REGIONAL CONSENSUS-BUILDING AS A MEDIATING FACTOR IN EUROPEAN REGIONALISATION: TERRITORIAL POLITICS BETWEEN ADAPTATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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1. Introduction

A great democracy must either sacrifice self-government to unity, or preserve it by federalism.
-Lord Acton-

Questions relating to European governance and constitutional change are today a pressing issue everywhere in Europe, nowhere moreso than in those countries where — as a partial consequence of wider integrationary and globalising processes — new strategies and solutions for national and regional forms of governance are implemented. Such a framework therefore makes Scotland a particularly interesting case, where devolutionary strategies, social processes of consensus building and attitudes towards European integration have become decisive, both in terms of governance, and in relation to the more philosophical concerns of political community.

Sub-national as well as continental processes of regionalisation and integration have become in recent years increasingly attractive as objects of study for social scientists. The nature, scope and intensity of regionalist ideologies and movements have been seen as altered by both their internal processes (the mediation of regionalist aspirations in terms of identity-building and the nature of their political environment) and external influences (economic, social and cultural pressures brought about by the expansion of neo-liberal ideology and the various processes of globalisation).
It is assumed here that internal and external mobilisation (regionalisation 'from below' and 'from above') are reflected in the processes of integration and globalisation and in turn influence the opportunities open to regional actors, oscillating between empowerment and adaptation.

The Scottish case is used here to indicate that a neo-Gramscian approach can be applied to study many of the central elements of regionalisation. The Scottish consensus-building process is viewed through the prism of two points in time; the establishment of the Scottish Constitutional Convention in 1988 (culminating in the publication of the 1995 report ‘Scotland’s Parliament, Scotland’s Right’), and the 1997 Devolution Referendum. These strategic decision points are used to indicate the social processes and conjunctural forces that were decisive in the construction and re-construction of the devolutionary strategy. The opportunity structures required to create such a successful consensus-building process can be utilised in drawing more general conclusions relating to regional influence.

It is suggested here that hegemony construction can be useful in identifying the nature of regionalist processes within Europe. Social processes relevant to this provide tools for the analysis of both current EU Member states and those in the pre-accession phase. The Gramscian notion of civil society is in essence the sphere in which organisations, institutions and individual social actors reproduce the consensus on which the legitimacy of structural domination is built. Thus an ‘historic bloc’ is the conjuncture within which the organic relationship between ‘political’ and ‘civil society’ is embedded in the form of a hegemonic structure and ideology.¹ Through a restructuring of the traditional reading of relationships between the spheres of civil society, politics and economy, this type of theory provides a helpful tool in the analysis of European integration and in particular for the sub-national regionalisation process. There are thus two connected and partly over-lapping consensus-building processes; a European one (part of a wider process of consensus-building with its emphasis on neo-liberal adaptative strategies) and the national / sub-national one in which openings for empowerment through new forms of regionalist strategies and discourse are

¹ This ideas was elaborated on in (Lähteenmäki-Smith 1999).
played out. This dualism reflects the problematic role of regionalism, oscillating between social transformation and economic adaptation.

### 2. Theoretical (re-)considerations

The theoretical basis for the argument presented here is firmly grounded in critical approaches to International Relations, mainly of the neo-Gramscian variety. As has been recently proposed by Ankie Hoogvelt (1997), neo-Gramscian theory offers a fruitful ground for the study of globalisation, allowing for consideration of the impact of the processes of globalisation through concentration on the identification of multiple paths to the future. This is not merely a matter of incrementalism, but emphasises the political nature of the processes of globalization, regionalism and integration.

The artificial distinction between force and consensus embodied in the traditional international-domestic distinction is in many cases unproblematically internalised by integration theorists, who are either concerned with the static nature of the domestic system emerging within the European sphere (thus amenable to a comparative methodology) or with the still essentially anarchic nature of international relations prevailing between the constituent parts of this system. This distinction can equally be outlined in terms of understanding ‘hegemony’. Within ‘hegemonic stability theory’ a state in the international system has been seen as hegemonic if it has maintained a position of leadership in which it is powerful enough to maintain the essential rules for governing interstate relations, as well as being willing to do so (Keohane and Nye 1977, 44). In Realist discourse the basis of this position has been assumed to be military preponderance, rather than consensus, which is limited to the domestic sphere. This power-political interpretation is however only one possible reading of the concept. Hegemony can also be seen as an ideological and intellectual position of leadership, that is not only implemented through the (actual or potential) use of force, but is part of a consensus building process within civil society.

