (Swenden, 2006: 34). Thus, the minority Labour government needed the backing of the SNP (Hopkins, 2002: 166). As the SNP pressed for home rule, a devolution bill was put to referendum in Scotland in 1979 (Swenden, 2006: 34; The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). While the majority voted in favour of devolution, the supporters represented 32.9% of the electorate, which fell short of the required 40% (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). Thus the SNP withdrew its support from the Labour government and subsequently the Conservative party took over and erased devolution from the agenda for the time being (Hopkins, 2002: 167). Nonetheless, this represented the rise of regionalism in Scotland. Owing to the improvement of the international environment and the UK joining the Community in 1973, the Labour government was able to offer decentralisation. However, it was still a time when regions got the majority of their finances from the central government and when the UK provided the link between regions and the international market and institutions. Thus UK governments often emphasised the benefits of being part of the state, such as high per capita welfare payments (Swenden, 2006: 34). The SNP was also Eurosceptical. It campaigned against joining the Community as it believed the integrated market would harm Scotland's economy and

that decision-making would move even further away from Scotland (Hoppe, 2007: 76). Thus the SNP's plans for more autonomy were seen in a national frame. This confirms regional studies scholars' claim about the rise of regionalism in the post World War II context.

However, over the next decades Scotland's conditions changed with European integration and subsequently it mobilised in multiple arenas to pursue its interests. The ruling Conservative government was focused on reducing the role of the public sector. This meant that further expansion of powers to regions was not supported and also the welfare state was minimised, which was contrary to leftist Scotland (Swenden, 2006: 35). Policies, such as the poll tax, were not supported by Scottish members of Parliament and thus led to resentment (Scottish Government, 2014a). Meanwhile the reform proposed by the European Commission in 1988 saw the participation of regions in policymaking and introduced measures to mitigate the negative effects of market integration on the less developed regions. With the pressure of the Commission, Scotland benefited from the funds. Furthermore, with the Maastricht Treaty the principle of subsidiarity was formally established, regions were given access to the CoR and the Council and the single market came into effect. The single market opened up a large market for export, enabled foreign businesses to invest in Scotland, EU citizens to add to Scotland's human capital, as well as facilitated global trade through EU trade agreements (McIver, et al., 2015: 4, 18; Scottish Government, 2016b: 2-3). Thus some decision-making powers had been transferred to the subnational and supranational levels and regions had become more dependent on the market and EU funds and less dependent on the state. A new level had been added to the power relations and new opportunities for Scotland had been opened. The Scottish people had become less Eurosceptic (Curtice, 2017: 2). As Table 1 shows, by 1999 only 40% supported leaving the EU or limiting its powers (Curtice, 2017: 14).

Table 1. Attitudes towards Britain's relationship with the EU, Scotland, 1999-2016 (%)

	1999	2000	2003	2004	2005	2013	2014	2015	2016
Leave the EU	10	11	11	13	14	19	17	17	25
Stay in EU but reduce its powers	30	27	25	23	39	29	36	43	42
Leave things as are	16	22	20	20	19	18	23	20	21
Stay in EU and increase its powers	28	22	28	28	8	16	9	11	5
Work for single European government	10	9	8	8	6	7	8	6	3

Data: Curtice, 2017: 14

Also the SNP came to view the EU as an opportunity (Hoppe, 2007: 76). Thus reacting to the changed international environment, Scotland mobilised in Europe to pursue its interests (Scotland Europa, 2018b). In 1991 Scotland established Scottish Enterprise and in 1992 Scotland Europa so that Scotland could be active on the European arena, have more influence in European institutions and before member states and regions, as well as have better information in order to secure Scotland's interests and promote Scotland's economy (Scotland Europa, 2018a; Scotland Europa, 2018b). Later the Scottish Government EU Office was also established, which operates in the same building with Scotland Europa (Scotland Europa, 2018a). Thus Scotland had constituted itself as an actor and defined a regional interest. As the benefits of the UK had decreased, nationalism increased (Swenden, 2006: 35). Devolution was gaining momentum again (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). While already a year after the Commission's 1988 reform the Scottish Constitutional Convention was formed to make plans for a Scottish Parliament, it was not until 1997, when the Labour party won the elections with a campaign promising devolution, that devolution was put to a referendum (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). This time it succeeded and in 1988 the

Scotland Act was passed, which created a devolved Scottish Parliament with tax-varying powers and a Scottish Executive (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). The Scottish Parliament received primary legislative powers in areas such as health, education, agriculture, fisheries and tourism (Cabinet Office & Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, 2013). Although several issues, including foreign affairs, defense, energy regulation, social security and immigration remained reserved to the UK Government, and the devolved regions are financed by block grants from the central government (in addition to their own tax raising powers), people believed devolution would improve Scotland's position (Cabinet Office & Office of the Secretary of State for Scotland, 2013; Cabinet Office et al., 2018; Scottish National Party, n.d.d). Accordingly, in 1999 a majority (59%) supported devolution (Curtice, 2017: 5). Thus due to European integration Scotland became less dependent on the UK and it came to see the EU as an opportunity. Subsequently Scotland mobilised on the European arena to pursue its interests, as well as requested more autonomy from the state. Therefore, new regionalism had emerged in Scotland.

In the following years as European integration progressed requests for autonomy in Scotland strengthened, leading to claims for independence. Over the years Scotland had been able to take part in EU decision-making and implementation as well as the internal market and establish itself in the EU. In addition, the Lisbon Treaty, which was signed in 2007 and took effect in 2009, empowered regions even more by strengthening the CoR and adding an explicit reference to regions into the subsidiarity clause. Subsequently, in the 2007 elections to the Scottish Parliament, the SNP received a record per cent of votes (32.9%) and was able to form a minority government (Scottish National Party, n.d.d). While the SNP claimed for fairer local taxes, its campaign also focused on how to help Scotland prosper (Scottish National Party, n.d.d). Mainly the argument was about the pros and cons of independence (Herbert, et al., 2007: 20). Thus the SNP produced figures, which Scotland would gain if it were a small, independent European state (Herbert, et al., 2007: 20). Although the majority of Scots still supported devolution (62%), it was the first election, where the constitutional question was a key theme (Curtice, 2017: 5, 11). Furthermore, the fact that the party that promoted independence won the elections for the first time shows a change in people's attitude.

The SNP rather views devolution as a milestone in achieving independence (Hoppe, 2007: 76). Thus, also in the following elections in 2011 the SNP campaigned for more powers for the Scottish Parliament, such as power over Corporation tax which was necessary since the economic recession had reduced Scotland's revenues, but it also proposed having a referendum on independence (Herbert et al., 2011: 9-10, 12). The SNP won the elections with a majority (Scottish National Party, n.d.d). Furthermore, as shown in Table 2, although over half of Scots still supported devolution (58%), support for independence had risen (32%) (Curtice, 2017: 5).

