

EUROPEAN INTEGRATION, REGIONAL CHANGE AND ETHNIC MINORITY MOBILISATION

AN INTRODUCTION

Dia Anagnostou^{1*}, *Anna Triandafyllidou*^{2**}

Abstract:

The aim of this introductory chapter is to provide an overview of the theoretical framework informing the case studies presented in this issue. In the context of nation and state building, it describes and analyzes the presence of minorities in Europe, their politicisation at the regional-local level in post war Europe, as well as the role played by EU regional economic processes and human rights policies since the early 1990s. European integration extends to minority-inhabited areas through processes of regional development change, implementation of structural funds, cross border co-operation, and in CESE pre-accession funds. It furthermore affects minorities through human rights norms and minority protection conditions, a regime that has developed over the past fifteen years in conjunction with the Council of Europe (CoE). Our case studies explore how changing opportunities and constraints in the context of EU regional economic processes and human rights norms, alter patterns of local political participation and economic activity of local ethnic minorities and national majorities, their relations with national and ethnic political parties and state administration, as well as minority political mobilisation and cultural demands vis-à-vis the central state. They also examine their influence on how local minorities and majorities view their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, as well as how they conceptualise 'Europe.'

Keywords:

ethnic politics, minorities, European integration, regions, nationalism

^{1*} Dia Anagnostou is Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens, Greece

^{2**} Anna Triandafyllidou is Senior Research Fellow at the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP), Athens, Greece

Introduction

This special issue examines the effects of European integration on territorially concentrated minorities inhabiting border areas and their relations with national majorities and the state in EU member states and accession countries. We are centrally interested in regions inhabited by large historical minority populations. The term 'historical minority' is used here to distinguish between the minority populations that were part of a national or multinational state since its creation, from the minority groups that are the outcome of international migration flows; the research presented in the contributions to this issue focuses only in the former type of minorities. The contributions cover six cases of minority inhabited regions in Southeast Europe, four EU member states (Greece, Italy, Slovakia and Slovenia) and two accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania).

European integration processes extend to minority-inhabited areas through regional development policies such as structural funds, cross border co-operation, and pre-accession funds to prepare CESE states to implement cohesion policy. They furthermore affect minorities through human rights norms and minority protection conditions, a regime that has developed over the past fifteen years in conjunction with the Council of Europe (CoE). Our case studies explore how changing opportunities and constraints induced by EU regional economic and human rights policies, alter patterns of local political participation and economic activity of local ethnic minorities and national majorities, their relations with national and ethnic political parties and state administration, as well as minority political mobilisation and cultural demands vis-à-vis the central state. We also examine their influence on how local minorities and majorities view their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, as well as how they conceptualise 'Europe.'

The aim of this introduction is to provide an overview of the empirical and theoretical framework informing the case studies presented in this issue. In the sections that follow we outline the general process of nation state building and minority formation in Europe, the politicisation of regional minorities in post war Europe, and the role played in this context by EU regional economic and human rights policies. We furthermore identify ways in which territorial-regional restructuring and the minority question have been intertwined, and probe the changing socio-economic and institutional context in minority inhabited regions, as well as the changing configuration of minority and majority relations and interests (both political and economic). In section 9, we further discuss the regional implications of the EU enlargement in Central Eastern and South East European (CESE) countries with special reference to the human rights and minority protection regime, and the preparation of new member states and accession countries for joining the EU.

1.1 Nation-state building, border regions and minorities in Southeast Europe

The rise of modern national states in Europe was a century long historical process that involved the creation of bounded geopolitical, cultural and economic entities out of myriad of fragmented, overlapping and quasi-autonomous territories and communities that comprised the pre-existing feudal and imperial systems. It advanced through two parallel, contested and inter-related processes of consolidating an external and clearly demarcated territorial border and simultaneously internally creating an integrated national society. As state borders became increasingly secure and relatively fixed, national leaders channelled the state's capacity and power for creating a unified and homogeneous national society out of dispersed and culturally diverse local communities. Besides cultural standardisation and political incorporation, such unification also involved processes of political-administrative centralisation and regional economic integration.

In the 20th century, Western European states dealt with ongoing regional protest through attempts to incorporate minorities in systems of representation defined by national political institutions (Urwin and Rokkan 1982). Drawing upon the work of Stein Rokkan (1970), Albert Hirschman (1970) and Rokkan and Urwin (1982), Bartolini analyses the historical formation of nation-states as a gradual process of incorporation of ever larger sectors of the population through political participation and social citizenship rights in national institutions (Bartolini 1998; 2000). The expansion of democratisation and internal opportunities for political representation (*voice*) with the centre yielding to popular pressure went hand in

hand with the consolidation of the state's external boundary and consequently with strong limitations to the possibility to secede (*exiit*). Nation building bolstered the state's ability to control its border, less through force and increasingly through the endowing of citizenship rights and the elaboration of a discourse highlighting the 'will of the nation'. This strengthened cultural loyalties towards the centre and provided it with a new account of political legitimacy of the state as the embodiment of the nation (Bartolini 2000: 12-18; Calhoun 1997: 71).

In the internal system of political representation and differentiation that emerged, functional interests and individual rights were privileged over the claims of peripheral regions and ethnic-cultural minorities, which withstood assimilation and were regarded as threatening. Governments sought to diffuse or solve conflict with peripheral regions and minorities by channelling it through the centralised administrative structures and national political parties.

In Central-East and Southeast Europe (CESE), state unification was specifically shaped by belated process of nation-state building that spanned over a century of empire dissolution and did not produce secure borders until well in the 20th century. The complex multiethnic mosaic in the Habsburg and Ottoman territories, with language and religious differences irregularly spread and thoroughly intermeshed, made national unification and territorial consolidation particularly antagonistic and bound to remain incomplete. The presence of large and regionally concentrated ethnic minorities in border areas that are often territorially contiguous to an external national homeland continues to this day to bear testimony to this legacy (Brubaker 1996).