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2 See also Lähteenmäki-Smith 1999.
It is worth emphasising here that the Gramscian notion of civil society is the sphere in which organisations, institutions and individually organised social actors reproduce the consensus on which the legitimacy of structural domination is built. Thus an ‘historic bloc’ is a system within which the organic relationship between ‘political’ and ‘civil society’ is embedded in the form of a hegemonic structure and ideology. Through restructuring the traditional reading of relationships between civil society, the sphere of politics, and the economy Gramsci is most useful for our understanding of European integration.

The state is not merely the external expression of society, as it has most often been purveyed in the field of International Relations, but rather is the combination or organic whole formed by the level of the political (the traditional state apparatus) and civil society (social forces such as churches, unions, parties etc.) that is expressed in the ‘historical bloc’ thus formed. In terms of European integration it therefore becomes possible to view the European Union as representative of an historic bloc, but equally as a sum of historical blocs, of elementary spheres of consensus building within this wider community (individual member states or shifting alliances). In each of these blocs hegemonic aspects are processed, as consensus is being built within the organic ‘extended state’.  

Though European integration has often been viewed in the neo-realist sense as an element of American hegemony-building or as a response and counter-reaction to this (Hurrell 1995, 48-52 and Lundestad 1998), this is not the type of hegemony we are most concerned with here. Instead emphasis here will focus on the ‘hegemony of an idea’— attempts to create ideological hegemony through consensus building in individual states and societies, not merely in the international sphere. Moreover, it must be remembered that in the neo-Gramscian sense hegemony also refers to both domestic and international arenas, though the domestic is often emphasised. Thus for instance in the Blackwell Encyclopaedia of political thought, hegemony is interpreted as a ‘term used principally by Gramsci and his followers to refer to the non-coercive aspects of class rule, i.e. to

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3 This reading of European integration has been developed in works by van der Pijl and Holman (van der Pijl 1984 and 1989; Holman and van der Pijl 1996).
the ability of a dominant class to use agencies of socialisation to foist its own values and beliefs on to the remainder of the population’ (Blackwell Encyclopaedia of political thought 1991, 200).\(^5\) Force and consent are thus both relevant, as are national and international consensus-building processes.\(^6\)

European integration is deeply embedded in a constantly ongoing consensus-building process, in which assimilation and adaptation are key issues. Indeed, for Cox, ‘hegemony is like a pillow that absorbs blows and sooner or later the would be assailant will find it comfortable to rest upon’ (Cox 1993, 63). The integration process as a whole offers numerous examples of this. In fact most theories of integration represent degrees of this hegemonic strategy approach in which elites and incremental policy integration are of central importance. Once actors are ‘locked’ into the system, it becomes difficult to resist the process. In the case of European integration this is evident in the way that members have to accept the ‘acquis’ when joining, thus accepting the evolutionary nature of the Union, with its previous commitments and future goals.

The incremental development view is particularly valid since the framework of analysis applied here seeks to incorporate various elements or spheres of action in its scope; thus encompassing the local, regional and global spheres, all seen as important in determining the social and political condition of regionality. In the neo-Gramscian approach, it is the ensemble of social relations configured by social structures (‘the regional situation’) that is the basic unit of analysis, rather than individual agents and their activities (Gill 1993, 24). This also applies to the study of regionality as undertaken here. Though the aim is to unravel the problems and possibilities facing regions within the EU, work must be carried out through the mapping of social relations within this sphere in their entirety, not by isolating individual actors and trying to analyse them and their relationships vis-a-vis other actors within this sphere of action.

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\(^5\) This interpretation of hegemony comes close to Joseph Nye’s concept of ‘co-optive power’, which refers to the ability of a state to influence a situation in a way that other nations develop preferences or define their interests in ways consistent with one’s own. Such an influence is built on other than military resources, such as cultural and ideological attraction as well as the rules and institutions of international regimes. (Nye 1990, 191.)

\(^6\) Gramsci himself took this idea from Machiavelli and his image of power as a centaur (Cox 1993, 52).
The nature of globalisation has been one of the most controversial issues within Political Science and International Relations in the recent years. The contested nature of the concept, as well as its manifestations have been a constant source of debate. The way globalization is understood here centres around three notions: identity, social mobilisation and forms of state. Each of these will be briefly analysed in turn.

The argument put forward here views the process of regionalization in Europe, the process of the ‘Europeanisation’ of regions as part of the wider integration project, which in turn is coterminous with the process of globalization. In line with the Coxian view of globalization as a phenomenon encouraging regionalization (Cox 1993, 262), it is argued that regions need to find reactive strategies in order to face up to the challenges that globalization and integration bring, both politically and economically.

Globalization is thus not merely a matter of economic necessity as liberal views would lead us to believe (Hurrell and Woods 1995), but also relates to the changing nature of social action in its entirety. It reflects the reactive nature of regionalist strategies as a defensive response in the face of globalising trends.