Table 2. Attitudes towards how Scotland should be governed, Scotland, 1999-2016. Constitutional preference (%)

	Independence	Devolution	No parliament
1999	27	59	10
2000	30	55	12
2001	27	59	9
2002	30	52	13
2003	26	56	13
2004	32	45	17
2005	35	44	14
2006	30	54	9
2007	24	62	9
2008	n/a	n/a	n/a
2009	28	56	8
2010	23	61	10
2011	32	58	6
2012	23	61	11
2013	29	55	9
2014	33	50	7
2015	39	49	6
2016	46	42	8

Data: Curtice, 2017: 5

Thus, despite receiving more powers for the Scottish Parliament in 2012, including collecting a third of its revenues and spending its budget, the first minister of Scotland

agreed with the UK's prime minister on holding a referendum on Scottish independence in 2014 (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a; The Scottish Parliament, n.d.b). During the referendum campaign the UK promised Scotland even more powers (Scottish National Party, 2016: 4). Thus the central government tried to manage tensions by allowing the vote on independence, as well as making concessions. The UK's strategy was successful as the referendum failed, with 55.3% voting in favour of staying in the UK, however the share of the population that supported independence was remarkable and the turnout was high 84.6% (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). Thus, the referendum further empowered Scotland vis-à-vis the UK Government, while also boosting secessionist sentiments.

Furthermore, secessionism did not wane after the failed referendum. As the then first minister Salmond noted, there had been a "change in attitudes towards independence and greater self-government" and "things cannot ever be the same again" (Scottish Government, 2014b). Indeed, although with the Scotland Act 2016 Scotland received further powers on taxes and welfare, support for independence remained strong (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.b). It grew to 46% by 2016, which is the highest it had ever been (Curtice, 2017: 5). In 2016, the SNP won the Scottish Parliament elections third time in a row (The Scottish Parliament, n.d.a). This time the campaign highlighted how the UK distributes funds unfairly and promised to create a fairer Scotland, which would fight for Scottish interests as regards the CAP and the Common Fisheries Policy (Scottish National Party, 2016: 21, 25). Thus Scottish interests also included its activities and benefits on the EU level. This was taking place against the backdrop of the upcoming referendum on the UK's EU membership, which the Conservative government had proposed (McIver, et al., 2015: 15). As the UK has strong Eurosceptic forces, prime minister David Cameron had hoped to renegotiate its terms of EU membership and strengthen its legitimacy. The prime minister aimed to make the EU more flexible and regain some powers from it (McIver, et al., 2015: 4). This follows the line of principal-agent theories, which imply that there can be unexpected consequences of transferring powers to agents. However, while Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon agreed that the EU needed a reform and more focus should be put on subsidiarity and proportionality, she believed that "Scotland's interests are best served by being

members of the European Union" (McIver, et al., 2015: 13-14). Thus the SNP's stance towards the EU is pragmatic (Hoppe, 2007: 77). However, in 2016 a slight majority of the UK voted to leave the EU (Curtice, 2017: 3). Although Scots have become more Eurosceptical (67%), and over half of those voting to remain in the union felt its powers should be decreased, the majority voted to stay in the EU (62%) (Curtice, 2017: 2, 15). Thus Scots want to reform the EU, but continue to see its usefulness. Furthermore, the SNP stated in its election campaign that in case there is a change to Scotland's situation, such as being unwillingly taken out of the EU, it should be able to hold another independence referendum (Scottish National Party, 2016: 24). Thus secessionism in Scotland is stronger than ever and the region continues to see the EU as an opportunity.

Under the leadership of the SNP, Scotland envisions independence within the EU. Independence is seen as necessary to fulfill Scotland's interests, which are not represented to the fullest within the UK. The former first minister has argued that for the majority of time the UK has been ruled by parties – that is the Conservative party – which do not have support in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014a). Thus unpopular policies have been forced upon Scotland and there is a democratic deficit, despite devolution, which was supposed to enable the region to follow its own values and interests (APS Group Scotland, 2016: vi, 39; Scottish Government, 2014a). Thus, both Salmond and Sturgeon believe independence would solve Scotland's issues (Scottish Government, 2014a; The Scottish Parliament, 2017). Independence would enable Scotland to "seize and fully realise [their] many opportunities" (The Scottish Parliament, 2017). The SNP believes that as independent Scotland could spend its revenues differently and thus become an equal and prosperous welfare state (ScotCen Social Research, 2014: 6; Scottish Government, 2014a). To support this argument, Salmond quoted Cameron's statement that "it would be wrong to suggest that Scotland could not be another such successful, independent country" as are Finland, Switzerland and Norway (Scottish Government, 2014a). Thus not only did the quote add to the vision the assurance of the prime minister, but also examples of existing successful small states. Independence is also expected to give Scotland more influence (Scottish Government, 2014a). However, in 2014 60% of Scots were quite or very unsure about the consequences of independence (ScotCen Social Research, 2014: 14-15). Only 25%

expected the economy to be better as a result, while 44% expected it to be worse, and 38% expected Scotland to have less voice in the world, while 33% expected it to have more voice (ScotCen Social Research, 2014: 10). Thus the SNP did not manage to convince its electorate that independence would guarantee success. Uncertainty could be one of the main reasons the referendum in 2014 failed. However, support for independence has risen, and almost all who are certain Scotland's economy or voice in the world would improve, would vote in favour of independence (ScotCen Social Research, 2014: 11-12). Thus Scots are rational as they want to maximise their interests, but they did not vote for independence as they were unsure it would deliver their goals. Therefore, the SNP's 2016 manifesto states its goal is to foster "a better understanding of international opportunities and a greater ability to seize them" (Scottish National Party, 2016: 41). The SNP government continues its efforts to promote independence in the EU (APS Group Scotland, 2016: v). Thus its independence plans do not involve independence in isolation. The SNP acknowledges the interdependence between countries in the present day and supports co-operation and the pooling of sovereignty for common good (Scottish National Party, n.d.a; Scottish National Party, 2016: 41). Therefore, the SNP has reacted to the changed international environment and adjusted its conception of independence.

The SNP is confident that Scotland would be able to become an independent country within the EU. One of its main arguments lies in Scotland's wealth. Sturgeon regards it to be "one of the richest countries in the world" (The Scottish Parliament, 2017). Scotland boasts vast energy resources, skilled people and top universities, as well as a higher GDP per capita than 20 other EU member states have (APS Group Scotland, 2016: 10; Scottish Government, 2014a). The Government commits to solidarity in the EU and believes the relationship would be mutually beneficial (APS Group Scotland, 2016: 2). Furthermore, it argues that Scotland is already integrated into the union, and not only economically, but it has also adopted EU law, it shares EU's values and its citizens are also EU citizens (APS Group Scotland, 2016: 2, 6). Therefore Scotland believes it would not only thrive as an independent member of the EU, but also thinks it could be accepted as one, since it is already integrated and it would contribute to the union. This confirms the expectation that those regions with better political and

economic resources are more likely to mobilise on the European arena. It also reassures that Scotland has considered its opportunities and has rationally formed a goal based on the expected outcomes.