In the inter-war period, the project of economic modernisation and state centralisation, with which state elites embarked towards unification, came up against ethnic fragmentation, institutionalised through international treaties aiming to protect minority cultures. The resulting tensions and growing revisionist sentiment contributed to the collapse of liberal institutions and the democratisation processes in the region in the inter-war period, which precluded forms of political incorporation of territorial minorities available in Western Europe (Mazower 2000: 109-110). The project of state-led modernisation, nationalisation and political-administrative centralisation did not resume until the 1940s with the advent of communist regimes in CESE.

States in CESE are home to sizeable ethnic minorities concentrated near or along border regions. During the communist period, state socialism consolidated ethnic-national identities and their regional concentration not only in the federal socialist states that explicitly institutionalised such identities, but also in unitary states. While communist regimes politically suppressed nationalism, a series of policies unintentionally contributed to strengthening ethnic and national identities (Anagnostou 2005). Communist ideology left little room for the expression of culturally distinct identities, and even less for ethnic mobilisation. In this way, ethnic conflict was prevented and neutralised. Nonetheless, the post-1989 experience has shown that ethnic and national identities retained part of their strength or appeal. They were relatively easily revived in the 1990s during the process of democratic transition and economic transformation in CESE.

1.2 Regional minority politicisation in post-war Europe

In post-war West Europe, national governments implemented regional economic policies and territorial reforms that set the context for two waves of regional minority politicisation. The first one made its appearance in the 1960s and 1970s. Undertaken with the overriding objective to further national integration, regional policy in the latter period reflected the state's increasing responsibilities in economic management and welfare and targeted through resource transfers and increased investments the peripheral and lagging regions. Conceived as an integral part of national economic management, regional policy was administered in a centralised fashion aiming at enhancing modernisation, efficiency and the performance of the national economy as a whole (Keating 1998: 47-49; Esman 1977: 373). In implementing it, states such as France, the UK and Italy undertook a series of administrative and territorial reforms to improve transport infrastructure, communications, and local provision of services, as well as to redress problems of

urbanisation and industrial development (Anderson 1996: 114).

In areas where ethnic-cultural distinctions remained significant, regional policies also had an implicit political rationale in providing additional resources as a mechanism for accommodating territorial and potentially disloyal minorities within the prevailing state structures (Urwin 1982: 58). Significantly influenced and inspired by the rise of social movements in the 1960s and their anti-centralist message (Berger 1977), regional nationalisms of the 1970s raised issues of cultural identity and sought greater autonomy from the central state in determining their distinctive path of economic development (Watson 1990). For most part, scholars entirely left out considerations of the EU factor, exceptions notwithstanding (see Scheinman 1977).

In contrast, the second wave of minority nationalisms in the 1980s and 1990s, in Catalunya, the Basque Country, Scotland and Wales, has been inseparably linked to the processes of EU integration (Lynch 1996; Mitchel and Cavanagh 2001). Studies attribute this wave of politicisation no longer to the centralisation of political and economic power in the hands of the state but instead to its dispersion above and below the latter, induced by European integration. A central factor arguably driving it is the processes of regionalisation: the growing significance of sub-state regions characterising the EU gives a fundamentally novel dimension in this most recent wave of minority revival. In the first place, the implicit contract underlying earlier state management policies, under which minority regions would give their loyalty or support to the state in exchange for regional resources, is increasingly undermined in the European context. So is the national state as the exclusive focus of identity and the sole centre to which minorities and regions can direct their claims (Keating 2001b: 22). By expanding political, economic and administrative boundaries from the state to the supranational level, the EU potentially transforms the nature and content of 'new' minority nationalisms. Some scholars argue that the latter shifts away from a concern with ethnic community preservation and state-seeking aspirations, and turns towards civic themes emphasising economic development, territorial self-government and market integration (Keating 2001a).

In this special issue, drawing upon the insights of the aforementioned studies, we set out to explore the links between EU-induced regionalisation and the changing nature of minority and majority nationalism. We specifically examine how regional resource distribution and territorial and/or institutional changes induced by EU cohesion policy, as well as political opportunities created by the minority protection regime, affect majority-minority relations, ethnic-national politics and identities in the selected regions. In pursuing these research objectives, we also take into account the wider context of European integration and accession to the EU within which each of our case studies is duly contextualised as well as the historical particularities of each case including internal political, economic and symbolic factors that are strongly implicated in the process of regional development in regions with large historical minority populations. Besides establishing a new opportunity structure, the EU also, and perhaps more importantly, offers a new symbolic frame above the national state, in which minorities project their perceptions and demands.

As regards CESE member states that have joined the EU in 2004 and also accession countries regional reforms have been undertaken in the context of pre-accession strategies and in anticipation of structural funds. These reforms initially appeared to pave the way for ongoing struggle over the drawing of regional units and the creation of subnational structures and competencies, with potentially significant implications for areas inhabited by territorially concentrated ethnic minorities. However, as the case studies in this special issue show, the picture is complex as in some cases decentralisation and regionalisation has only involved a nominal change of administrative units but not a substantial transfer of authority to regional and local centres.

Minority politicisation in the 1990s in the CESE countries was not only made possible by democratisation and liberalisation, but it has also been encouraged by the emerging European minority protection regime. European human rights norms and minority protection conditions promoted in CESE states by the EU in conjunction with the Council of Europe have encouraged these states to adopt political representation and cultural rights that institutionalise ethnic-national identities (Deets 2002). They have contributed to the adoption of electoral rules and the emergence of institutional arrangements for ethnic-based representation

of minorities at the national and subnational levels (Aniol et al 1997). The case studies inquire into the ways and extent in which the European minority protection regime alters opportunities for political representation at the national, supranational and subnational levels. They furthermore explore their implications for ethnic mobilisation in border regions in CESE states.

1.3 Market integration, regional disparities and structural funds

The creation of a European single market and subsequently post-communist restructuring brought to surface and made acute the deep socioeconomic disparities of the less developed areas. Redistributive policies and measures on the part of national governments to redress these disparities have been limited due to macroeconomic constraints made imperative by convergence with the common market. In part, however, redressing such disparities has been incorporated as a goal in the EU's cohesion policy designed to deal with and reduce the large regional disparities in the EU.