7 At its most basic and traditional, the concept of integration in International Relations refers to a process of formal association between states in treaties establishing new economic and political entities (Barry Jones 1995, 89). The definition used here views integration as part of the internationalisation process involving all capitalist states, which oscillates between the need to create a more effective transmission belt between the world economy and the European regional economy, and the attempt to give Europe the means to compete and protect itself in the face of this internationalisation. The integrationary project is thus in essence the attempt to strike a balance between these two partly contradictory processes, in which the dominant social forces seek to garner support for their leadership by expressing their goals in terms of universal interests and using institutions as the anchor for their hegemonic consensus building strategy. (See Cox 1987, 259-260; 1981, 137 and 1983). However the understanding of integration here equally borrows form the pluralist approach that emphasises the existence of a variety of actors within the integrationary process, that has emerged from Deutsch’s notion of integration evolving through increased communications and exchange transactions into a transnational political community (Deutsch 1957).

8 Typically economic globalization is seen as consisting of a growth in the volume of international trade; a shift of production from the most developed capitalist economies to the NICs, an increase in the level of financial flows at a global level, sharply increasing levels of Foreign Direct Investment, and an increase in the amount of world business conducted by transnational corporations (Wilks 1996, 100). Yet the degree to which the level of these changes actually makes this era different from previous ones is sometimes contested (e.g. Hirst and Thompson 1996). These shifts in economic activity are generally seen as having an impact on various economic practices resulting in internal differentiation aiming at creating niche markets and specialised competitive advantages as part of the process of integration and regional governance (Dicken 1992, 1 and Hirst and Thompson, op.cit.) In this sense integration is not a process resulting solely in the homogenisation of micro-regions within the macro-region.
(pursuing local and regional needs in face of pressures for further integration), but also the attempt by regional and transnational elites to pursue certain economic, political and social goals in line with the European ‘liberal’ integration project.

‘Actorness’ is one instrument available to those who wish to evaluate regional goals and roles. It is obvious that different types of regions can desire different political (and other) goals. Yet actorness as a capability to mobilise and articulate interests and values is a prerequisite for most of them, and hence a key element in evaluating the relevance and potential influence of actors representing regions.

Approaching the question of regional presence and ‘voice’ in the EU from this angle thus emphasises both the socially constructed nature of regionality (those who are willing to act to further regional interests must have an - official or unofficial - mandate from the regional society) and the element of power (‘voice’ is meaningless without empowerment) involved. Hence ‘region’ is a unit which reflects the ‘regional condition’, that is, certain political, economic, social and cultural circumstances typical to this area, which in turn is reflected in the actor capacity or ‘actorness’ of the representatives of the region in question.9

Though the nature of globalization can be seen as stemming from various roots and consisting of divergent influences (from the ‘interdependence’ literature of Keohane and Nye to the globalism of Cox and Gill), methodological choices underlying this study are most focused on the critical/emancipatory approach of the neo-Gramscian school of thought. The interdependence approach in itself would not be a sufficient anchor for a socially constructive approach emphasising the potential of transformation and social agency. Neither is it sufficient as a conceptual tool for grasping the full meaning of globalization as a process, since it is still more a tool for operationalising the world-wide reach of interactions than a tool for creating an epistemological shift towards a more critically oriented

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9 Michael Keating recently outlined a similar idea in his definition of regional space through three elements: territorial space, functional space and political space, in which political space corresponds to ‘a space in which political debate takes place, a space recognised by political actors in which decisions are taken and legitimised’ (Keating 1998, 21). He also cites Scotland as an example of such a space, which (before the referendum and the subsequent establishment of the regional parliament) forms a legitimate regional political space, though without political autonomy. The fact that the actors themselves in the regional setting determine who / where the
approach. The reflectivity of Keohane et al. is rather more a question of interpreting institutional impact and influence (Waever 1996, 164) than aiming for change in the epistemological and social sense.\textsuperscript{10}

Though globalism/globalization even in the social science literature is often used in the sense of extensive and intensifying interdependence\textsuperscript{11}, this alone is not sufficient to make it relevant in terms of regionalization. What is required is an emphasis on critical approaches to change, with a focus on society and the possibilities for anti-hegemonic moves and movements as well as on the empowerment of citizens, rather than concentrating on political institutions and the prevailing hegemonies and power structures within them.\textsuperscript{12} Such emphases have epistemological implications that will be briefly discussed next.

International Relations as a discipline has been dominated by empiricist epistemology. This has entailed constant attempts to operationalise the knowledge of International Relations into statements about phenomena that can be as close to directly experienced phenomena (phenomenalist nominalism) as possible.\textsuperscript{13} This study is methodologically and epistemologically more influenced by the approaches included under the general heading ‘Critical Theory’ than those that can be distinguished from relativist post-modernist approaches, though sharing some similarities with them in terms of ontology. The epistemological basis of this study seeks to understand regionality from the perspective of the actors relevant actors are and which space is formed as the basis for regional activity yet again reflects the social construction of the region.