The Scottish Government has formed strategies for becoming an independent EU state. It needs one as rules also limit the opportunities available for actors. Thus, as the EU is an essential part of independent statehood, its accession rules play a deciding role (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). During the first independence referendum Scotland envisioned it could join the union through an agreement that is ratified by all member states, and thus become a separate member before becoming independent – meaning it would not have to apply for membership (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). However, the representatives of EU institutions have not confirmed this possibility. European Commission president Barroso stated that a newly independent state would become a third country to the EU and therefore would not be a party to EU treaties (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). The opinion is shared by EU member states (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). This is to avoid destabilising Europe as there are other secessionist regions in Europe (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). Thus, although inadvertently the Commission and European integration have provided regions incentives to mobilise, the EU does not support secessionism. Anti-independence campaigns have that argument in their favour (Bourne, 2014: 114). Thus in 2013 people were rather unconfident about the prospects of Scotland being able to keep an EU membership on the same terms as the UK (Angus Reid Global, 2013: 5). Accordingly, more people were of the opinion of voting against independence (Angus Reid Global, 2013: 1). Thus people voted rationally as independence without EU membership would be less profitable or even unthinkable.

However, the SNP has formulated a new strategy. As in light of the UK leaving the EU, Scotland is no longer granted a place in the union through the UK, it sought to negotiate with the central government so that a deal on Brexit would represent Scottish interests as well (The Scottish Parliament, 2016; The Scottish Parliament, 2017). It expected to stay in the single market even if the rest of the UK did not and to increase Scotland's powers in order to be able to have a "new relationship with Europe" as well as to substitute the safeguards EU law gave to the devolved institutions (APS Group

Scotland, 2016: 39, 1; Curtice, 2017: 3). This plan was seen as an advancement as in this way Scotland would not be bound by the UK's positions in the EU, however the Scottish Government also recognised it fell short of the benefits of full membership (APS Group Scotland, 2016: viii, 30). Two years later the Scottish Government noted it was "disappointed" in how the talks were going and that anything other than independent EU membership would not give Scotland the same benefits (APS Group Scotland, 2018: 9-10). Scotland is not only dependent on EU funds, but it also relies on the single market as 42% of its exports go to EU member states, it receives significant foreign investments, and citizens from other EU states help mitigate the effects of an ageing population (APS Group Scotland, 2016: 11; Scottish Government, 2016a; Scottish National Party, 2016: 41). Furthermore, Scotland appreciates EU regulations as it ensures equal trading conditions across the EU (APS Group Scotland, 2016: 11). Moreover, Scotland notes it has benefited from peace and co-operation in Europe, and as it would like to continue to do so, the Scottish Government has been directly forwarding that message to other member states and EU institutions (APS Group Scotland, 2016: viii; The Scottish Parliament, 2016). Scotland expects it could hold a referendum on independence before the UK leaves the EU (The Scottish Parliament, 2016). Thus it most likely again expects to avoid joining the union from outside the EU. However, this time the claim for independence has more legitimacy as it is the second election that the SNP won with explicitly promising a referendum on independence (The Scottish Parliament, 2017). Furthermore, as Brexit is not something Scotland voted for and after its positions have not been taken into account in negotiations, it makes it seem less like a purely secessionist claim. It is also noteworthy that Scotland has come to view the EU as so important, as in the beginning the SNP was against joining the Community. However, it is yet to see where Brexit talks and Scotland's ideas of independence lead.

Thus European integration is connected to Scotland's regional mobilisation and the emergence of claims for more autonomy and eventually independence. Not only has the union provided a regulated, peaceful environment, but it has also provided Scotland with funds, access to the single market, decision-making and fostered direct contacts and co-operation with other European actors. This not only empowers Scotland, but also

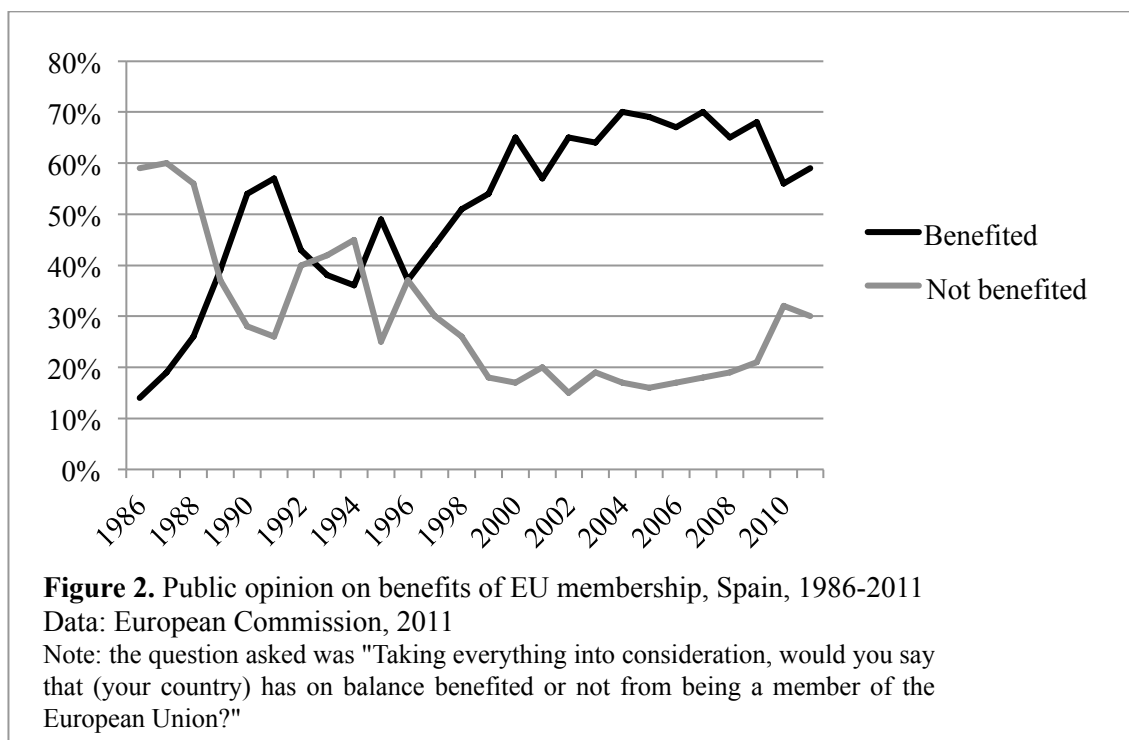
makes independence less risky. Thus, as a rational actor, who wants to maximise its interests, Scotland has re-evaluated its strategies as its opportunity structures have changed. It has mobilised to pursue its interests on the European arena, as well as requested more autonomy from the state and the right to become independent.