Successive waves of enlargement since the 1970s heightened the diversity of member states with regard to levels of development and increased economic and social disparities among regions in the EU (Tsoukalis 1991: 206). Already in the late 1980s following the Mediterranean enlargement, the EU undertook redistribution of development funds to deal with the large regional disparities of the less developed states of south Europe (Tsoukalis 1991: 206). Such funds were premised upon economic development as a means of incorporating peripheral areas and mitigating regional tensions. Upholding the post-war model of social democracy and the principle of social cohesion, structural funds were a compensation for those regions and populations likely to be placed at a disadvantage in the competitive European common market (Hooghe 1996: 5).

Through assistance to disadvantaged regions to help them develop economically and converge with the European economy, cohesion policy was intended to contribute to the stabilisation and political normalisation in the newly democratised states of south Europe. Besides being a social counterpart to the European liberal project of economic deregulation and market integration, the underlying philosophy had analogies with the historical underpinnings of the EU as a whole: economic development and integration can challenge both physical borders and national boundaries that have historically been *loci* of national and ethnic antagonisms. While by no means specifically aimed at territorially-concentrated minorities, they have had indirect and largely unintended effects, potentially influencing the workings of subnational structures, as well as patterns of political participation and interest representation in border regions (Anagnostou 2007).

The first wave of enlargement in 1974 raised concern with regional disparities and marked the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in addition to the pre-existing European Social Fund (ESF) and the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF). Relatively small in size, the EC's embryonic regional policy involved the disbursement of funds to member states on the basis of quotas, which were intended to supplement national resources going into regional and infrastructure investments. In order to deal with the evident reluctance of national authorities to make available their share of resources (principle of additionality), as well as to tackle the special development problems of the Mediterranean, the Commission began to change its approach in the 1980s. With the Iberian enlargement serving as a catalyst, it introduced its new approach with the Integrated Mediterranean Programs (IMPs) in 1985, which targeted the regions of France, Italy and the whole of Greece (Tsoukalis 1991: chapter 8).

The Single European Act (SEA) assigned greater importance to social and economic cohesion and paved the way for the 1988 overhaul of structural funds (Tsoukalis 1991: 216). Besides their doubling in size, largely a side-payment for the political acceptance of the internal market, the reform adopted five priority Objectives to which the bulk of funds would be channelled. These targeted (Objective 1) the less developed regions where GDP per capita falls below 75% of the EU average, (Objective 2) areas of industrial decline, (Objective 3) the long-term unemployed, (Objective 4) employment among young people, (Objective 5a) adjustment of agricultural structures and (Objective 5b) development of rural areas.

The emphasis was placed on Objective 1-less developed regions that include the whole of Greece, the

Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Portugal, the greater part of Spain, the *Mezzogiorno* and the overseas departments of France and Corsica, with the intent of improving their capacity in market competition. The amount of structural funds targeting these areas continued to significantly increase throughout the 1990s. The 1988 reform reinforced and extended the integrated approach of the IMPs. Structural funds began to be distributed for projects incorporated in multi-annual Community Support Frameworks (CSFs), that is, regional development programs submitted by regional authorities in co-operation with national governments to the European Commission.

Structural policy has sought to address economic development and economic integration into the EC/EU beyond national borders, challenging thus indirectly and to a certain extent unintentionally the loci of national and ethnic antagonisms. This is exemplified and explicitly captured by a particular kind of regional programs that have a transnational and inter-regional dimension and involve cross-border co-operation (CBC) schemes, which flourish across the EU. Such programs are the focus of the INTERREG Community Initiative established in 1990, which is financed by the ERDF, and other similar programs targeting specific countries like PEACE in Northern Ireland. Although, as we shall see below, INTERREG programmes are rather limited in terms of economic impact, they have gained an important political and symbolic significance in some cases (albeit not all) despite persistent problems in their implementation related to historical relations and actual disparities between communities at each side of the border.

Designed to strengthen economic and social cohesion, the aforementioned INTERREG and PEACE programs particularly target remote regions and regions sharing external borders with candidate countries. They place emphasis on fostering co-operation between local minorities and majorities, as well as between national authorities in economic activity and development strategies across state borders. Designating them as responsible for project implementation, these funds promote involvement of local and regional authorities that directly apply to the Commission for these funds (Murphy 1999: 64; Christiansen & Jørgensen 2000). As an idea, cross-border programs originated in the trans-frontier co-operation between local governments across the Franco-German border in the 1950s, instituted with the aim of fostering reconciliation between the two countries by overcoming their wartime national divisions (Anderson 1996: 121).

1.4 Regions, territorial restructuring and ethnic minorities

Regional processes induced by EU cohesion policy can be seen to represent a continuation of the historical processes of political-economic integration, as described in the first section of this introduction. This time, however, they take place above the state level and target entities below it, while reproducing the current functional regime centred on the national state. The most important component of the 1988 reform of cohesion policy was the decision-making and procedural innovations it introduced, which reinforced a series of domestic territorial reforms among the member states that are the policy's beneficiaries. In particular, the 1988 reform enshrined the principle of *partnership*, whereby the planning and implementation of EU-funded regional programs requires close co-operation between subnational, national and European Commission authorities (Hooghe 1996: 2; Marks 1993: 396).

The involvement of subnational actors was a departure from earlier arrangements in which the Commission was exclusively dealing with national authorities. Reflecting an implicit intent to enhance efficiency and promote effective policy implementation, the principle of partnership was also in tune with the principle of subsidiarity and emphasised the involvement of local actors as a precondition for successful economic development and democratic participation (Hooghe 1996: 21). For this reason, and in contrast to regional policies undertaken by national states in the 1950s and 1960s, the implementation of EU structural funds has been regarded as a factor promoting regional devolution of competencies, the creation of regional units where they do not exist, and improved administrative and planning capacity of substate structures.