\textsuperscript{10} This has also been referred to as ‘reflexivity’. A reflexive orientation sees theoretical approaches (or paradigms) as ‘coping vocabularies’ that are linked to different social agendas and political projects, and as such incommensurable. Reflexivity is then thought to represent the epistemological move from asking ‘what constitutes good theory?’ or ‘which paradigm is superior?’ to asking ‘which general social agenda/political project is most appropriate (in terms of the needs of the planet)?’ (Neufeld 1993, 75).

\textsuperscript{11} Anthony McGrew for instance has referred to globalization in this sense as the ‘...multiplicity of linkages and interconnections between the states and societies which make up the modern world system’ and ‘the processes through which events, decisions, and activities in one part of the world can come to have significant consequences for individuals and communities in quite distant parts of the globe’ (McGrew 1992, 23).

\textsuperscript{12} On the methodological and epistemological implications of Coxian ‘global political economy’ for International Relations see Cox 1993, Mittelman 1998 and Higgott 1994.

\textsuperscript{13} Traditionally the competing epistemologies on the International Relations agenda have included empiricism, rationalism and pragmatism, which each have their own weaknesses, connected to the nature of observation, explanation and the subsequent nature of knowledge thus obtained. In addition to these dominant epistemologies, recently serious epistemological challenges have been mounted by scientific realism, hermeneutics, Critical Theory, feminist and post-modernist approaches. (Smith 1996.)
involved, as they are to some extent empowered by emerging spaces for social action, but also constrained by the hegemonic elements of the integrative process. The perspective of the actors involved is socially constructed, which implies that epistemologically they cannot be seen as independent, but rather understood within a theoretical framework and thus necessarily the object of foundationalist evaluation.

Economic developments are central to this overall process. The increasing tension between neo-liberal economy (border-free mode of operation for transnational enterprises) and democracy is seen in increasingly problematic. Globalization and regionalization are not only relational phenomena, but also therefore potentially contradictory. The fact that regional societies and economies, and the individuals living in them cannot afford the same disregard for borders and territorial bounds as capital, limits their freedom of choice and leaves them in an unequal position in relation to capital, which can profit from this imbalance in negotiating advantages within this environment. The local impact of such economic activity is sharply felt in different parts of the globe, as the economy is the sphere in which the interconnectedness of local and global is perhaps most obvious. Issues such as the Maastricht convergence criteria may be nationally oriented and based on national economic indicators, but the impact of implementing them is often more regional and local (Amin and Tomaney 1995, 19). In terms of economic adjustment, the relationship between the political and the economic becomes most obvious, but cultural and social aspects are equally relevant when considering regional responses to global influences.

The complex nature of globalization as it impacts upon regions therefore becomes clearer as do potential responses relating to the nature of interaction and the resources available. As has been argued by Ash Amin, the impact of the global is permeable, depending on the terms of interaction between evolving ‘in here’ identities and capabilities and ‘out there’ influences (Amin 1997, 129 - also Amin and Thrift 1994). Thus the impact of globalization varies a great deal and though there is no region, locality or community totally uninfluenced by it, the relative vulnerability of each is determined by the balance between internal and external factors and influences. In this sense one could again cite Michael Keating who has
argued that in the present-day world there can be no independence as such, only ‘strategies for managing [inter] dependencies’ (Keating 1998, 25).

The co-existing processes of globalization and Europeanisation are contested. They cannot be analysed merely by looking at the input and output of regional actors, calculating what such regional actors ‘get out of it’. Questions of ‘structure’ and ‘agency’ need to be considered. The capacities of regional empowerment are not linear, nor necessarily cumulative. They cannot be judged simply by evaluating the institutional, economic and political capacities that the regional actors hold (Keating 1998 and Négrier 1998). The potential for regional empowerment is equally dependent on the social construction of a region by social forces and thus is a constant site of negotiation and re-negotiation regarding the terms of this construction. Thus regionalism is also a matter of ‘identity politics’ in which political and social actors make the region visible by their actions and by the self-understanding and consensus-building taking place in the region in question.