2.6. Secessionism in Catalonia in the context of European integration

In Spain decentralisation and regionalisation began in the 1970s following the end of the Franco regime. As part of the democratisation process measures were taken to modernise the state. Thus in 1977 elections to the Spanish Parliament were held and a year later the national constitution was adopted (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). The constitution established the “indissoluble unity of the Spanish nation”, but it also acknowledged that the Spanish "nationalities and regions" have a right to govern themselves (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). The will for self-government had already been expressed by historic regions such as Catalonia. In the 1977 general elections Catalan parties campaigned for reinstating the Catalan Generalitat, as well as provisionally reintroducing the 1932 Catalan Statute of Autonomy – and they received wide support from Catalans (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). As the Spanish executive under the Union of the Democratic Centre coalition was a minority government, the support of the Catalan CiU in the Parliament mattered (Levrat et al., 2017: 17). Thus, because the Spanish Government needed to be co-operative, but also to restrain nationalist movements in historic nations, the Spanish executive was accommodating towards the requests for regional autonomy (Levrat et al., 2017: 17; Swenden, 2006: 63). After negotiations with Catalonia in Madrid, instead of restoring the old statute, a new Statute of Autonomy was drawn up, which was accepted in a referendum in Catalonia in 1979 (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). The 1979 statute reestablished the Generalitat, which includes the Parliament, the Government and the president of Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). The Generalitat has exclusive legislative, regulatory and executive powers in areas such as Catalan civil law, tourism, culture and language (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). Thus Catalonia has established Catalan and Aranese as official languages besides the statewide Spanish (Swenden, 2006: 271). Catalan is widely used and more than 80% of Catalonia's population speaks it (Swenden, 2006: 250). In addition, in areas such as education, health and the planning of Catalonia's economic activity, Catalonia has the responsibility to develop legislation

based on the states' guidelines (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). Catalonia, like most Spanish autonomous communities (except the Basque Country and Navarra), has few fiscal powers (Swenden, 2006: 133). Catalonia can collect its own taxes, however most taxes are controlled by the central government, which allocates funds to the autonomous communities (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). Furthermore, areas such as external affairs, foreign trade, defense and employment are the exclusive competence of the state (Borgen, 2010: 1012; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2018). Thus decentralisation took place in Spain since the 1970s. Although it was part of the democratisation process, regionalisation was also enabled by the improvement of relations between Western European countries after the Second World War. In addition, regionalism emerged in Catalonia as its parties requested autonomy and the society supported the regionalist movement. Thus Catalonia received autonomous powers; however its funds depended on state subsidies and also the link with the international market and institutions was provided by the central government. At this time Spain was not yet a member of the European Community either. Thus, the emergence of regionalism in Catalonia was confined to the nation-state.

However, over the following decades Catalonia's opportunity structures changed as Spain was set to join the European Communities in 1986. Thus, already prior to joining the union, Catalonia seized the opportunity of the new arena and set up a private representation in Brussels, despite it not being allowed by Spain (Keating, 1998b: 169). Furthermore, the time that Spain joined the Communities was favourable for Catalonia as in the same year the SEA was signed. The SEA strengthened the supranational dimension of the Community and led to the reform of the structural funds that empowered regions, including Catalonia, by involving them in the development and implementation of the regional policy as well as by providing them with European funds. Thus Catalonia has benefited from the Community from the moment Spain joined it (EC Representation in Barcelona & Generalitat, 2015: 2). In fact, Spain in general has come to view the EU positively. As illustrated in Figure 2, in 1986 only 14% believed that Spain had benefited from being a member of the EU; by 1991, the proportion had risen to 57% (European Commission, 2011).



Furthermore, with the Maastricht Treaty the subsidiarity principle was formalised and Catalonia got access to the CoR, the Council (although the CARUE agreed to involve the autonomous communities in the Council in 2004) and to the single market. Thus through European integration Catalonia became less dependent on Spain as it received new channels for financing itself as well as new political powers and arenas for participation. The new opportunities provided incentives for mobilisation. Subsequently, Catalonia pursued its interests on the European arena. As the Spanish Constitutional Court's decision of 1995 allowed regions to establish offices in Brussels, the Government of Catalonia set up its official delegation to the EU, which also houses an exhibition and networking room *Espai Catalunya Europa*, as well as government agencies that deal with trade, investment, culture and tourism (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2013a; Keating, 1998b: 170). The aim is to have contact with EU institutions, other regions and member states in order to get access to information that could profit Catalonia, to influence EU decision-making, as well as to promote Catalonia and its companies internationally (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2013a). Furthermore, the Generalitat's objective is that Catalan would be used in EU institutions and that the EU would officially recognise Catalan (Parlament de Catalunya, 2014: 10). Thus the European arena has provided Catalonia an opportunity to bypass Spain, as well as to

find support for Catalan minority language and culture (Levrat et al., 2017: 133). At the same time Catalonia has continued campaigning for greater autonomy from Spain. Catalan governments under the CiU coalition (from 1980 to 2003) tried to receive more powers from the centre, while respecting Spain's unity (Harguindéguy et al., 2017: 82; Levrat et al., 2017: 15, 18). Accordingly, Catalonia's requests honoured the Spanish constitution. In addition, the Spanish governments were quite willing to negotiate with Catalonia (Levrat et al., 2017: 18). Thus Catalonia managed to consolidate its autonomy (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). For example, in 1996 Catalonia managed to receive power over 15% of the region's income tax in exchange for CiU's support for the Spanish People's Party's (PP) prime minister candidate (Harguindéguy et al., 2017: 88). Thus, the first decades of Spain's EU membership saw the emergence of new regionalism. As Catalonia became less dependent on the centre and was provided with new powers and incentives, it mobilised on the European arena, as well as within Spain to pursue its regional interests.

In the following years as European integration proceeded, Catalonia's requests for greater autonomy strengthened. While Catalonia had secured a place for itself in the EU market and institutions, it also aimed to enhance its position within Spain. Thus, in the 2003 regional elections the main Catalanist parties campaigned for reforming the statute of autonomy (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). The new government led by pro-federalist Socialists' Party of Catalonia (PSC-PSOE), in coalition with pro-federalist Initiative for Catalonia Greens-United and Alternative Left (ICV-EUiA), and pro-independence ERC committed its two terms of office to strengthening Catalonia (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a; Levrat et al., 2017: 15). The Parliament proposed a new statute which would, among other things, define Catalonia as a nation (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). While Catalonia held its negotiations with the Spanish Government led by the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), the final statute was less than what Catalonia desired, as the PP that was at the time in the Spanish opposition, had challenged the statute by bringing it to the Spanish Constitutional Court (Catalonia Votes, n.d.; Levrat et al., 2017: 19). Nonetheless, the Statute of Autonomy was adopted by the Catalan Parliament and approved by a referendum in 2006, although the turnout was lower than 49% (Levrat et al., 2017: 19). Thus Catalans were not satisfied with the powers

