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11 Conclusions

The aim of this dissertation was to discover the effects of regionalisation on regionalism, leaving behind the outrageously alarming, or soothingly comforting, predictions relating to these regionalisation projects made within the framework of political debate. And justly so. Contrary to political predictions, Spain, France and the United Kingdom did not fall apart after regionalisation, and national unity did not end up in the bin of history. In fact, despite an almost omnipresent wave of regionalisation, no Western Europe state has actually 'fallen apart' due to the secession of part of its territory since the independence of Republic of Ireland in 1922. With the exception, perhaps, of the Faroe Islands, where very gradual steps are being taken to move closer and closer to independence from Denmark, independence elsewhere does not seem to be a likely outcome for any Western European region soon.

Things are different in other parts of the world and very clearly so in Eastern Europe, where some countries have now become members of the European Union. Nevertheless, the number of independent states in the world has increased impressively over the past decades, mostly because of the last big wave of decolonisation in the 1970s, the emergence of a number of Caribbean and Pacific island states in the early 1980s, and the creation of new states after the fall of communism. Large numbers of new states were created after the break-up of the Soviet Union, and Yugoslavia a few years later, as well as the separation of the Czech and Slovak republics. In the case of both the Soviet Union (Knippenberg, 1996) and Yugoslavia, regionalisation, or the choice for a federation along ethnoterritorial lines, influenced the territorial outcome of the disintegration of those states. However, it can hardly be regarded as its direct cause. Elsewhere, secession is a rather rare phenomenon, not just in Western Europe. Relatively recent examples are Eritrea (in 1993) and East Timor (2002). However, examples which have no direct links to the waves of decolonisation and post-communism are harder to find. The regionalisation that took place in Western European countries certainly did not put any new states on the World map.

However, contrary to other predictions, regionalisation did not do away with separatism and regionalism either. Separatist violence is still very much present in the Basque Country and Corsica, and the democratic political parties striving for independence in Scotland and Catalonia did not abandon their mission nor did they lose support. What is more, in all three states, a concrete discussion is now taking place on whether to take regional autonomy one step further. In Spain most regional Autonomy Statutes are to be changed and autonomy expanded during José Luis Zapatero's first term of office, two decades after they were first drafted. In some regions, such as

Catalonia, this is set to involve the formal recognition of Catalonia as a 'nation'. Galicia's present socialist - regionalist government coalition is heading the same way. In France it is now the centre-right that is proposing further decentralisation, to the *départements* and *régions*. This would involve giving regions the right to experiment and increase policy differentiation between regions. In the United Kingdom, just five years after regionalisation, the Richard Commission recommended increasing Welsh autonomy to more or less match the arrangement already made in Scotland. Taking Welsh autonomy at least one intermediate step further now seems likely. In this light, the description of devolution by former secretary of state for Wales Ron Davies as 'a process, not an event', seems to be relevant. This is not because regionalisation set in motion some unstoppable mechanism, or some 'slippery slope' of fragmentation, but because of political decisions and reactions to political opportunities.

Some of the predictions regarding what would happen after regionalisation were made in the heat of the moment of political debate and campaigning and that they failed to materialise is clear for all to see. This study addresses the gap in our knowledge about the effects of regionalisation on regionalism, by looking into the resulting institutionalisation of regions, the political opportunities offered by regionalisation, and the reactions of regional political actors. This concluding chapter tries to offer some answers to the questions raised, first to the more detailed research questions, and draw some conclusions on the main theme of this dissertation. Finally, it refers back to some of the theoretical discussions of chapter 2, and evaluates some ideas put forward elsewhere on possible effects of regionalisation on regionalism.

11.1 Interpreting research findings

In chapter 2 a number of research questions were formulated, with a distinction being made between those questions dealing with the institutionalisation of the region and changes to regional identification, and those related to the politicisation of regional identities, and the opportunities offered by the emergence of a new political arena. This distinction has been maintained in the description of the case studies that followed, and will be maintained here.

