‘Europe of the Regions’
A Genealogy of an Ambiguous Concept

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Once again, the future of the EU is up for debate. Ursula von der Leyen, who took over the EU Commission in late 2019, has announced a Conference on the Future of Europe, starting in 2020 and lasting for two years. Citizens and civil society are to have their say as equal partners alongside European institutions. While the concrete scope and objectives of the conference still have to be agreed on, von der Leyen has already declared her readiness to follow up on what the conference decides – be it legislative action or even treaty changes. While the latter requires consensus among member states – something hard to imagine in the current situation – the public space was already flooded with manifestos and proposals for a European Constitution[1] in the weeks around the May 2019 European Parliament elections.

Before that, in March 2017, EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker had presented five scenarios for the future of the EU in a white paper and put them up for discussion.[2] Without awaiting the outcome of the ongoing consultation process, Juncker set up the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and ‘Doing Less More Efficiently’ a few months later, which presented its recommendations in July 2018.[3] Those who can still remember the last major debate on the future of the EU, which was officially opened by the Laeken Declaration in 2001 and resulted in the EU Constitutional Treaty of 2004, cannot help wondering about the contrast: hopes of a better, more democratic Europe have given way to fear of the future and short-sighted cost-benefit thinking or even national egoism, while visionary drafts have been replaced by half-hearted reform proposals. The rejection of the EU Constitutional Treaty by French and Dutch voters in 2005 and more than ten

1 See, for example: the Amsterdam Declaration of the Pan-European Party VOLT (Volt 2019) (https://www.volteuropa.org/amsterdamdeclaration) and many more. For an overview, see Ulrike Guérot (2019), Was ist die Nation?, Part III, Hannover: Steidl, or Ulrike Liebert (2019), Europa erneuern. Eine realistische Vision für das 21. Jahrhundert, Bielefeld: transcript.

2 See: European Commission (2017): White Paper on the Future of Europe. Reflections and scenarios for the Eu27 by 2025, 1 March 2017, COM(2017)2025.

3 See: Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and ‘Doing Less More Efficiently’, 10 July 2018. (CoR 2019b)

years of permanent crisis – economic and financial crisis, euro and sovereign debt crisis, Ukraine conflict, refugee crisis, Brexit – have left deep marks and further undermined the already precarious legitimacy of the EU.

Significantly, the Commission's white paper and the final report of the Subsidiarity Task Force do not mention the EU's democratic deficit or European citizens at all. Instead, the discussion once again focuses on the position of the member states in the EU, as it did in the 1990s, when the treaties were subject to constant reforms. Thus three sets of questions are at the forefront: 1. the distribution of competences between the EU and the member states ('*how much* or *what* should be decided at European level?'); 2. the design of the European decision-making process and, in particular, the relationship between intergovernmental and supranational institutions and procedures ('*how* and *by whom* should decisions be taken in the EU?'); 3. the scale and speed of European integration for individual member states, that is, the room for differentiated (dis)integration ('which states *may*, which states *should* take what steps towards integration?'). However, one thing is never questioned in these never-ending discussions: that the EU is and should remain primarily a union of (national) states. Though – unfortunately – a political reality so far, this view clearly neglects an important aspect that has been enshrined in the constitutional foundation of the EU itself since the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, namely that the EU is not only a Union of *States*, but also a Union of *Citizens*.[4] As German historian Hartmut Kaelble recently put it, European citizens, although they are the sovereign of the political union of Europe, have also so far been the 'dismissed subjects' of European integration.[5]

The EU – Still Only a Union of (Nation) States?

After years of European integration and despite persistent complaints about 'being bossed around' by 'Brussels bureaucracy', the member states do indeed remain the key players in the EU – and they are not thinking of disempowering themselves for the sake of the European idea by merging into a full-blown European political union. The German constitutional lawyer Josef Isensee sums up the prevailing legal opinion with a vivid metaphor: The member states are not only the builders of the European Union, but also provide "the building land" and "the building material, which they take from their own houses. The Union is the work of its member states." (Isensee 2016: 7, author's translation)

The member states are the 'masters of the treaties'. They decide which competences to transfer to the European level. In most cases, however, this does not

4 Cf. especially Art. I-XII of TEU.

5 Hartmut Kaelble (2019).

mean that they would *give away* these competences, but simply that they *exercise* them *jointly*, with the participation of the Commission and the European Parliament. In any case, with their seats in the European Council, which (unanimously) lays down the strategic guidelines for European policy, and in the Council of the EU, which is involved in most law-making procedures, the member states are guaranteed control over the European political process. This is even more true of key financial and personnel issues such as the negotiation of the multiannual financial framework and the filling of top positions.