Catalonia was given, but as the statute was an improvement to Catalonia's position, they accepted the offer. Meanwhile, Catalonia's place in the EU had been improved by the Lisbon Treaty through strengthening the CoR and reforming the subsidiarity principle. By increasing regions' role in the EU, the treaty also strengthened their identities (Patrick, 2016: 211). Thus, as the 2008 financial crisis hit Spain, Catalonia sought a new financial arrangement from the centre to avoid significant financial losses (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a; Harguindéguy et al., 2017: 92). In this way Catalonia was not showing solidarity with the rest of Spain. Although in 2009 the Spanish Government made concessions and gave the autonomous communities (except the Basque Country and Navarre) more control over collecting taxes, it did not please Catalonia as the region contributed more to the central funds than it received and the funds were insufficient for financing the public services it was responsible for (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2015b). Furthermore, in 2010 the Spanish Constitutional Court made a judgement on the case brought by the People's Party in 2006 against Catalonia's Statute of Autonomy (Levrat et al., 2017: 20). The ruling reduced Catalonia's autonomy in areas such as justice, fiscal policy and language, as well as removed the clause that defined Catalonia as a nation (Levrat et al., 2017: 20). The court's decision led Catalans to protest chanting "We are a nation. We decide!" (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). The public's dissatisfaction led to a change of government. In 2010 CiU was brought back on promises to achieve a fiscal pact that would imply fiscal sovereignty (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012c; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012d; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). There had been a change in Catalans' preferences about Catalonia's relationship with Spain. In 2009 38.6% thought Catalonia should be an autonomous community of Spain (status quo), and 35.2% thought Catalonia should be a state in a federal Spain, thus increasing the level of self-government, while only 16.1% thought Catalonia should be an independent state (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2009: 25). However, by 2011 the popularity of the options of an autonomous community of Spain and a state in a federal Spain had decreased to 33.2% and 31.9% respectively, while the popularity of the option of an independent state had increased to 24.5% (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2011: 25). This was remarkable as the independence option had not secured over 20% of votes before 2010 (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). Thus the Catalans' regional identity was

strong and the will for greater autonomy had strengthened. While the central government was making concessions, they were insufficient.

As the level of autonomy achieved by Catalonia was unsatisfactory, the requests for greater self-government led to demands for independence. Thus on 11 September 2012, on Catalonia's National Day, Catalan president Artur Mas noted that if an agreement on the fiscal pact is not achieved, "the road to freedom for Catalonia is open" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012b). In this way the president implied that in case the central government does not make concessions, Catalonia will pursue independence. On the same evening people protested in Catalonia once again, however this time with the slogan "Catalonia, a new State in Europe" (Harguindéguy et al., 2017: 82). Thus the regionalist movement had become secessionist (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). At the same time, the Spanish Government had become less accommodating towards Catalonia's wishes. As in 2011 the PP won the elections with an absolute majority; it was able to be restrictive as regards Catalonia's autonomy (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Accordingly, the Spanish prime minister Mariano Rajoy rejected the proposed negotiations on the fiscal pact, possibly to avoid reductions to state revenues, as well as to not encourage other wealthy autonomous communities to ask for more fiscal leeway (Harguindéguy et al., 2017: 82, 92). As a response, Mas noted that the Spanish Government missed an "opportunity for repairing the relationship between Catalonia and the rest of the State and reversing the growing fatigue between the two" and therefore announced elections to evaluate Catalans' attitude towards independence (Catalonia Votes, n.d.; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012d). The 2012 regional elections campaigns were for the first time overwhelmingly about independence (Levrat et al., 2017: 22). The election results confirmed Catalans' desire for self-government as CiU won the elections, and with the backing of ERC, Mas was reappointed as president (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a). By 2013 a majority of Catalans (71.2%) felt that Catalonia had achieved an insufficient level of autonomy (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013: 23). Accordingly, an independent state as an option of Catalonia's relationship with Spain had achieved a record level of support (46.4%) among Catalans (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2013: 23). Thus, as the central government was no longer willing to negotiate or make concessions, and Catalans were unsatisfied with the level of autonomy achieved, the regionalist

movement became separatist.

A series of attempts to organise a Catalan referendum on independence were taken. In 2013, Mas suggested starting negotiations with Rajoy on holding the referendum and at the beginning of 2014 the Catalan Parliament requested to be given the powers to do so (Catalonia Votes, n.d.; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2013c). However, the Spanish Parliament rejected the plea (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Consequently, the Catalan Parliament passed a law that allowed holding a non-binding popular consultation, however it was suspended by the Spanish Constitutional Court at the request of the central government (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Thus Mas resorted to holding a public participatory process, which too was suspended by the Constitutional Court, yet still took place on the 9th of November 2014 as it was eventually organised by non-governmental organisations (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). While 80.76% supported independence, two thirds of the electorate did not cast a vote (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Thus the legitimacy of the vote was questionable. Furthermore, Rajoy dubbed it propaganda and Mas and two other Catalan politicians were faced with criminal charges for not stopping the voting (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Nonetheless, Mas called early elections for 2015 (Levrat et al., 2017: 23). The president participated in the elections under the Together for Yes (JxSí) coalition, which included the two main pro-independence political parties, Democratic Convergence of Catalonia (CDC) and ERC, as well as other smaller parties and representatives from the civil society, such as the Catalan National Assembly and Òmnium Cultural (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a; Levrat et al., 2017: 24). Mas argued that by involving such diverse groups, the elections were a *de facto* referendum on independence (Mas, 2015). The JxSí won the elections, but needed support from pro-independence Popular Unity Candidacy (CUP) to form a government, and as a concession Carles Puigdemont became the president of Catalonia instead of Mas (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2016a; Levrat et al., 2017: 24). As the JxSí had promised independence within 18 months, the Catalan Parliament voted to "disconnect" from Spain, however the decision was soon suspended by the Constitutional Court (Levrat et al., 2017: 24-25). Thus, in 2016, on Catalonia's National Day, for the fifth consecutive year Catalans protested for independence (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Consequently, the Catalan Government once more tried to negotiate with

Spain for a referendum, but to no avail (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Thus, in 2017 Catalonia held an illegal referendum on independence, with 90% voting in favour of independence (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). However, the event was hampered by the central government, had low turnout (43%) and lacked impartial supervision (Catalonia Votes, n.d.; Torres, 2017). Thus the outcome was controversial. Public opinion surveys also suggest that Catalans are divided on the independence issue. For example, in 2017 the share of people who wanted Catalonia to become a state was large (44.3%), but the per cent that did not want that was slightly bigger (48.5%), and a year earlier it was almost a tie between the two sides, with 45.3% voting in favour and 45.5% against (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2016: 29; Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2017: 32). Despite the controversies, in October 2017 Catalonia unilaterally declared independence, which resulted in the Spanish Government invoking article 155 of the constitution – thus taking control over Catalonia, dismissing the government and calling for new regional elections (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). This also meant shutting down Catalonia's offices abroad, except in Brussels (Agència Catalana de Notícies, 2017). However, as the members of the CoR are nominated by the member states, Catalonia currently does not have any members there (Bux, 2018; European Union, n.d.a). Thus Catalonia's powers have been temporarily cut back greatly. The new regional elections were also held in difficult circumstances, with pro-independence candidates in custody or self-exile (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). Nonetheless, the separatist parties managed to secure 70 seats and are thus in a long search for a suitable president (Generalitat de Catalunya, n.d.b; Torres, 2018). The majority of Catalans still want to see a change to Catalonia's position within Spain. While 20.8% support abandoning the "process" and reforming the constitution and the financing system, most want to continue with the "process", however only 19% support a unilateral way, whereas 35.9% want to look for a bilateral agreement with the central government (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018: 30). Thus, although the central government's more recent strategy has been to hold the state together by not making concessions, Catalonia is still considering pursuing independence with the support of an active civil society.