The research was based on the assumption that territorial attachments are not static, but may change through the influence of certain factors or events, for instance the introduction of regional autonomy, and the emergence of regional institutions. Although this research certainly does not dismiss that assumption, there has not been a lot of change in the degree of attachment people feel to their region since regionalisation . As could be expected, identifications with the region increased, but almost nowhere spectacularly. This was despite the fact that some territories were new creations, and that some put effort into actively building an attractive regional image

and identity. Levels of identification appear to be rather persistent, and change less radically than election results or preferences for certain policies for instance. Neither do people lose previously held preferences that quickly. In almost all regions in Spain, France and the United Kingdom the inhabitants combine a regional and a national identity, and regionalisation has not caused a dismissal or weakening of national identifications. The only exception has been the United Kingdom, where Scottish, Welsh and English identifications became more often exclusive, although even there this applied only to a minority of the population. Given that most, regional and national identifications are not mutually exclusive, and although for some regionalisation inspired people to consider a regional identification alongside a national one, on the whole this did not change after the introduction of regional autonomy. This has been the case even in regions well-known for ethnic conflict and there is no easy, clear-cut division between Scottish and British in Scotland, between Basques and Spaniards in the Basque Country, and between Corsicans and French in Corsica, let alone in other regions. However, as demonstrated by the voting for regionalist political parties, and preferences for increased autonomy or even independence, in those and other regions, that is no prerequisite. The survey data used here only allows for limited conclusions on this point, as they do not examine possible changes to the role of different territories as source of attachment, and more detailed accounts of the ways in which institutions influence regional consciousness.

Of course administrative regionalisation sets or confirms the boundaries of administrative territories. The question is whether it also influences the territorial extent of the homelands defended by regionalist actors, and the territorial divisions used outside administration? The answer is that this is not really the case, as shown in the case studies here. Wherever administrative regional boundaries did not coincide with the spatial ambitions of regionalists, this issue continued to be topical, and new regional boundaries were not accepted more readily, or became less of a political issue as time passed by and once the new regional boundaries started to function and were constantly confirmed by the territorial extents of regional government authorities. This was much less the case in Spain and the United Kingdom, where regional boundaries largely conformed to historical examples, than in France, where historical and cultural regional boundaries were often avoided. Because the function of the regional government remained limited and mostly administrative, the new regional boundaries could not replace the existing ones that were kept in use in almost all other situations, such as in Brittany. It appears that the adoption by non-administrative institutions , for instance the media, cultural organisations, and business, would be needed to change the mental map of Bretons about the territorial extent of their region. In other places (e.g. Savoy, French Catalonia, French Basque Country), some were not happy with the regional boundaries either, and regionalisation offered regionalist movements a new political objective, namely that of obtain-

ing a 'region of their own'. In Spain and the United Kingdom, some people were also discontented with regional boundaries (e.g. in Léon, the Basque Country, Cornwall), but this issue featured less prominently on regionalists' agendas. Like different levels of territorial attachments, ideas and representations of the boundaries of historical territories, although changeable and malleable, are rather persistent.

Regionalisation provided regions with a new set of symbols, some designed with that function in mind, like a regional government logo, and some serving as such in practice, like the figure of the regional president representing the regional authorities within the region, and the region as a whole elsewhere, or the expanded representative role of the regional capital. Regional authorities and politicians often incorporate references to historical situations or symbols in the new region's iconography, to give an idea of historical continuity and increase the regional autonomy's legitimacy. However, in many cases, such regional symbols were already well developed, and the presence of regional government authorities is just a small factor in their maintenance.