Hence the EU merely provides the framework within which the member states pursue common objectives. The transfer of competences to the EU is a permanent loan, which, as Brexit shows, can in principle be revoked at any time. Moreover, member states are wary of handing over policy areas that are at the core of national sovereignty (e.g. defence, taxation – with the important exception of currency) or critical to securing citizens' loyalty (e.g. welfare and social affairs). Last but not least, European integration in no way challenges the member states' monopoly on the use of force. Instead, the EU depends on the provision of resources by the member states for its defence and security policy.

Nation-state thinking permeates even utopian blueprints for the future of Europe. Significantly, the final point of the 'ever closer union' is conceived of in statist terms, namely as 'United *States* of Europe', a 'European federal *state*' or a 'confederation of nation states'. These old debates, which were particularly relevant in the 1990s, focus exclusively on relations between the *European* level, on the one side, and the *nation state*, on the other. They thus completely dismiss two things: first, the role of the citizens themselves in the European polity; and, second, the role of sub-state entities in large federal states, such as Germany and Italy.

The first source of dismay – the lack of the republican component in the EU – can only be touched upon briefly here: In essence, during the past seventy years of European integration, much focus was spend on the question of the *federal* structure of the EU. But little if any energy was spent to reflect on the necessary *republican* component of a political union of Europe – i.e. the necessary legal equality of its citizens. Independently of whether a state is centralized (France) or federal (Germany), any political union must comply with the general principle of the political equality of all its citizens, which is not the case in today's EU, where European citizens remain fragmented in national 'law containers' (Ulrich Beck). Federalism only organises the competition *and* cooperation between sub-state entities. In itself, it does not provide legal equality for citizens, which is the necessary, though not sufficient condition for any democracy. Going forwards, the *federal* and the *republican* principle must be interlaced in the EU if it really wants to become a democratic, political union. This discussion emerged already during the talks around the Eu-

ropean Constitution of 2003, especially between Germany and France,[6] but is not the focus of this contribution.

This chapter rather focuses on the *level* of (European) federalism, by questioning whether today's EU member states in their current state are the only possible entities that can 'carry' the political edifice of the EU. This becomes evident when looking at the battle for political independence in Catalonia and Scotland. Though the two cases differ strongly in terms of political context, political leaders of both these sub-national regions have openly proclaimed the goal of 'individual' EU membership for Catalonia and Scotland, respectively, alongside the political independence they seek. Sub-state entities or regions are also vigorously coming back to the European discussion table in other cases, as, for instance, when all of Europe focused on Wallonia in 2016 in the context of the debates about CETA, the EU trade agreement with Canada. There is thus a growing desire on the part of sub-entities of federal EU member states to increase their ability to act on their own in matters of European governance, i.e. independently of the channels provided through their federal states.

The discussion of the role of regions in Europe is, however, not new. It already peaked in the early 1980s, when, for instance, the – at that point new – German Green Party sought to strengthen regional Europe in order to foster regional agriculture and the promotion of 'sustainable farming methods' as well as decentralised energy provision. Conservative parties such as the EPP also began to hold regional party gatherings as early as the time of the Maastricht Treaty in 1991, claiming that European regions, not today's member states, should be the constitutional carriers of a political union of Europe.[7] This concept of a 'Europe of the regions' did indeed challenge the prevailing paradigm of Europe as a union of today's (nation) states. As the EU seems to have reached a dead-end and there is a need for alternative visions for European integration, it might be worth taking a closer look at the now widely forgotten concept of the 'Europe of the regions' and its intellectual history.