Independence has become the goal, as Catalan demands have not been met by the central government. The former Catalan president Mas has explained that Catalonia is

perceived to be "always making demands and always complaining" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012c). However, even during Puigdemont's tenure, the Catalan leader noted that their proposals have been met with "silence, or repression" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017d). Thus, Catalonia "has not been able to satisfactorily resolve the way it fits into the framework of a Spanish state that will not allow it to grow or develop its self-government" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). The main issues have been the 2010 ruling of the Spanish Constitutional Court and the unwillingness to negotiate a fiscal pact (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2013c). Therefore "Catalonia cannot continue along the same path as before, but needs to create its own project" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012c). Even though Catalan leaders have tried to negotiate the holding of the independence referendum, including its details, the Spanish Government has not opened up to discussion (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017a). Thus Catalonia has resorted to unilateral secession. However, Catalan leaders regard the referendum as not contradicting the law and instead accuse the Spanish Government of being undemocratic (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014a; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017a). Catalan leaders have argued that the process is legitimate as they claim Catalonia to be a historical nation, which has the right to self-determination and that it is what the "immense majority of Catalans want" (Generalitat de Catalunya, n.d.a: 2; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017b). Table 3 shows that indeed the majority of Catalans have felt over the years that Catalonia has achieved an insufficient level of autonomy.

Table 3. Public opinion on autonomy, Catalonia, 2009-2017 (%)

	2009	2011	2013	2015	2016	2017
Too much autonomy	5.0	4.6	3.8	3.9	4.3	5.8
A sufficient level of autonomy	27.2	28.0	19.2	23.9	23.1	25.5
An insufficient level of autonomy	63.7	62.0	71.2	64.1	68.1	63.3
Does not know	3.1	4.5	5.3	7.0	3.7	4.5

Data: Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2009; 2011; 2013; 2015- 2017

Note: the question asked was "Talking about the relationship between Catalonia and Spain, do you think that Catalonia has achieved...?"

Accordingly, as illustrated by Table 4, support for an independent state has risen, while support for increasing the powers of Catalonia in the form of a state in a federal Spain has decreased, as has support for status quo. Decreasing the position of Catalonia to a region of Spain has never been a popular view.

Table 4. Desired relation between Catalonia and Spain, Catalonia, 2005-2017 (%)

	A region of Spain	An autonomous community of Spain (<i>status quo</i>)	A state in a federal Spain	An independent state	Does not know
2005	7.0	40.8	31.3	13.6	6.2
2007	6.1	37.0	35.3	14.5	4.9
2009	4.5	38.6	35.2	16.1	3.6
2011	5.6	33.2	31.9	24.5	3.5
2013	4.4	20.7	22.4	46.4	4.9
2014	2.6	23.3	20.0	45.2	6.9
2015	3.4	24.0	26.1	39.1	5.3
2016	4.1	25.1	26.3	38.5	4.5
2017	7.0	28.5	21.7	37.3	3.8

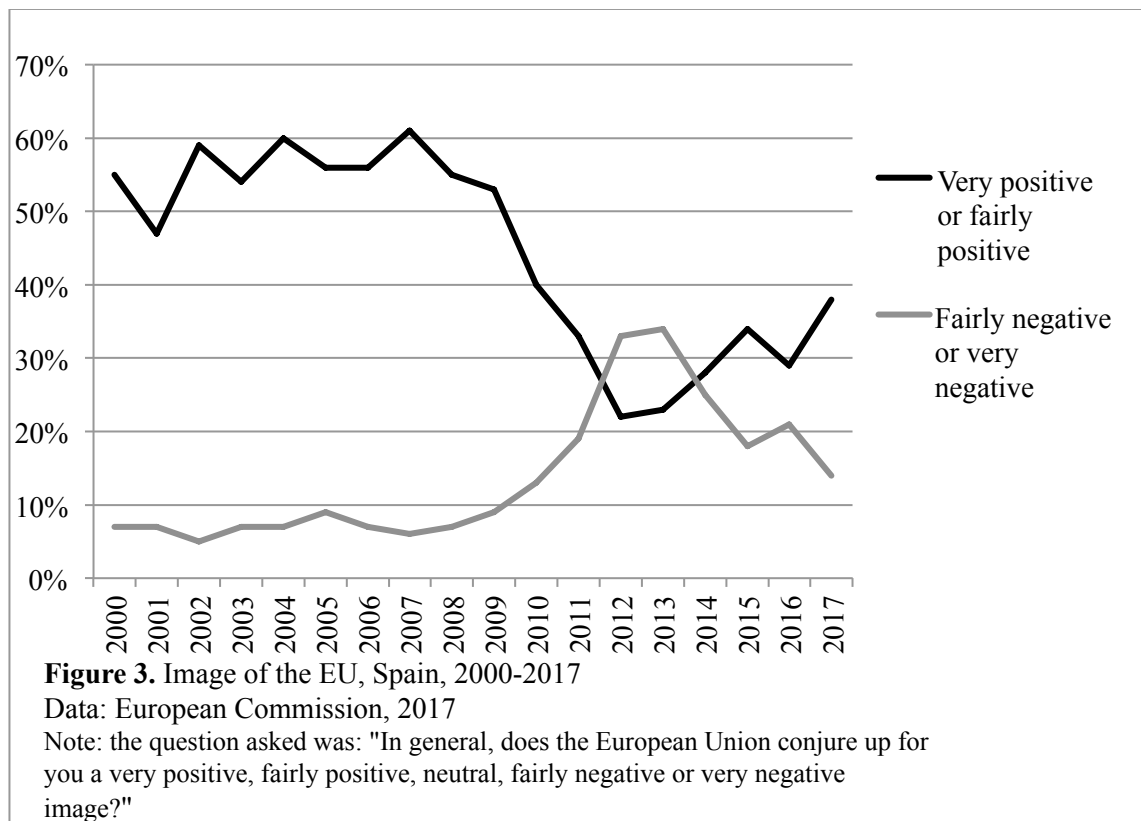
Data: Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2005; 2007; 2009; 2011; 2013-2017

Note: the question asked was "In any case, how do you think this relationship should be? Do you think that Catalonia should be..."

However, the legitimacy of the argument that a clear majority of Catalans want an independent state is questionable as the option of an independent state has not once received over 51% of votes. Nonetheless, the independence movement is based on rational arguments. Catalonia has pursued secession to maximise its interests. Catalan presidents have argued that the aim is to "achieve instruments that will allow [them] to defend [their] interests in a better way" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012e). As an independent state Catalonia would have more resources, an improved quality of life and better opportunities to defend their identity (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012f; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). In 2013, 29.4% of Catalans indicated they would vote for independence to achieve economic self-management and greater capacity, while

only 10.7% would vote in favour of independence because they conceptualise Catalonia as a nation (Levrat et al., 2017: 39-40). Accordingly, in 2014 45.1% thought the living standards of the Catalan people would be "better than now" if Catalonia was an independent state (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2014: 38). Thus independence is not supported merely for the principle of it, but it is a calculated decision that is expected to lead to gains.