The direction and impact of domestic reforms that are implicitly or explicitly linked to the EU structural policy greatly vary across states. Differences stem from prior experience with regional policy, as well as from the nature of pre-existing territorial structures and power relations between central and local government levels, as a series of case studies have demonstrated (Hooghe 1996; Marks 1996). In states with unitary

territorial structures, such as in Greece, Ireland and France, domestic reforms induced by EU structural funds and CBC devolved more competencies to regional structures and enabled local actors to assert their interests vis-à-vis central authorities more openly than before (Hooghe 1996: 13; Thielemann 2000). In some cases, it even promoted a degree of decentralisation and strengthened subnational government institutions (Ioakimidis 1996; Laffan 1996). In contrast, in states with already strong regionalised structures and competencies, such as Spain, Germany and Belgium, the implementation of EU policies potentially placed regions at a disadvantage in a European political arena where national states continue to be the pre-eminent decision-making actors (Borzel 2001). In regions dominated by historical minority nations, the unsettling of existing territorial structures set anew a struggle between the central and local levels and sparked a new wave of minority politicisation seeking to preserve or extend their autonomy vis-à-vis central states (Morata and Munoz 1996; Laible 2001).

Initially, studies saw in the EU's reformed cohesion policy a political thrust and attributed to it an implicit and substantive aim to transfer political power to regional and subnational government units (Nanetti 1996). Extrapolating from the decision-making and partnership arrangements of cohesion policy, scholars increasingly identified the contours of a system based on multi-level governance. In its vein and in contrast to the historical processes of nation-state building, that involved a progressive concentration of power to a national centre, EU integration was depicted as signalling a perverse process of asymmetrical dispersing of power above and below the national centre (Marks 1993; 1997). More recently, scholars have retracted earlier depictions of EU cohesion policy as a force reconfiguring political power relations between central state and subnational levels, as it became increasingly evident that national states retained significant central control over its implementation (Keating 2003a: 21). Nonetheless, in the context of implementing cohesion policy, regional reforms on the whole opened up greater space for and revitalised mobilisation among local and regional actors in several member states even though the effects of cohesion policy implementation on regionalisation are mixed.

Leaving aside the debate about its political decentralisation effects, the implementation of cohesion, perhaps more than any other policy, has enabled European institutions to penetrate the politics and societies of member states (Hooghe 1996: 5) in ways that are of central interest to this research. While exhibiting an increasing tendency for centralised administration of structural funds and even CBC, cohesion policy continues to place strong emphasis on regional administration, efficiency and programming. It is pervaded by a functional economic logic that highlights the need to mobilise local production capacities for development in order to improve the competitiveness of regional economy in the European market. Such logic entails policy priorities and norms that potentially contradict traditional regional policies driven by the priority to secure national control over local territory, and potentially reconfigures forms of interest aggregation and articulation historically linked to the national state. In this respect, it potentially undermines political interests and local representation embodied in nation-wide and centralised organisations such as political parties, trade unions and other corporate entities, and arguably paves the way for the rise of regional-economic or ethnic-cultural forms of representation (Marks and McAdam 1996; Bartolini 2000).

1.5 Europeanisation, regional restructuring and minority-majority relations.

The presence of regionally concentrated minorities exposes the artificial and incomplete nature of nationalisation within a state. Yet, the frequent conflation of a region with a minority nation no less reifies the same national logic it originally sought to challenge. If border regions often lack the national unity professed by central states, they rarely become the citadels of ethnic minority solidarity. Whether interface or enclave peripheries, minority inhabited border regions are divided societies. They are spaces of antagonism and conflict between national majorities and ethnic minorities contesting control over local institutions and regional territory. In the course of history, regional and local institutions in border areas have variably been dominated either by national and centrally ruling majorities or by strong regional minorities that acquired extensive degrees of autonomy through successive waves of democratisation. In both cases, the common feature is the attempt to gain national-ethnic control over territory underlined by the aspiration to establish

congruence between the cultural community and the political unit, which in Gellner's infamous definition is the epitome of nationalism.

A number of studies explore the effects of structural funds and CBC for domestic territorial structures, the resulting changes in the balance of power between central state and the regions, as well as their consequences for opportunities and constraints of minorities inhabiting them (Mitchel and Cavanagh 2001; Laible 2001). Even though structural funds and CBC may enhance opportunities for regional interests and politics, the extent to which such opportunities are utilised is largely shaped by the unit-level characteristics of sub-national actors (Smyrl 1997). This observation can also be extended to minority-inhabited regions and actors. The constellation of local forces, cultural resources as well as endogenous processes of mobilisation and political interaction are decisive for the reconfiguration of regional, national and ethnic interests and identities

In the case studies presented in this issue, the contributors examine how the channelling or reorganisation of regional resources and subnational institutions towards economic development goals linked to EU structural funds, impact upon minority-majority relations not only between central and local levels but primarily *within* border regions. The basic hypothesis that they investigate is whether the increased salience that structural funds and CBC assign to economic development and administrative efficiency revive majority-minority antagonisms over local institutions and economic resources; or, conversely, whether the emphasis on development imputes to regional-local mobilisation and subnational government a civic and integrative character that mitigates ethnic-national divisions. In exploring this hypothesis, the empirical case studies in this issue focus on the level of the region. The emphasis on the local context of interaction shaped by changes in sub-national institutions allows a focus on actors as much as on structures, and makes possible to discern the variety of stances within minorities and majorities, rather than reify them as homogeneous collectivities.

Structural funds and CBC promote economic development as a priority of subnational institutions and local actors and may enhance their resources and competencies. In this sense, they may expand opportunities of local minorities and majorities to mobilise and pursue their interests through these institutions, and possibly redefine the politics of local-prefecture-regional government. The articles in this issue investigate how in the context of structural funds implementation and EU integration changing opportunities and constraints affect patterns of local political participation and economic activity of minorities and majorities, as well as minority political and cultural demands vis-à-vis the central state.

Structural funds and CBC also have an indirect impact on regions and minority-inhabited areas. They are part of a wider discourse prompted by European policies around the content and meaning of national-ethnic identity, cultural and linguistic diversity, national/European citizenship and 'Europe'. EU market integration, regional development and social cohesion goals are carriers of ideational and imagined constructs of Europe, intertwined with contested ideas about ethnic/national identity, democracy, cultural pluralism, administrative efficiency and economic competitiveness. For instance, the study by McCall (1998) in Northern Ireland argues that in the context of structural funds distribution and implementation local minority and majority actors reconceptualise their communal identities by projecting them in the broader EU frame. The studies presented in this issue assess how involvement in structural funds and the regional development goals linked to these engages minority and majority actors with the wider 'Europeanisation' discourse. They examine how structural funds implementation on one hand, and the overall discourse on Europe, democracy, diversity, efficiency and citizenship, on the other, influence and/or are reflected in they ways in which local minorities and majorities view their identification with a national or ethnic community, their rights and obligations as citizens of a state, as well as how they conceptualise 'Europe.'