Through the founding and the funding of regional media regional governments can make a considerable impact on the emergence of regional institutions. In fact regional governments have shown some willingness to do so in all three regions studied here, although their financial, political and legal leeway to do so differed. The same applied to the willingness and opportunities to introduce regional language policies. The degree to which institutions moulded territorially to fit the administrative region, apart from direct regional government policies, has been limited. For instance, regional newspapers on the scale of the administrative region were already present before regionalisation in Galicia, growing into a considerable and well-read source of information on regional politics. In Wales and Brittany regional newspapers focusing on those regions either had relatively small circulations, or were absent , a situation which regionalisation did not change. Nowhere was regionalisation followed by a decreased wish for regional autonomy. It did not make people reconsider earlier and more radical demands. Neither did it make them switch to more modest or even centralist positions. Nor was there an increased demand for independence. Almost everywhere that it was an issue, the support for secession remained stable. So, neither the predictions that regionalisation would be followed by general satisfaction with the level of autonomy, nor that it would strengthen separatist demands, were reflected by the trends in public opinions on regional autonomy. What did happen, almost universally, was a strong decrease in popularity for the pre-regionalisation situation of a centralised state without regional autonomies. No large movements appeared anywhere whose aim was to abolish the new regional institutions. On the contrary, according to public opinion surveys, many of those who were against regional autonomy before its introduction, subsequently turned from opponents into supporters. This indicates that,

once it had been introduced and was working, regional autonomy was able to acquire general acceptance and increased legitimacy quite quickly. This also means that, even when introduced after much controversy and opposition, it will be hard to reverse a decision to introduce regional autonomy. Nevertheless, in many regions there was not only a shift in public opinion from preferences for centralisation to a preference for the regional autonomy as introduced (or, in other words, a shift from one status quo to the other), but also a shift to a more vociferous demand for a further increase in autonomy. In that sense, although regionalisation does not affect preferences for independence, it does cause an increase in popularity of more radical autonomy demands, and therefore potentially stronger support for regionalism.

However, neither regional identities, nor preferences for regional autonomy are good indicators for the election results of regionalist parties. Nor is their support restricted to those who do not regard themselves as Spanish, French or British at all, or to those who would support independence for their region. Generally, regionalist parties manage to obtain a larger share of the vote than those groups would provide for. Nowhere did regionalist parties really become weaker than they had been before regionalisation. Thus, as regards the cases studied here, predictions that regionalist parties would become obsolete after the introduction of regional autonomy, can be dismissed as unfounded. On the contrary, in most cases regionalist parties became stronger, and in other instances regionalist parties emerged in regions where none had existed before. The introduction of regional elections played an important role in this. The regionalist parties manage to gain considerable support especially at regional elections. Those are moments when often regional interests take prominence, and regionalist parties are able to position themselves successfully as the best defenders of the interests of the region, pitting themselves against the state-wide parties which are presumably more inclined to defend state-wide interests. Thus, the introduction of regional elections has been a boost for regionalist parties. Within their region many have become much more competitive than they had been nationally, suddenly managing to obtain seats, or more seats than previously, and deploy a larger group of full-time politicians who have then been able to build up a more professional organisation. As described in the previous chapter, this did not happen in all regions, and not in all three states, to the same degree. The regionalist parties in France were less successful in managing to obtain seats. Part of the difference can be explained on the basis of differences in how the campaigns focused on regional issues, and thus regional interests, or on state-wide issues, meaning that they served as a test for the popularity of a national government. This is related to the development of a separate regional political arena.

When recapitulating on the idea of a region as a political space, as discussed in chapter 2, it was noted that the presence of regional government is no necessity, nor a guarantee, for the development of such a political

space. The analysis of three regions after regionalisation suggests, however, that the introduction of regional autonomy and regional elections can be a huge stimulus in this respect. However, based on the differences between Brittany on the one hand, and Galicia and Wales on the other, a number of preconditions can be determined. In the first place, the development of a political space is hindered if the region is just one level of administration among many, instead of being dominant at the meso level, and having opportunities to direct policies at local level. Related to this is the existence of a category of political actors dedicated solely to the interests of the region, in contrast to the system of *cumul des mandats*, where most politicians are active at different spatial levels. Both are also connected to the regionalisation of the political party system, with the development of relatively autonomous regional party sections, and the restriction of those organisations to temporary forums for election campaign planning within a system in which other levels of administration are equally important. Moreover, power is vested more in individual politicians who are active at different spatial levels than in territorially based organisations. Finally, of course, the degree of autonomy, the importance of the policy topics transferred to the regions, and the capabilities to adapt or make legislation, does matter. Political actors, media, and citizens are less likely to ignore governments and political debates if there is more at stake. In this light it can be stated that regionalisation as it fits in the French state tradition block the development of regional political spaces much more than the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic state tradition as they apply to the United Kingdom and Spain.