The concept of identity used here comes close to Manuel Castells’s notion of a legitimising identity building process (Castells 1997, 8), which refers to situations in which notions of identity are forwarded by the dominant institutions of society

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14 Similar models for evaluating capabilities required to achieve effective adaptation strategies at the national level have also been outlined. They have emphasised the interplay between internal and external factors; for instance the influence capability of a Member State as evaluated against its degree of sensitivity to the outside world, i.e. stress sensitivity (Hansen 1974 cited in Petersen 1998). Though the balance between external and internal factors is one of the key elements of outlining a national or local/regional integration strategy, the adaptation model tends to overemphasise common national characteristics, and leaves aside variations in national and regional policy interests. Britain may be well known for its (sic) diplomatic skills (Petersen, op.cit., 39), but obviously these skills do not produce consistent results. The reasons for this are perhaps more issue-specific, regional, or in some cases even personal than the model would lead us to believe. Fisheries for example has traditionally been an issue where the British government has been strongly criticised for not negotiating as effectively as possible; reform of the structural funds is another contested issue where national interests are far from uniform. (On implementing adaptation theory to integration; see Mouritzen 1993, Kelstrup 1993, Petersen 1995.)

15 The influence of social forces within regionalism seeks thus to avoid the economism of some of the class-based explanations of nationalism (Nairn 1977, Foster 1989), though acknowledging the relevance of economic forces as one part of the social construction of the region.

16 In the Scottish case the process of consensus building that transcends class- and party lines has been also emphasised by Michael Keating and Barry Jones (Keating and Jones 1995, 103). Though this is generally recognised as an important asset of Scottish politics, there has recently been public debate on the balance between consensual politics and the need to have lively public discussion on different issues, occasionally verging on disagreement and controversy. Consensual politics should not lead to politics without alternatives. (On this debate see The Scotsman 8 and 9 December 1998.)
to extend and rationalise their domination vis-a-vis social actors. Yet there has traditionally also been an aspect of ‘project identity’ in the Castellian sense in regional identity building, i.e. in a process whereby social actors utilise the resources available to them in order to build a new identity that redefines their position in society, and by so doing, precipitates the transformation of the overall social structure.

Devolution can thus be seen among other aspects of potential constitutional transformation as indicative of a project that is partly modifying, partly itself the result of the modification of identity. Yet this ‘project identity’ is more encompassing than current identity processes tend to be. Whilst legitimising identity creates a civil society in the Gramscian sense, project identity for Castells produces subjects in the sense of collective social actors through which individuals reach holistic meaning in their experience. Though subjectivity is present in region building, it is more fragmented than this traditional modern identity / subject construction ever was. The third type of identity building in Castells’s typology, ‘resistance identity’ also has a potential applicability to regional movements. Indeed for Castells, it is the approach that is most likely to lead to community building in the Etzionian sense (Etzioni 1993).

As the processes of identity building, institutionalisation and actoriness can be viewed as a multi-faceted whole, the key issues that follow from this include a variety of factors ranging from human and economic resources and administrative structures and resources, to questions of leadership and political and social legitimacy, all of which are relevant in the process of identity building and in particular in the articulation of identity as political and social action (e.g. Jeffery 1998, 72-75). Effectiveness in constructing such alliances, both regionally, nationally and on the European level is equally important, and for their successful

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17 An interesting aspect of this identity construction is the role of the media and broadcasting services, which have in recent months seen heated debate in Scotland. (See for instance The Scotsman and Daily Record, 26 November 1998.) The need to have regional news reporting the Scottish parliament’s legislative work has emerged as a major issue. How Scottish news is organised once devolution has taken place is of utmost importance, as news, as well as broadcasting in general is an essential instrument of identity building as well as of civic education.
formation as effective strategies the direct representational route is of key importance.\textsuperscript{18}

3. The process of Scottish consensus building

Decentralisation and federalisation go hand in hand, though the connection between regionalism and federalism is not a straightforward one. Whilst regionalists see federalism and federalisation as a means of enhancing the development potential and status of their own region, federalists are in turn likely to use regions and regionalism as stepping stones towards a federalist Europe (Loughlin 1996, 151). These connections may however be useful in helping to provide answers to some of the questions posed earlier regarding European governance.

The current trend towards multi-level decision making, political strategies and identities requires us to reformulate political ideas balancing different sources of legitimacy and identity. Federalism and regionalism can be contributing factors in this exercise. Indeed as Josep Ferrater Mora argued with regard to Catalonia and its place in the modern Spanish state: ‘The Catalanization of Catalunya may be the last historical opportunity to make Catalans ‘good Spaniards’, and to make Spaniards ‘good Europeans’” (Ferrater Mora cited in Castells 1997, 50). Similar challenges are being faced across Europe.