1.6 The reconfiguration of political and economic interests

Changes in subnational institutions and increase in development resources may expand political and economic participation of minorities and majorities. They may also become a source of institutional learning ensuing in the process of inter-communal association and interaction. Studies show that in the

process of mobilising local actors and regional representatives around development projects, structural funds implementation and cross border activities strengthen their commitment to self-government and regional decentralisation and redefine their interests (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992; Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). As early as 1990, an empirical study on prefecture councils in Greece examining their role in the implementation of the IMPs, identified growing awareness and mobilisation around local problems (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992).

In the Greek context, the implementation of the IMPs was seriously hampered and undermined by a highly centralised administrative structure and entrenched networks of clientelism flourishing by political parties. Yet, in the course of local mobilisation they engendered, local support for increased decentralisation seemed to grow and the first signs of building a regional image began to emerge in a context where regional-subnational institutions have historically been extremely weak (Verney and Papageorgiou 1992; Papageorgiou and Verney 1992). Following a major reform that established regional institutions and prefecture self-government in 1994, another study found growing political interaction and local support for decentralisation in the Greek region of Thrace, across the two ethnic communities of Christian Greeks and Turkish Muslims minority inhabiting the region (Anagnostou 2001).

Nonetheless, these findings from the case of Greece cannot be generalised in other countries, where historical legacies, pre-existing structures and other domestic factors may establish distinct and fundamentally different conditions of regional change and institutional development in relation to European integration. As the case studies presented in this issue show, the regional importance of structural funds and CBC may range from negligible to considerable and highly salient, and affects in variable ways and degrees the political views and interests of locally elected minority and majority representatives, as well as local party leaders.

1.7 Socioeconomic and institutional change, historical trajectories and culture

Historical, national, political and cultural factors may constrain, or, conversely promote, the extent to which local minorities and majorities actually mobilise around economic development projects and engage in subnational government. The view of institutions as decisive factors in shaping political outcomes and behaviour has formed the kernel of the school of new institutionalism that has dominated the study of politics and policy processes in the past few decades (March and Olsen 1989). One strand of this school has offered rational choice accounts that see institutions as arenas shaping political outcomes by providing different sets of opportunities and constraints for actors to pursue their interests, which are taken to be a priori defined and outside the scope of analysis (North et al. 1990). A major challenge to rationalist accounts has come from historical and sociological perspectives that attribute to institutions a more formative role that influences not only the strategies of political actors but also the very goals they pursue (Thelen and Steinmo 1992).

Historical perspectives view institutions as path-dependent bearing the imprint of specific historical trajectories, while sociological approaches place emphasis on the cultural frames that influence how individuals conceive of and formulate their interests (Di Maggio and Powell 1991). These approaches focus the analysis on the process of politics and policy-making, on how institutions structure relations of power between contending actors and the overall context of interaction between actors whose conflicting interests may transform in the process. Broader political and socio-economic restructuring can revive the salience of old institutions, it can infuse them with new ideas and/or produce shifts in the functioning of, as well as the goals pursued by existing institutions. Political actors may adjust their strategies to changes and new actors may come into play setting in motion new kinds of struggles (Thelen and Steinmo 1992). Historical and sociological approaches take institutions both as independent and as dependent variables, both shaping and in turn being shaped by political actors' behaviour, respectively.

In areas near or along state borders, minority-majority interaction and regional economic mobilisation may be constrained by existing administrative-political structures and ethnic/national traditions (including distinct cultural-social norms, linguistic differences and religious beliefs). In ethnically divided regions, minorities have historically established their own structures of economic activity, political organisation

and cultural-associational life, which can constrain local actors' perceptions and actions. Cultural-historical factors and ties of communal solidarity underpinning the latter may actually conflict with forms of regional economic co-operation and institutional participation made imperative by the functional logic of structural funds implementation and CBC. The cohesion and intensity of ethnic community solidarity varies from case to case. It is most binding when cultural differences are enmeshed with interests, as well as when both are institutionalised through state policies, international treaties or cultural-religious organisations (Cornell 1996).

Historical ties and close contacts with an external national homeland can also reinforce such collective cohesion, together with the extent of politicisation characterising an ethnic community. During periods when state nationalising functions and minority marginalisation or repression were strong, such parallel ethnic community structures offered what Bartolini has called 'partial exits' (Bartolini 1998: 14). These were alternative spaces physically within but at the same time outside the public sphere of the national state, where minorities could retreat and pursue their economic and political interests. Minority-majority divisions, parallel and comparable in essence to transnational relations across state borders, have imbued local life and politics with profound inter-communal mistrust. In a slightly different context, scholars have identified the latter as a major constrain in building social capital, in encouraging civic participation and in promoting the autonomisation of regional institutions and politics from national structures (Putnam 1993; Paraskevopoulos 1998).

Structural funds and cross-border cooperation in tandem with the broader processes of European integration may strengthen subnational resources and institutions with a view to fostering regional development. In the process, they may transcend traditional ethnic lines of division and promote integration of minority and majority political and economic activities in regional frames. Ideas and discourses on democracy, cultural and ethnic diversity, human rights, non-discrimination as well as economic efficiency within the wider framework of European integration processes may further reinforce changes in this direction. Conversely, factors pertaining to local/national traditions of ethnic/cultural solidarity, traditions, policies and institutions of state nationalism and centralism and also the strength of national and ethnic political parties among local populations may constrain minority and majority cooperation.