Political parties themselves have adapted their objectives and strategies as well to deal with the new reality of regional elections and regional political activity. This applied to regionalist parties and also to the regional sections of state-wide parties. In the case of regionalist parties, and in the regions studied here, this generally meant a moderation of their views in order to become a more attractive alternative for a larger number of voters. The opportunity to amass a large number of seats and even compete for government positions made their choices between a more activist and democratic political party easier. The introduction of regional elections offered them new possibilities to become competitive and more mainstream parties, instead of peripheral outsiders.

Apart from an adaptation of general strategies and discourses, regionalisation also inspired a reconsideration of their core demand, namely increased regional autonomy. Some reactions involved maintaining the same demands, since it was clear enough that they went further than the regional autonomy arrangement offered, or they involved a radicalisation based on the adaptation of a more far-reaching 'final goal'. What did not happen, as some predicted, was that regionalist movements split into satisfied and pacified parts and extremist parts, which then became isolated after regionalisation. Fringe groups of radicals did split off but, on the whole, regionalist par-

ties did persist and kept putting pressure on the central government to increase regional autonomy or independence. In the case of a radicalisation of autonomy goals, an important reason was the fact that regional sections of state-wide parties also adapted to regionalisation and started to impose demands on central government, including demands for more regional autonomy.

One of the clearest developments after regionalisation in the cases studied in this book has been the adaptation of regional sections of the Spanish, French and British mainstream parties, through the increasing usage of a different type of regionalist discourse. Regional elections and a regional political arena mean a vision is required on the defence of regional interests, a celebration of regional distinctiveness and features of regional identity, and the usage of regional symbols. This has often meant a conflict, or at least a rhetorical contrast, with the interests, identities and symbols of the state as a whole. In this context, elements and symbols were often 'borrowed' from regionalist parties, which had always pitted themselves against those who generally represented the state . Of course, this was usually a milder regionalist view than the one held by regionalist parties. Sometimes it was limited to a symbolic regionalism. However, in other cases, it involved active campaigning for an extension of regional autonomy. In general, however, regional branches of the main state-wide parties in Galicia, Brittany and Wales made an effort after regionalisation to appear more Galician, Breton and Welsh, and as parties that could be trusted with the government and interests of those regions. The fact that this development was less clear-cut in Brittany than in the other two regions can be explained through the differences in the emergence of regional political spaces and the concentration in regional election campaigns and political debates on regional issues. So, while most citizens preferred the new status or more regional autonomy, rather than centralisation, most actors in the regional political arenas that emerged after regionalisation chose to work with the new arrangement instead of fighting an apparently lost cause based on turning back the clock. Again, this is more apparent in the case of Spain and Galicia, and especially the United Kingdom and Wales, than in France and Brittany. In the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic state traditions the accommodation of regionalist demands through regionalisation includes a number of elements mentioned above that facilitate a more important role for regionalist actors and ideas. In contrast, in the French state tradition the regions remain firmly integrated in a national administrative and political structure that offers less incentives for the growth of regionalism.