Furthermore, independence is believed to be achievable as it is envisioned within the EU. Mas has said that they "have not gone mad; when Catalans demand the instruments of State, they do so, obviously, within the framework of the European Union" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012c). The former president has recognised the interdependence between European countries (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012h). Thus Catalonia is not pursuing isolation or a break with its relations with Spain (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012e). The EU is viewed pragmatically. As shown in Figure 3, while Spaniards in general are pro-European, then after the economic crisis the per cent of those who had a very positive or fairly positive image of the EU made a downfall, from 61% in 2007 to 22% in 2012 (European Commission, 2017).



Nonetheless, in 2012 Catalans were demanding Catalonia to be the next state in Europe (Catalonia Votes, n.d.). Thus their support for the EU is not unconditional, yet they believe independence should be pursued within the EU. In 2018, 68.4 % Catalans wanted Catalonia to be a member of the EU if it finally becomes an independent country (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2018: 39). Independence in the EU is not as costly as the EU offers a framework for co-operation, and Catalonia is integrated into the single market. EU member states make up 64.9% of Catalan exports and 57.4% of imports, and Catalonia receives high levels of FDI (20.7% of Spain's total gross foreign investment), as well as tourists (25.5% of Spain's tourists) (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017; Generalitat de Catalunya, n.d.a: 5, 33; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). As Catalonia has an open economy and the region is relatively wealthy (19.1% of Spain's GDP, with eight EU countries having higher GDP per capita than Catalonia), Catalan leaders believe it would thrive as an independent state within the EU (Generalitat de Catalunya, n.d.a: 2, 4; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). Mas has noted that “as a country we are able to finance our own social and economic model with the wealth we ourselves produce” (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012a). This confirms the expectation that regions with better economic capabilities are more prone to mobilisation. Furthermore, Mas has claimed that “on most occasions it is the small states that have greater ability to respond to the new challenges that arise”, thus confirming that in an integrated market states do not need to be large (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). Mas believes Catalonia is “no different from the rest of the European states of [their] size”, such as Austria and Denmark (Mas, 2015). Thus Catalonia has rationally considered the expected outcomes of independent statehood and has formed a vision that is adjusted to the changed international environment.

While the EU framework is favourable for small states, Catalan leaders would like an even stronger EU. Former president Mas has invited member states to “cede all the powers necessary to give real strength to the European Union” (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). The vision is to create a cohesive and capable union, which would represent the members vis-à-vis the rest of the world, as well as provide security and well-being to EU citizens (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). The implementation of

policies, which affect citizens directly, such as healthcare and education, would be done "at the levels where this can be done more efficiently and consistently" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). Thus, the Catalan leader has proposed strengthening the supranational dimension of the EU, including in the area of common foreign and security policy, while functioning according to the principle of subsidiarity. Mas has said their "ideal is the United States of Europe", since if nation-states had less powers and the EU more powers, Catalonia "would have nothing to lose and a lot to gain" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012f). If Europe would comprise of 60 or 70 nations, which have "a clearly defined territory, history, language and culture, [...] the will [...] to be their own player", Mas believes Catalonia could be a European state (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). Thus, Mas has supported the independence endeavour with a vision of a stronger EU with smaller and less powerful member states. While it would be more beneficial for Catalonia, it is unrealistic in the foreseeable future.

Furthermore, Catalonia has sought support from EU leaders for the independence movement. As the Spanish Government has been reluctant to allow the holding of the independence referendum and regards Catalonia's independence bid as unconstitutional, Catalan leaders have tried to internationalise the secession process (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). Mas has argued that while European leaders "open the door and listen, in Madrid until now the doors have remained shut and hardly anyone is willing to listen" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2013b). Thus Catalan leaders have hoped that by explaining that there is wide support for independence in Catalonia and why the referendum should be held, other member states, as well as the European Commission would "encourage the peaceful, democratic, transparent, and European process" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014a). As rules guarantee actors' behaviour, Catalonia anticipated Europe to follow one of its fundamental values – democracy – and support the democratic will of the Catalan people (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012h). Furthermore, Catalonia regarded a referendum to be an internationally accepted tool, and according to a report Catalonia ordered from international experts, Catalonia's referendum was legitimate as it was about the right to decide rather than the right to self-determination, which is limited to colonies (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017a; Levrat et al., 2017: 9-11). Thus Catalonia believed it could secede. Still, after the

referendum Catalonia's leader Puigdemont demanded mediation and noted that the Charter of Fundamental Rights should protect them (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017c; Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017d). However, the majority of European leaders have not offered Catalonia support and although the Commission condemned violence, it found the vote to be illegal and noted that the issue is Spain's internal matter (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017; Strategic Communications, 2017). The Commission does not want to break up Europe and therefore has stressed the importance of "unity and stability" (Strategic Communications, 2017). Thus, the result was not what Catalonia expected and the illegal referendum can seem irrational. Nonetheless, Catalonia's leaders behaved strategically and adjusted their behaviour according to the rules. As they held the independence referendum based on their expected outcomes, the referendum could be said to have been rational.

Another limitation of the independence process has been the potential future membership of the EU. As the EU plays a central role in the future of an independent Catalan state, the Spanish Government has suggested Catalonia would be left outside the union "to scare Catalan voters" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014a). Indeed, support from member states is unlikely as Catalonia pursues independence unilaterally (Elcano Royal Institute, 2017). Furthermore, the Commission has stated that even if independence would be achieved according to Spanish rules, an independent Catalonia would not be automatically in the EU (Strategic Communications, 2017). This requires applying for membership and receiving supporting votes from existing member states. However, Catalonia itself is of the belief that as there is no precedent, Catalonia's membership would be a question of political will, and thus, as Brussels is flexible, and "even Spain has a strong interest in Catalonia being part of the EU", Catalonia would not stop being a member of the union (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2014a; Mas, 2015). Mas was confident in that, as Catalonia "is already part of the European Union and the eurozone" (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2012g). Thus, like Scotland, Catalonia believes it could become an independent member through "an internal enlargement process", without leaving the union (Generalitat de Catalunya, 2017a). This would be done through a treaty revision process according to article 48 TEU (Levrat et al., 2017: 12). However, Catalans are uncertain about the possibility of future EU membership. While

in 2014 44.9% and 2017 47.7% Catalans believed that very likely or rather likely Catalonia would stay automatically out of the European Union, if it was an independent state, then in 2015 46.1% and in 2016 49% regarded the possibility of staying out of the union not very likely or not likely at all (Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2014: 39; Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2015: 33; Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2016: 30; Centre d'Estudis d'Opinió, 2017: 33). Thus, as Catalans are divided on the issue of independence, they are also undecided about the potential of future EU membership. However, as noted earlier, the majority would like an independent Catalonia to be in the EU. Therefore future support for secession could be influenced by the possibility of Catalonia's options for receiving international recognition and EU membership.