In this light, the devolution of power to Scotland from London is merely one attempt to reconstruct a more flexible framework of identity and legitimacy. Notions of federalism are thus quite compatible with complex interdependence and globalization approaches - emphasising the need to overcome nationalistic mindsets and unilinear state-centric governance solutions. Our point of embarkation here shares some basic assumptions with the multi-level governance approach as far as the impact of regionalization is concerned. As argued by Beate Kohler-Koch, regionalization or Europeanisation alone cannot transform the

\textsuperscript{18} One prerequisite for this alliance building in the current EU structure seems to be the establishment of regional offices. Regional actors looking for partners and creating issue-specific alliances tend to limit the scope of their options to those actors or those regions that are present or represented in Brussels. (Interviews with representatives of the regional offices of Hanse Office, Scotland Europa, West Finland and Ostrobothnia.)
constitutional situation of states, neither is it expected to, but it can contribute to
the modification of the principles, ideas and rules that determine the legitimacy of
governance, as well as political actoriness and empowerment in every-day life
contexts (Kohler-Koch 1998, 53).

The process leading to regionalism is obviously similar to that of nationalism - it
can be argued that the defining difference regarding political goals is an element
that emerges only later when the sentiment of national or regional specificity has
been expressed. The process of nationalism is closely connected to modernisation,
and can as such be outlined in four consecutive steps:

1. Modernisation, consisting of the processes of social mobilisation, cultural
standardisation and growing political participation can be identified as a
prerequisite for the emergence of nationalism.
2. Modernisation causes the social dislocation of the state, one facet of which
being peripheral disintegration.
3. A social category with a distinctive peripheral culture and resources will
perceive this dislocation as unfair, and as such is likely to express its
grievances.
4. Moreover, the aggrieved community, or part of it, is likely to blame the state
for this dislocation. It will attempt to mobilise against the existing state and in
favour of more autonomy for the aggrieved community. A nationalist
movement takes off in the periphery. (Hooghe 1992, 26).

Hooghe’s account however still fails to distinguish between the causes and
manifestations of regionalist and nationalist ideologies. Europeanisation and the
ensuing regionalization can offer a useful set of tools for this, as the link between
regionalism in the domestic environment, and regionalization in the wider
(European) context is present through processes of external and internal
mobilisation, and the Europeanisation of the sub-national environment.

Scotland is used as the example case here for three main reasons. Firstly, it neatly
illustrates the various elements of the impact that a combination of globalization
and Europeanisation has had on the regions. Secondly, it accurately represents the
different facets of regionness outlined above. It is to some extent dependent on
the European Union for its well-being, with 85% of Scotland’s population eligible for European structural funds under Objectives 1, 2 and 5b after the 1994 reforms. (On the financial impact of EU policies on Scottish local government see COSLA 1996a, 4–6.) Yet its role is not merely one of receiver, as it is highly active in fora of European interest representation. Thirdly, it is necessary to note the specificities of the Scottish ‘regional condition’ related to its role as part of the United Kingdom. Though Scotland is more than a region — it may be better to call it a ‘dead state’ or ‘stateless nation’ (McCrone 1992), with a distinctive set of civic institutions and a strong sense of patriotism traceable back to the 14th century Declaration of Arbroath (Kellas 1992), it also strongly portrays the characteristics of a European region with all the problems of a regional economy and the political issues that are attached to such a position. This also makes Scotland a special case in terms of the regionalism - nationalism interface.

The possibility is entertained here that the needs of Scotland may not primarily be served by focusing on nationalist aspirations, but that peripheral disintegration and political discontent can be more effectively mobilised in terms of regionalism. The reason for this lies in the understanding of European governance applied here. In the traditional political system of relatively coherent individual states with mutually binding intergovernmental co-operation agreements, the independence option may have been the most plausible one through which to pursue the interests and political, economic and cultural aspirations of the Scottish people, assuming that these interests could be defined in such unified terms.19

European integration and globalization can be viewed as having altered the coherence and social basis of community, political action and citizenship to such an extent that organising around separate independent and sovereign nation-states may no longer be the ideal way of organising people politically and socially. Thus nations, as well as other political and social reference groups could better be seen

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19 In a recent study on political options and economic consequences conducted at the University of Edinburgh, the independence scenario was found to be most effective at creating economic prosperity and achieving sustainability. The method used was ‘natural capacity accounting’ taking into consideration the environmental effects of economic conditions. In this study the scenarios available were ‘status quo’ (pre-referendum) or ‘business as usual’, devolution and independence. Unfortunately the devolution scenario was not seriously considered, because of the difficulties in evaluating its economic consequences before the existence of the legislative blueprint. Also the
as elements within a multi-level polity, rather than embodying divisive boundaries raising cultural, administrative and military borders between peoples in a situation where concern over sovereignty issues stifles the pursuit of more inclusive forms of political organisation.