11.2 Reconsidering theory

If we take the theoretical debate from chapter 2 on regionalisation as either the moment of settlement and the smothering of regionalist conflicts, and

contrast it with regionalisation as a milestone in a recursive regionalist conflict, the latter corresponds more closely to the empirical evidence found in Spain, France and the United Kingdom. The description of ethnic politics as consisting of different episodes, separated by events such as regionalisation, through which the conditions for the next episode are set (Van der Wusten & Knippenberg, 2001), appears to correspond closely with the developments of regionalism after regionalisation in those three states. Regionalisation altered the political opportunities and incentives for regionalism drastically, and it is clear that we can speak of the period after regionalisation as a new episode of regionalist politics. In none of the three states did that episode cause the disappearance or serious weakening of regionalist movements and their support. In that sense, assumptions that regionalisation accommodates regionalist tensions to the point of satisfying some of its supporters with a compromise, and thus resolving the conflict, do not hold ground in these cases. There was no movement of popular opinion away from more radical autonomy demands to an acceptation of the autonomy arrangement, and neither was there a weakening of the support of regionalist political actors, or a split in the regionalist camp. What did happen was a moderation of immediate demands and general political strategy. However, this was an adaptation to a newly available intermediate step towards obtaining political objectives rather than an abandonment of a more radical final goal. The argument that a sense of remoteness and lack of responsiveness might be helped by regionalisation, through the provision of a new level of government might be true. However, this has not been the focus of this research, and has not caused an increase in attachment to the state as a whole, or a decrease in support for those who oppose the extent of the state's political control over the region. In that sense regionalisation did not accommodate many demands, but either had a very small effect on the amount of pressure exerted by regionalist movements, or stimulated it and moved the centre-periphery conflict up a step on what Rokkan and Urwin (1983) called the 'stages of escalation', which range from centralisation to secession. The way in which opinions shift quickly and easily to preferences for more far-reaching levels of autonomy or federalisation, but not to independence, indicates that independence is by no means a simple process, nor a slippery slope leading to separatism. Support for independence was not affected either way by regionalisation. In places where it had been a broadly supported demand before regionalisation, it remained on the political agenda despite the of the introduction of a more moderate degree of regional autonomy.

The points of departure for a new episode of regionalist politics based on regionalisation involved, most importantly, the presence of a regional government and recurring regional elections. As argued by, for instance, the sociologists Bourdieu and De Swaan, the act of boundary drawing by a recognised authority can produce or highlight cultural differences, and the role of a territory as an administrative unit which enables the region to

come to life' and make its inhabitants aware of the fact that their destinies are bound up with regional politics. The political geographer Peter Taylor (1994) referred, in this respect, to the state during the expansion of its functions as acting like 'a vortex sucking in social relations to mould them through its territoriality' (p.154), creating the image of the state as a 'power container', as well as a 'wealth container', a 'cultural container' and a 'social container'. The expansion of the functions of regional authorities due to regionalisation can, in that sense, be seen as the construction of regions as smaller versions of such containers. Some regions have, to some degree, moulded cultural, economic and social relations to their territoriality after regionalisation. However, in most cases this has been restricted to political powers and administration. One effect was the emergence of regional political arenas with symbolic and political resources which sometimes conflicted with those of the state, although they were rarely a real threat to the state's existence. In some ways, regional autonomy has allowed regions to take on state-like functions and images. However, this autonomy only played a limited role in encouraging the institutionalisation of the region and the building of a regional identity .

The impact of regionalisation is strongest in the context of regional political and administrative life. Of the types of opportunities mentioned by Sidney Tarrow (1994), regionalisation mainly provides regionalist movements with an opportunity to participate and gain partial access to power. As an almost general rule in all regions where regional elections were held in Spain, France and the United Kingdom, and, we may assume, in many regions elsewhere, regionalist parties obtain better results at regional elections than at state-wide elections. Regional elections provide them with real possibilities to gain representational seats, and thereby gain access to regional power. Their position in regional parliaments and assemblies allows them to participate in state-wide political debates on constitutional issues and centre-periphery conflicts. As can be seen from the cases analysed here, regionalist movements tend to take that opportunity to become more integrated into mainstream democratic politics and become a serious player in the regional political arena. This does not mean, however, that they lose their position as protesters against the power distribution between state and region. Instead, they use those new opportunities to mobilise support, and put forward and normalise their existing claims, for regional autonomy or independence.