This special issue includes the cases of the northeast Greek region of Thrace, which has received significant inflows of structural funds, the northeast Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia, as well as the northwest Slovenian area of Istria, which have been targets of cross-border cooperation schemes utilising INTERREG funds. The region of Thrace in the northeast of Greece is territorially contiguous to Turkey and is inhabited by a small Turkish Muslim minority and a Greek Christian majority. Since 1989, it has received the third largest in size CSF in Greece, which falls under the Objective 1 areas. The areas around the Italo-Slovene border where the Italian minority of Slovenia and the Slovenian minority of Italy live have participated in the INTERREG II and III programmes. The EU's Phare external assistance programme began operating in Slovenia in 1992, and a cross-border cooperation (CBC) component within it was formalised in 1994, though its interventions took place entirely upon Slovene territory. INTERREG II as regards Italy-Slovenia was finally approved in 1997 while both regions participate in INTERREG III (2000-2006).

The case-studies presented in this issue suggest that structural funds and cross-border co-operation schemes, in tandem with the broader context of European integration, have affected in variable ways administrative structures and subnational institutions, the development strategies of minority-inhabited regions, as well as patterns of political and economic mobilisation of minority and majority actors. In some cases, they have promoted inter-ethnic, cross-border and inter-party cooperation around regional development schemes but in other cases, their relevance for and influence on minority-majority antagonisms and ethnic cleavages is questionable. In order to understand such differences, we must place them in the specific national-historical context of each country-case. In our case studies, we look at the varying strength and salience of pre-existing historical and institutional factors on the one hand, and of emerging political-economic opportunities at the regional-local level on the other, and try to assess how they interact in transforming patterns of local and ethnic politics, as well as of minority-majority relations.

1.8 National-ethnic identity and emerging perceptions of 'Europe'

In the social, political, cultural and historical sciences the predominant approaches conceive of collective identities as constituted by the collective group which individuals belong to and identify with. Accordingly, national identities are analysed as derivatives or prerequisites of nation-state formation and, translated to Europe, a European identity is seen as an attachment to the evolving European transnational governance regime. Within this perspective, in parallel to the opposition between the nation-state and an evolving European super-state, two opposite theoretical approaches define the methodological options for analysing the relationship between national identities and a potentially emerging European identity. The first position, starting from the conceptualisation of the European Community/Union as a transnational layer above the constituting nation-state members, views the emerging 'Europeanness' as an additional layer to the basic national identity (Lepsius 1998). The premise here is that the emerging European identity is secondary or additional and therefore weak as compared to the primary and strong national identity. The opposite position, conceptualising the European Union as a system of governance which absorbs elements of national governance, assumes a trans- or post-national European identity is increasingly replacing the pre-existing national identities (Eder 1998). The opposite premise here is that national identities are progressively declining against a strengthening European identity.

However, these approaches tend to neglect the interaction between nations and the EU and more generally the link between collective identity development and boundary constructions (Triandafyllidou 2001). Each national identity is constructed and continually reconstructed as a collective sentiment, self-awareness, self-definition and boundary setting of a national group, but at the same time in continued interaction with the surrounding national groups in the cultural and geopolitical context of Europe. The post-World War II European integration project has been developing in interaction with the matrix of national groups and web of national identities involved in it and has been influenced by a set of interwoven national and European elements (af Malmborg and Stråth 2001). From this perspective, the European element in national identities is not simply an emerging property of or an identification with the formation of transnational European institutions, rather it is constituted in continual interaction between nationally formed European orientations and the developing transnational European framework. In this sense, the image of intertwining of European and national components in collective identities is more appropriate than the alternative models of superimposition or replacement.

From this relational perspective, the reconfiguration of collective identities in their national and European components with the disintegration of Soviet communism, the opening and bridging of the East-West divide and the progressing reconnection of the European civilisation is crucial. On the Western European side, the opening of the Eastern European space means a geopolitical as well as a cultural reconfiguration of collective identities and redefinition of boundary constructions as cultural bases of the Eastern enlargement of the European Union. In geopolitical terms, it presents an opportunity to export and enlarge the Western European model of liberal-democratic welfare capitalism and create a military, political and social welfare zone. In cultural terms, a reconstruction of a Western 'mission' towards the East from defensive anti-communism to a cautious expansion of Western values is under way. This includes the geopolitical relocation and cultural reconstruction of national identities, particularly of those countries at the border of the former East-West divide and now again in-between East and West (Triandafyllidou and Spohn 2003).

In the context of the new geopolitical and cultural landscape in Europe as outlined above, our case studies investigate local perceptions of European integration through involvement in subnational institutions and in the implementation of SF and CBC programmes. Taking into account the relational and interactive nature of national and European identity formation and change, they examine local perceptions of regional, ethnic, national identities and notions of citizenship, as well as contested ideas about European values, democracy, equality and cultural diversity.

1.9 Eastern enlargement: human rights, regional development and minorities

Similarly to the Mediterranean enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s, eastern enlargement in the 1990s has succeeded the democratic transitions in CESE states. In the latter case too integration in European institutions has been seen as a way to assist political and economic development and the consolidation of their nascent institutions. Soon following regime transition, most CESE countries applied for membership in the CoE, while since the mid-1990s, most have signed association agreements with the EU (originally the Europe agreements in 1995 and the Accession Partnerships in 1998). The foundational prerequisite for European integration has remained that the country is a democracy and has a functional and competitive market economy. At the same time, in the process of their enlargement to CESE, European organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) and the EU have given explicit attention to human rights, and specifically to the cultural and political rights of minorities as defining criteria of democracy. This was largely a response to the crucial and potentially destabilising role ethnic and national divisions played in the dissolution of communist regimes and the multi-ethnic federal states of the Soviet bloc.

The extension of human rights and democratic prerequisites to the protection of minorities presents a departure from earlier waves of enlargement in the 1970s and 1980s. Human rights were far from absent from the European agenda prior to the 1990s, with all EC states also being members of the CoE, and thus parties to the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) that contains a list of basic human rights accorded to individuals. However, prior to the 1990s, the EC did not pay specific attention to or scrutinise the human rights record of candidate or member states neither how they treated their minorities. For example, the Council of Europe's readmission of Greece in 1975 following her transition to democracy, or her admittance to EC membership in 1981, did not pay any attention to how Greece treated her minorities. While respect for democracy, the rule of law and human rights had been recognised as fundamental values since the EU's origins, insistence on the protection of minorities is a new condition explicitly highlighted only in the context of enlargement to CESE in the 1990s (De Witte 2001).