'Europe of the Regions' in the EU Political Debate

The 'Europe of the Regions' refers to a wide range of ideas and reform plans that are more or less compatible with the existence of the EU in its current form.

6 Cf. Pascal Savidan (2004) La République ou Europe? For details of this discussion cf. Ulrike Guérot (2016, 2019).

7 In 1991, 178 conservative representatives of European regions gathered in Düsseldorf and prepared a 'Regional Manifesto' for a political union of Europe, among them Jordi Pujol. This document still can be found in the Landesarchiv Düsseldorf. This shows that the Catalan question, in particular, is hardly new. (Landtag Nordrhein Westfalen 1991)

Demands for a mere **political upgrading of the regions** through earlier and closer integration in the decision-making process of the EU – whether at European or member-state level – can be quite easily accommodated within the current institutional architecture of the EU. The proposals of the Subsidiarity Task Force[8] and the Committee of the Regions (CoR)[9] currently under discussion clearly fall into this category. Most of these proposals revolve around the principle of subsidiarity, which was enshrined in European primary law with the Treaty of Maastricht. The Task Force and the CoR have called for existing control mechanisms such as the 'subsidiarity early warning system' to be improved by extending deadlines or introducing a standardised test grid. Under the new concept of 'active subsidiarity', work is also underway on new procedures for the consultation of local and regional policy actors at earlier stages of the law-making process. By contrast, the current President of the CoR, Karl-Heinz Lambertz, has proved more innovative with his recent push for the creation of a 'permanent EU mechanism for structured citizen consultations and dialogues'[10] in which regions and cities would play a key role as the transmission belt between citizens and EU institutions. However, it remains to be seen how this initiative will be welcomed by the member states. Hence it is interesting to note in this context that the two above-mentioned essential flaws of the classical federal discussion of the EU, which focuses only on 'Europe vs. the nation state' – the *regional* (sub-state) dimension of Europe and the missing *republican* component, i.e. the linkage of the EU with its citizens – seem closely linked: the regions and towns are where citizens live, and that is where citizens increasingly want to decide about European issues.

A more comprehensive understanding of the 'Europe of Regions' is advocated by proponents of a decentralisation or 'federalisation' of the EU with **regions as actors in their own right in the European multi-level system**. In the 1980s and early 1990s, German *Bundesländer* – above all Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg and North Rhine-Westphalia – championed this concept and contributed to its (short-lived) popularity in regionalist circles. By doing so, they reaffirmed their claim to be recognised as fully fledged political actors in the emerging European polity alongside the member states, at least in those policy areas that traditionally fall within the competence of federated states and legislative regions. These efforts resulted in

8 See: Report of the Task Force on Subsidiarity, Proportionality and 'Doing Less More Efficiently', 10 July 2018. (CoR 2019b)

9 See, in particular: Karl-Heinz Lambertz (2018): State of the European Union: The View of its Regions and Cities, 9 October 2018, and European Committee of the Regions (CoR 2019a): Building the EU from the ground up with our regions and cities (Bucharest Declaration), 15 March 2019.

10 See: Karl-Heinz Lambertz and Luca Jahier (2018): Bringing the EU closer to its citizens: The call for an EU permanent mechanism for structured consultations and dialogues with citizens, 14 December 2018.

important legal and political innovations, namely the inclusion of the principle of subsidiarity in the treaties and the creation of the Committee of the Regions by the Maastricht Treaty. However, this lagged behind the original concept and did not affect the structure of the EU as a union of states.

(Some) regional actors have thus embraced the concept of a 'Europe of the Regions' with a view to regaining ground lost to national governments in the course of European integration. However, the initial advocates of the concept had much more in mind than merely strengthening the regions in a union dominated by nation states. What they demanded instead was no less than a paradigm shift: overcoming the nation state and **building a European federation based on independent regions**. The original concept thus involved a radical territorial reorganisation of Europe involving the dismantling of (large) nation states and – where appropriate – the redrawing of regional borders along historical, cultural, linguistic and functional lines. These utopian and revolutionary ideas date back to the beginnings of European unification – or even precede them in some cases – at a time when the memory of the political and moral bankruptcy of nationalism was still alive after two devastating world wars. Interestingly, this initial conception of the 'Europe of the regions' is now experiencing a renaissance with the work of Robert Menasse (2016) and myself (Ulrike Guérot 2016) reacting to the current crisis of the EU, the revival of nationalism and the return of the 'regional question' in (Western) Europe (e.g. Scotland, Catalonia, Tyrol).