Interestingly, regionalisation not only strengthened regionalism through increased access to power, but also through its inclusion in the political discourses of the main state-wide political parties in the regions. In order to compete with the advancing regionalist parties, and to show their suitability as regards taking up regional government positions and defending regional interests, if need be in opposition to those of the state as a whole, and to demonstrate their knowledge of regional affairs and attachment to regional identities instead of being centrally appointed envoys from the state

capital, regional sections of state-wide parties started to talk more intensively of regional identity and culture, and distinguish themselves from their fellow party members in the rest of the state. In some instances, this meant the adoption of regionalist programmes, such as the demand for extended regional autonomy. In this way, regionalisation means a strengthening of regionalism. However, because regional sections of state-wide parties are unlikely to call for independence, and maintain some adherence to the subsistence of the state and its territorial unity, this does not mean a strengthening of separatism.

Chapter 2 discussed a number of explanations of the occurrence of regionalism, that is where, when and in what form it occurred. The aim of this research was not to test these explanations, since it analysed only the development of political regionalism after and in reaction to the introduction of regionalisation. However, the emergence of regionalist movements, especially in Spain, in regions that were relatively new, and in which regionalism had not existed before regionalisation, suggests that regionalism is not always based on long existing 'peoples' with a history of independence, but can also emerge through the impact of regional institutions. In that sense it does not only 'reawaken' identities and shared destinies, but creates new ones or moulds existing ones to a new territorial reality. The fact that this occurred in regions with varying economic characteristics shows that regionalism is not based on simple correlations with economic deprivation or advancement.

Regionalist political projects have not been pursued in isolation. Regionalist demands almost always have to compete with other political demands, which are geographically based on the interests of the region, the state, or other territories. In the period since regionalisation, regionalist movements in Spain and France were not the only bodies to challenge the existing mainstream parties. This was also the period in which Green parties emerged as a significant force in many European countries, and in which anti-immigration parties won votes, often based on a nationalist ideologies linked to the nation state and which, as such, were in contrast to those linked to sub-state regions. It was also a period in which globalisation and European integration became more important. The transformation of the European Community from a mostly economical, common market organisation into the European Union, with its many state-like features, had an impact on political arenas in Europe at both state and regional level. Regionalist politics was also affected. The idea has come about that the existence of a European Union above the member state level makes independence less threatening. In other words, secession no longer means the necessity to be self-reliant , given the possibility of becoming an EU member state. Within the European common market, it is believed that newly independent states would have to be less 'independent' because of the back-up they receive in the form of EU solidarity. Whether or not this is true in practice, regionalist parties have incorporated these ideas into their programmes. In Galicia, Brittany and Wales,

regionalist parties highlighted the European level as an alternative to the state in some contexts, and referred to the possibility to be integrated into the European Union to take the sharper edges off demands for more autonomy or independence. European integration, and direct elections for the European Parliament also provided regionalists with extra opportunities to obtain representative positions and more funding and then become more professional organisations. It also provided them with incentives to increase their international cooperation.

Regionalisation is only one of a number of possible answers to regionalist demands. This research has not compared the outcomes of regionalisation with those of, for instance, maintaining a centralised state, or federalisation. It is therefore not possible to make solid statements and policy recommendations about which type of response to regionalist demands is preferred. This research aimed to find out what happened to regionalism after regionalisation. It has shown that predictions of a rush towards independence and the falling apart of the state, or a withering away of regionalism and satisfaction with the degree of autonomy obtained are unfounded. On the contrary, support for independence remained stable in all cases, while in many ways political regionalism became stronger after regionalisation. There are, however, differences in the dynamics of regionalism after regionalisation between states and between different forms of regionalisation, and more research is needed to determine whether the conclusions of this study apply for other cases as well. Nevertheless, the findings of this research are reason to state that regionalism certainly does not disappear when regional autonomy is introduced.