Thus European integration is related to regionalism and secessionism in Catalonia. The EU has provided Catalonia with funds and access to the internal market, as well as involved it in European level decision-making and the implementation of EU policies. In addition, the EU has opened up new arenas and channels for contacts, which would not otherwise exist. By creating a peaceful, secure, stable and rule-based environment in Europe, the EU has empowered Catalonia and prompted it to consider independence within the EU, as it is a suitable environment for small states. Thus, as a rational actor who tries to maximise its interests, Catalonia has formed strategies to use the rules, the changed environment and opportunities to its advantage. Catalonia has mobilised to ask for more autonomy and independence, both from Spain and the EU.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to analyse the relationship between European integration through the European Union (EU) and separatism in Europe's multinational states. The objective was to answer the question: "How has EU integration influenced secessionism in multicultural states?". The thesis built on theoretical insights from multi-level governance (MLG), new regionalism and rational choice institutionalism (RCI). Each of the three approaches offered useful arguments and complemented one another, and thus enabled to construct a comprehensive theoretical framework for analysis. Deriving from the arguments of RCI, new regionalism and MLG, the thesis formulated the expectation that European integration has strengthened secessionism among sizeable geographically concentrated indigenous minority groups in multinational states by (a) creating a favourable international environment for small states, and (b) strengthening regions and subnational actors economically and politically.

To test the expectation the thesis analysed: 1) the international environment European integration has produced in terms of the opportunities and constraints it provides for small states 2) the political and economic empowerment of subnational actors and regions through European integration since the Single European Act (SEA), in terms of involving them in policy implementation, as well as providing access to EU institutions and funds and 3) regional mobilisation up to secessionism, and its connection to the altered international environment created by European integration as well as the empowerment of regions. This was done by conducting a qualitative small n study using two cases: Scotland and Catalonia. They are economically and politically capable, territorially concentrated historical nations. Although they have been incorporated into larger states, Scotland and Catalonia are not fully integrated and thus constitute minority sub-state nations and have nationalist movements. Thus the cases enabled us to test the expectation.

The first main result of the analysis was that the international environment European integration has produced is favourable for small states. The EU in the present day is

stable, peaceful and secure. It provides common rules and values and its supranational institutions guarantee that the rules and values are followed by all member states. Furthermore, the single market provides free movement of people, goods, services and capital and thus opens up a large market. The EU also provides access to its institutions, where small member states are on a par with larger states, and which facilitate co-operation between them. Thus European integration has turned Europe from a realist anarchy into an organised and peaceful community. In this environment states do not need to be big for security reasons, or to exploit economies of scale, and they are not in isolation. Therefore would-be small states could be viable in the present day EU.

The second main finding of the thesis was that through European integration subnational actors and regions have been economically and politically empowered since the SEA. Both, Scotland and Catalonia, have been aided by European funds, and still continue to do so. Thus they have become more competitive and less dependent on state grants. In addition, Scotland and Catalonia have been involved in policy-making and implementation, as the reform of the structural funds introduced the partnership principle, and the Maastricht treaty formalised the subsidiarity principle. Furthermore, both regions have been given access to EU institutions – the Council of the EU, the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions (CoR). Although in the Council regional actors represent their member states, and the CoR is not that powerful, Scotland and Catalonia have been empowered as they have been given access to information, a channel for co-operation with other regions, member states and EU institutions, and a new arena for mobilisation. In this way subnational actors and regions have been empowered, they have become less dependent on their respective states and they are no longer nested within states. Thus the EU has inadvertently given autonomy or independence-seeking regions an incentive to mobilise.

The third finding of the analysis revealed that regions have mobilised to demand more power and autonomy as well as independence, and that it is related to the change of opportunities brought by European integration. In the case of Scotland claims and public support for more powers for Scotland have grown over time, from devolution to independence. Likewise, Scotland's attitude towards the EU has evolved over time.

While in the beginning the Scottish National Party (SNP) campaigned against joining the European Community, then after regions had been empowered and institutionalised into the EU, Scotland mobilised to pursue its interests on the European arena, Scots came to view the EU rather positively and the SNP campaigned for independence in Europe. In addition, while Scots think the EU should be reformed, they do not support Brexit. Thus Scots view the EU pragmatically and there has been a change in attitudes towards the EU. Scottish leaders believe independence within the EU would be possible as Scotland is prosperous, the EU provides access to the single market and facilitates co-operation with other member states, and since Scotland is already integrated into the EU through the United Kingdom (UK). Similarly, in the case of Catalonia requests and public support for more powers and autonomy have increased over time, up to demanding independence. Catalans, like Spaniards in general, have been optimistic about the EU since Spain joined the European Community, as it joined around the time regions were being empowered and institutionalised into the union. Thus Catalonia has mobilised on the European arena to enhance its position and to bypass Spain. However, support for the EU in Spain is not unconditional as following the economic recession the EU was perceived more negatively. Nonetheless, Catalans support independence within the EU. Catalan leaders believe independence in the EU is attainable, since as an open and prosperous nation Catalonia would thrive in the single market and the EU guarantees security. Although, Catalan leaders support an even stronger EU. Furthermore, Catalonia has expected the EU to guarantee democracy and thus to aid the region in becoming independent. Catalan leaders believe that a newly independent Catalan nation would be accepted into the union as it is already integrated through Spain. Thus, Scotland and Catalonia have adjusted their perceptions of independence and strategies of maximising regional interests by pursuing independence within the EU.

The analysis of key events, public sentiments and rationalisation by subnational actors confirmed the expectation that European integration has strengthened secessionism in minority sub-state nations of multicultural states, as a result of creating a favourable international environment for small states, and empowering regions and subnational actors economically and politically. The change in opportunities has led the rational,

regionalist or nationalist actors to adjust their strategies for maximising their interests. Regions have constituted themselves as actors and mobilised on multiple arenas to pursue their interests, and to ask for more powers. Those with greater capabilities have sought independence – within the EU – as they believe it would give them greater power and wealth, and since it would be possible. This finding is important as so far separatism has been mostly explained in terms of internal factors, such as cultural and identity related differences and economic inequalities, while its external aspects have been understudied. However, the issue should be explored further, as the Catalan and Scottish processes are ongoing, and there are several more independence movements within the EU.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that even though the two cases – Scotland and Catalonia – have had differences in their opportunity structures as regards their respective states making concessions and allowing separation, both have pursued independence in Europe. However, as the UK was accommodating towards Scotland's claims, the central government was able to negotiate on the referendum, as well as to convince a share of Scots to not vote for independence. On the contrary, Spain has tried to thwart Catalonia's efforts, only leading to the escalation of the crisis; unilateral secession benefits neither Spain nor Catalonia. In addition, the lack of a precedent of a constituent part of an EU member state separating, as well as there being no set process for sub-state secession and accession to the EU, both constitute an issue, as the potential of international recognition and future EU membership affect support for secession. Therefore, a strategy as well as clear and coherent rules need to be developed for dealing with sub-state secessionism in the EU.

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