In addition, the Scottish case will shed light on the regional condition on a more general level, as well as highlighting one of the key issues of regionalism, the often problematic relationship between the centralised state and the region. There has been much debate on whether regionalism can provide answers to some of the problems of the state. It has been argued that regionalism is both the ‘symptom of the ailing world of centralised statehood’, and also ‘its possible cure’ (Hueglin 1989, 200). In the Scottish case this rather optimistic view of the possible political and social relevance of regionalism can thus be analysed as a wider reflection of the need to decentralise and to activate the regional tier. Whether this will result in the federalisation of the UK state, or save its enforced unity, however remains to be seen.

As the processes connected with regionalism and integration are political, as well as conjunctural, depending on the decisions and actions of a variety of actors within the European sphere, there is always a possibility of altering the current situation in what can be called ‘strategic decision points’. These points allow for the choice regarding political and social power structure and activity. This makes the regionalist processes, as well as those connected to European governance in a wider sense path-dependent. Scotland’s alternative scenarios can be presented in a simplified form as follows:

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possibility of a constitutionally altered UK structure was overlooked. (Slésser, Crane and King 1995.)
'Strategic decision points’ vary in their impact in terms of the paths chosen. It can be argued that in the recent years the establishment of the Scottish Constitutional Convention and the Devolution Referendum have been particularly decisive. Though the elections to be held in May 1999 are obviously important in terms of the every day functioning of regional governance and the distribution of powers and responsibilities, they are not as relevant in terms of determining the path to the future as the two other decision points were. It is at these ‘strategic decision points’ that matters of principle in terms of governance, social actorness and consensus building are determined. This makes regional governance a deeply path-dependent process, allowing for choices and alternative paths, but equally depending on previous choices.

In terms of the future form of governance, expectations regarding the increase in Scottish influence in Europe as a result of the establishment of the regional parliament are high. Though official representation in EU institutions is unlikely to be realised, it is the influence vis-a-vis the UK government that may become a key focus, as the Scottish parliament begins its work.\textsuperscript{20} Though in this study we are mostly concerned with the regional consensus building process as a move stemming from within civil society, it is obvious that the UK government (and by extension Scottish Office) are the main targets for political and regional interest

\textsuperscript{20} In some cases ‘Scotland going European’ has been taken so far that the regional and local players have perhaps neglected to forge effective ways of influencing the UK central government (Interview with Hugh Henry.)
representation. There is, and will remain however a need to forge effective forms of interest representation both nationally and trans-nationally (Keating and Jones 1995, 100).  

Many of the questions relating to the future of Scotland in Europe remain to be answered, as we progress towards the elections of the Scottish Parliament. One of the key factors here is the role of the SNP, which can be considered to be of decisive importance, perhaps for the first time in the history of the party. As the polls have indicated, the likelihood of a close race between Labour and SNP, with the possibility of an SNP majority has been entertained in the minds of political analysts as well as Scots in general. This would mean that for the first time the SNP would have the opportunity to implement its political programme, rather than merely acting as an instrument of political mobilisation. Though foreign policy remains in the hands of the Westminster parliament, some changes are likely to occur in Scotland’s European presence and influence.

The key issue in this respect will be the representation of Scottish interests in Brussels. Since March 1998 there has been a separate Scottish Office Bureau placed with the UK Permanent Representation office in Brussels, with two representatives of the Scottish Office monitoring the situation leading up to devolution and taking part in consultations regarding the future role of Scottish interests in Europe. This however is a transitional solution and the question of the representation of the Scottish Parliament will remain unresolved until the executive starts functioning in July 1999. Whether the parliament’s representation will be placed within the UK Representation, independently or with ‘Scotland Europa’ is thus going to be of symbolic as well as functional importance.

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21 The role of the Scottish Office has been central in administering EU structural funds. Also it has been the major instrument in the creation of a higher and more pronounced ‘regional’ profile for Scotland as a whole. In this differentiation process Scotland has emphasised its special character through ‘Northern Rim’ co-operation, which has been used to justify the status of the Scottish 1, 2 and 5b regions. This has not only been a means of forging practical co-operative ties and projects, but is also seen as a PR tool. Whilst there has been some indication of a more active ‘diplomatic’ role for the Scottish representatives (even before devolution), Finnish and other Nordic regions have been more reluctant to engage in ‘paradiplomatic’ activities. (Interviews with the representatives of the Finnish ministry of interior and Association of Finnish Local authorities, Northern Periphery 1997.)
In most member states with devolved systems the regional (federal) representation is separate from the national one, and this does seem like the most likely option also for Scotland. In the German and Austrian cases there is also a permanent regional observer placed within the national representation. Scotland Europa would understandably be keen to see the parliamentary representation located within its own offices (Select Committee on Scottish Affairs 1998). Whether this will occur or not is unlikely to change the fact that the role of Scotland Europa will be altered. The relationship between local and regional administration will be central in this respect.22

In the transitional stage the experiences of other devolved member states will be particularly valuable. Representatives of the Scottish Office have been conducting extensive consultations with regional representatives of other EU member states in 1998 in order to find the best way to conduct Scottish affairs with Europe once devolution has taken place. Donald Dewar has put together some of the conclusions as follows:

- The relationship between the central and devolved tiers of government must be a harmonious one. The degree of formality must be low, as flexibility is a prerequisite for effective co-operation between the two tiers.