The increasing emphasis of European organisations on human rights and minority protection as conditions for membership in the 1990s, have established a distinct political context for regional minority-majority relations. Central-East and Southeast Europe (CESE) is home to sizeable and territorially concentrated ethnic minorities inhabiting border, and usually peripheral and undeveloped, regions, a legacy of the multi-ethnic empires that preceded the formation of national states.

The transition from communism and the process of constructing democratic political systems in the region were what Rokkan has called a "critical juncture" during which basic decisions concerning the structures and forms of political representation in CESE were made (Flora 1999: 36). This turning point saw widespread mobilisation of historical minorities asserting their rights to political participation and representation on an ethnic basis. Indigenous minority claims and demands have been implicitly or explicitly defended by European organisations such as the Council of Europe (CoE) seeking to diffuse nationalist tensions and prevent conflicts. Case studies report that European support for human rights has encouraged improved state treatment of minorities in CESE states (Aniol et al. 1997; Pettai 2001: 274), which are required to demonstrate a "credible commitment" to guaranteeing cultural and political rights of ethnic minorities (Pentassuglia 2001: 28).

The EU in conjunction with the CoE has emphasised a variety of methods for protecting minority cultural and political rights in the process of integrating CESE states in the European structures. The CoE Recommendation 1201 of 1993 advocated that regionally concentrated minorities have the right to special status of local autonomy, which became a point of friction between Hungary and Slovakia (De Witte 2000). Throughout the 1990s, EU economic assistance, co-operation and trade preferences vis-à-vis CESE have regularly been linked, directly or indirectly, to respect for human rights and minorities, with the underlying intent of conflict prevention and conflict management (Pentassuglia 2001).

With the signing of association agreements between the EU and CESE candidate states in 1997-98, the Commission has given considerable attention to minority rights in its assessment and opinions of the latter (Agenda 2000, Volume I). In the Regular Reports on Progress towards Accession, the Commission has devoted sections to issues such as minority language and education, political and social discrimination,

etc., in reference to minorities in Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia. The EU has even tied its aid provided through PHARE program to CESE candidate states to the Copenhagen political conditions for respect for human rights and the protection of minorities. Several micro-projects at the local level supported by it include analyses of minority problems and cross-border co-operation in areas where border conflicts had taken place and areas lying along the EU's external border (Pentassuglia 2001). Nonetheless, the lack of a firm foundation in EU law and concise benchmarks for minority protection (De Witte 2000) means that what constitutes a minority remains unclear and there are different interpretations of what implementation and protection of minority rights means (Tesser 2003).

European support for minority protection contributed in the early stages of the democratic transition to the creation of ethnic parties and their incorporation in national parliaments in countries like Bulgaria, Slovakia, Romania and Poland (for the Bulgarian case, see Anagnostou 2005). Under pressure from domestic minorities and European organisations, the democratising elites and politics of CESE states adopted electoral rules and arrangements that institutionalised ethnic-based representation of minorities in spite of national opposition. The incorporation of ethnic parties in the national representation systems diffused nationalist tensions and it also gave to minorities' direct access to the supranational level through their delegates to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). They have regularly used European arenas and drawn leverage from the minority protection regime to redress their grievances and exercise pressure in pursuing their demands domestically. Furthermore and more importantly for the purposes of this project, the presence of minority parties has meant the ethnicisation of local government units and municipalities in regions where a minority is demographically concentrated. Ongoing monitoring of how CESE states treat their minorities provides further incentives for ethnic-based mobilisation and organisation at the local and regional level.

The transition to a market economy in CESE states, a central precondition for membership in the EU, has led to a massive withdrawal of the central state from regional economic development, with far-reaching effects for economic conditions in the less advantaged regions such as minority inhabited areas. In general, CESE comprises states with a GDP ranging from $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of the EU average. Since 1997, when the Luxembourg European Council launched the present enlargement process to CESE, the EU has expanded economic aid to candidate states to assist their development and reoriented it towards accession priorities. The main and oldest frame of economic assistance to CESE has been the PHARE program originally created in 1989 to assist Poland and Hungary, which today encompasses the ten candidate countries in the region. PHARE funds are in no way comparable to structural funds, they do not specifically focus on regions as targets, neither are they accompanied by the institutional and organisational arrangements of partnership familiar to structural funds. Since 1997-98, PHARE funds have been re-oriented in the service of accession priorities with the goals of domestic institution building, enhancing administrative competencies and programming capacity and redressing regional economic development problems. In addition, EU regional aid since 2000 has come through two new programs, the Special Accession Program for Agricultural and Rural Development (SAPARD) and the Instrument for Structural Policies for pre-Accession (ISPA).

This special issue includes three case studies of one new member states (Slovakia) and two accession countries (Bulgaria and Romania). More specifically, we look at the Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia, the Hungarian minority concentrated in the region of Transylvania in Romania and the Turkish minority concentrated in southeast Bulgaria. These countries have been beneficiaries of pre-accession funds mainly through PHARE but also through SAPARD and ISPA programmes. Slovakia is now (2005) also preparing to receive after the 2004-2006 transition period, its first share of structural funds.

In the frame of the accession process to the EU, however, CESE states have undertaken a series of regional reforms largely with the view to enhancing their capacity to implement structural funds once these are diverted to CESE. All three countries have been through a process of regionalisation, namely the creation and/or reorganisation of regional structures and subnational institutions. This has been partly in relation to the EU's request to create a NUTS2 level of unit with the goal to promote and assist regional development but it has no less been undertaken in response to the political transition elites and citizens' request for decentralisation and democratisation within these countries. In contrast to earlier expectations,

studies show that regional reforms promoted in CESE states tend to reassert centralisation and the role of national states and to marginalise that of subnational authorities (Hughes et al. 2003; Keating 2003b: 63). Nonetheless, the ongoing and pending nature of regional reforms and the relative fluidity they introduce in existing territorial patterns and central-local relations set the stage for local and minority actors to contest and seek to influence outcomes (Bachtler et al. 2000).