- Regional government needs to be very professional in dealing with EU matters, which in turn requires that they are kept informed of different issues on the EU agenda.

- The impact of regional government is at its greatest at the early stages of considering EU business. This once again requires the fast and effective flow of information between the different tiers of government. The Scottish Executive should also be able to speak for the UK in appropriate cases.

- The flow of information between officials of regional and national governments must be fast and effective. This necessitates complementary roles for the national permanent representation and the regional government

22 As has been argued elsewhere, regionalisation or federalisation does not automatically imply democratisation of, or subsidiarity to, the local level. Moreover, the Spanish and Belgian cases have been cited as examples, where the ‘empowerment of the regional’ has had a negative impact on the empowerment of the local level. (Kerremans and Beyers 1997.)
representative office. Effective regional government and an effective representative office in Brussels should be two sides of the same coin.

- There should be an acceptance of ‘healthy plurality’. Especially in cases where regional and national governments one representative of different political affiliations. Disagreements can emerge, but they should be solved in the spirit of negotiation and pluralism. (Scottish Office 1997.)

The demands for professionalism and flexibility are manifest in all forms of regional representation. The effective flow and processing of information, together with the establishment of effective networks for this purpose is also a prerequisite of all regional influence in the European sphere. The establishment of such networks is usually seen as the first task of regional offices (devolved or otherwise). Only after these are established can other functions be effectively undertaken, such as information gathering and lobbying for funds. Once these functions have been established a more political role for the regional representation can be developed, with a regional consensus building process supporting the establishment of a strong regional profile. This can be seen as a basic prerequisite for the attainment of more political goals.

The Scottish case provides us with some examples of the articulation of regionalist strategies through a consensus building process. The variety of interests present in this construction process representing various social forces from the trade unions to local government and business elites provides a background against which the effectiveness and visibility of Scottish interests can be evaluated. Yet effectiveness and visibility are two separate issues and though Scottish interest have been visible and have created a strong European profile for Scotland as a whole, the constitutional guarantees for the articulation of this voice into power resources and thus empowerment are lacking. It was hoped that devolution would enhance the situation, but as yet this remains to be seen, as there has been reluctance or ambiguity relating to the external role of the Scottish parliament. Much will depend on how the Parliament will function, the depth of its popular support and the nature of its contribution to the regional consensus building process. Yet debate so far has indicated a reluctance on the part of Westminster to allow a strong formal European profile for the Scottish executive
to emerge. This may not be as much a hindrance as one may think however. It has been emphasised by studies on various regional actors from devolved and unitary member states that what matters are institutional resources (institutional thickness, professionalism and most importantly the capabilities required for effective consensus building). These issues in the end also determine the regional actorness, i.e. the perceived legitimacy of the regional actors, which in the end is a key prerequisite for acting as an effective channel for regional interests in the European context.

4. Conclusions

Questions regarding the form of European governance, and type of political community are not settled in one-off situations of intergovernmental bargaining, such as the IGC process within the EU. Neither can they be settled in electoral contests. Instead what determines these key issues are constant political and social processes centring around strategic decision points at which social actor and political forces mobilise.

The neo-Gramscian theory of International Relations emphasise the constructive and contested nature of political and social action within the sphere of various social forces, oscillating between consensual trends of community building and top-down forms of coercive hegemony-building. As such these approaches can provide a useful tool in understanding and explaining the social and political processes that result from integration and globalization.

Though consensus-building can provide a useful tool in the analysis of Scottish regionalism, it should not be understood as a uncontested, unified force. There are tensions within the social forces and interest groups that must be allowed to play themselves out in order for the political governance structure that accompanies devolution to function in the interests of the citizens. Thus the need to forge consensus must not override existing tensions and differences of opinion, though neither should they be over-emphasised in the attempt to gain electoral success.
Key factors in determining the ‘Scottish voice’ in Europe (and thus by extension globally) will be the ways in which the representation of the devolved parliament will be organised. Existing forms of interest representations (e.g. Scotland Europa) must be utilised in order to forge a strong presence and voice, but the problems with accountability and democratic representation must not be overlooked. The process(es) of consensus-building must be viewed as becoming globalised, implying the need to respond to global and continental pressures in defining the role of state and various social forces. This renders regional consensus-building and regionalism not merely influenced by globalization, but also part and parcel of defining its very meaning and relevance.

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