The three case studies examine the extent to which the implementation of pre-accession funds as well as the overall regime and discourse about human rights and minority protection has influenced the structure of political opportunities for minority actors, their patterns of economic activity, their demands towards the central state as regards cultural rights and decentralisation, local minority and majority perceptions of national-ethnic identity, citizenship, and 'Europe'. We assume that the reconfiguration of minority and majority interests, as well as contestation over ongoing or pending and EU-induced regional-territorial reforms in anticipation of structural funds, are mediated by the institutionalisation of minority rights in CESE states. More specifically, we assume that ethnic-based political representation of ethnic minorities in CESE, drawing leverage from the European human rights and minority protection regime, is likely to mediate and shape very differently processes of EU-driven regional territorial restructuring, as well as minority-majority relations and politics in CESE.

1.10 Overview of the special issue

This special issue comprises six reports of an equal number of case studies of minority-inhabited regions in EU member states and Accession Candidate Countries (ACC) in Central-East and Southeast Europe: the Greek region of Thrace inhabited by Turkish Muslims, the Bulgarian districts of Smolyan and Khardzali (part of the South Central region) home to Turkish and Muslim minorities, the Slovenian region of Littoral-Krast home to a small Italian community, the Italian area of Friuli-Venezia Giulia inhabited by Slovenian communities, the Romanian region of Transylvania inhabited by Hungarians, and the Slovak region of Kosice also home to a Hungarian minority. Besides secondary literature, these reports present findings of empirical research comprising regional socioeconomic and other official reports, political and press material and other relevant documentation. Each report also draws from approximately 33 semi-structured interviews conducted at the regional-local level with representatives of minorities and majorities (elected officials, community leaders, development officials, individuals engaging in development programs). This research was carried out as part of the FP6 research project *Changing interests and identities in European border regions: EU policies, ethnic minorities and socio-political transformation in member states and accession countries* (FP6 # 506019).

The two CBC/INTERREG cases (Slovenia and Italy) provide for insights on what kind of new opportunity structures and political/symbolic/identity contexts are created in cases where the local 'minority' can reach out across the border to its 'national homeland'. Ksenija Sabec examines the ways in which the dissolution of Yugoslavia, state independence and market transition, and subsequently integration in the EU (actual or aspiring) has transformed the political and economic opportunities for the Italian communities of Slovenia and Croatia. CBC programs in the Slovenian-Croatian areas bordering with Italy have played a role in expanding economic opportunities for minorities and fostering cooperation across the border. At the same time, Slovene Italians, who had previously depended on state supports, have not been able to adjust to the changing conditions of market economy. In the new European context, heightened levels of ethnic-cultural mobilisation and political assertion of their rights can be observed among Italian minorities in the newly independent states of former Yugoslavia, together with a discernible, albeit faint sense of belonging to Europe.

The report by Enrica Rigo and Federico Rahola presents the socio-economic situation of the Slovenophone community living in FVG within the context of the regional development and European integration, in conjunction with domestic political factors. It explores the minority's political representation and participation in the public life, as well as its identity representations, cultural recognition and perceptions of 'Europe'. It argues that EU integration processes have improved minority opportunities

at the regional level, influenced majority/minority relations and promoted political-cultural mobilization of the Slovenophone minority itself. The impact of the EU must be understood in conjunction with the broader geopolitical changes in Europe after the end of the Cold War, as well as with domestic factors. Following Slovenia's independence and subsequently its integration in the EU, Italy instituted enhanced forms of legal protection of Slovenophones. A catalytic factor transforming their political and economic position has been the progressive loosening of the border with former Yugoslavia over the past twenty years, which normalised trans-border relations.

Home to a small but politically salient Turkish Muslim minority, the Greek region of Thrace over the past fifteen years has been Objective 1 region and a main beneficiary of EU structural funds. The report argues that through structural funds and human rights norms, EU integration set a new context for, and prompted significant domestic reforms in regional development, subnational institutions and minority rights in the 1990s. The regional economic and institutional changes that have taken place within the EU frame have promoted some inter-communal cooperation in Thrace, which, however, is constrained by ongoing political separation along ethnic-national lines. National and ethnic politics have grown more moderate since the 1990s, at the same time, there are important differences in how Muslims and Christians understand democratic rights and citizenship. In the context of European integration, national and ethnic differences in Thrace remain salient, yet, they appear to diversify and acquire a qualitatively different content and meaning in comparison to the 1980s.

The case studies from Bulgaria and Slovakia explore the changes brought about by post-communist regime transition, market restructuring and subsequently the processes of integration in the EU, and examine their consequences for minority mobilisation and its relations with the majority in selected ethnically regions. The report by Aneta Antusova and Darina Malova argues that in the case of Slovakia, European integration process played an important role in the implementation of minority protection regime in Slovakia and contributed to the political mobilisation and empowerment of the Hungarian minority at the national and also at the regional political level. The strong social-cultural cohesion of the group, experience with political representation and favourable constitutional and legal provisions concerning the electoral system in Slovakia expanded opportunities for the country's Hungarian minority. The European integration process in conjunction with a committed national political elite became an important impetus for consolidating the ethnic relations exacerbated during the Mečiar government. While EU structural policy stimulated Slovakia's new government to speed up the processes of regionalization and decentralization, its impact on regional development and the general socio-economic conditions of the minorities is much less clear.

Galina Lozanova and the Bulgarian research team describe the findings of local research carried out in the Turkish and Muslim minority-inhabited districts of Smolyan and Khardzali in the South Central Region. In the context of post-1989 political and economic restructuring, it explores the process of accession to the EU, and its impact on the rights of Turkish and Muslim minorities. It also examines the influx of pre-accession funds and the related changes in local economy, government and administration of minority-inhabited areas. The report shows notable convergence across parties on EU integration, as well as cooperation between Turks-Muslims and Bulgarians in local government around regional development programs and pre-accession funds. At the same time, it also reports significant separation and divisions along ethnic lines in local government in Khurdzali which since 1990 has been dominated by the Turkish minority party Movement for Rights and Freedom. A sense of identification with 'Europe' is sporadic and weak, while there is an emphasis on the need to preserve ethnic, national and religious identities in the European integration context.

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