'Europe of the Regions' – A Polysemic Concept

The first proponents of a 'Europe of the Regions' share the same criticism or rejection of the nation state. In their view, modern nation states are artificial entities, the random outcome of history, violence and power politics, which compensate for their lack of territorial and cultural cohesion by imposing a homogeneous 'national' identity on their citizens through linguistic, educational and cultural policies. By being integrated into nation states, voluntarily of by force, as the case may be, regions are thus bound to lose their political autonomy and cultural specificity. Beyond this common anti-nationalist and anti-centralist stance that the early advocates of the 'Europe of the regions' have in common, three different understandings of the concept can be identified, rooted in different intellectual traditions:

- the personalistic conception;
- the ethnic conception;
- the anti-authoritarian (*herrschaftskritisch*) conception.

The Personalistic Conception

The idea of a 'Europe of the regions' originated in French intellectual circles of the 1930s among the group known as 'personalists'. This group of young intellectuals around Alexandre Marc saw in the deeply troubled times of the interwar period a crisis of civilisation. Distancing themselves from both rampant totalitarian ideologies and liberal individualism, they claimed to represent a 'third way', beyond left and right, communism and capitalism. The 'new order' (*ordre nouveau*) they were calling for combined conservative concepts, in particular organic and corporatist views of society, with forward-looking ideas, such as the need for European unification, in an original synthesis. The basic element of this new order is the concrete human being (in contrast to the abstract individual of liberalism) considered as an autonomous and responsible person integrated into various organic or natural units: the family, the community, the profession and the region. Accordingly, the personalists advocated federalism as a basic principle for the organisation of society as a whole, that is, not only in the political realm but also in the economy, social relations and all other areas of society (integral federalism). Hence, the social and political order should be built 'from below', according to the principle of subsidiarity – from the corporatist 'intermediary bodies' (*corps intermédiaires*) and the 'regional homeland' (*patrie régionale*) up to the European continent. In this respect, it is very important to note that the renowned liberal thinker Hannah Arendt was deeply influenced by Alexandre Marc and his *non-ethnic* concept of a 'federation of small federations' (borrowing from Montesquieu) in Europe, when sketching out her political grammar for the founding of federal entities.[11]

After the Second World War, the Swiss writer Denis de Rougemont (1906–1985), who had joined the personalists in the early 1930s and became a central figure in the pro-European movement, elaborated on personalist thought. Rougemont inspired the creation of the Union of European Federalists (UEF) in 1946–1947 and took part in the Haagen Congress in May 1948, where his 'Message to Europeans', a passionate plea for European unification, was adopted by acclamation. Although the UEF soon lost momentum, and the dream of a supranational European federation gave way to the realpolitik of the Cold War, Rougemont tirelessly continued to campaign for a federal Europe.

In view of the stagnation of the European unification process and the continuing primacy of national interests in the young European Economic Community, he intensified his criticism of the nation state from the 1960s onwards. According to Rougemont, nation states are a relic from bygone times and either too large or too small, as the case may be, to cope with current challenges: *'L'Europe unie ne peut avoir réponse à tout, mais […] les souverainetés nationales ne peuvent plus avoir réponse à rien*,'

11 Cf. Wolfgang Heuer (2016).

he summed up in 1979.[12] Moreover, as sovereign entities, the member states would never be willing to merge into a European federation, whose creation Rougemont regarded as a historical necessity. Deeply disappointed by the intergovernmental process of European integration, he then pinned his hopes on the young regional movements that were starting to gain political momentum in the 1960s and advocated the creation of a European Federation based on the regions. This shift of emphasis is reflected in the term 'Europe of the Regions', which he introduced in 1962 and continued to develop.

Rougemont's definition of the region is quite original – today no less than five decades ago – and deserves a more detailed description. It does not coincide with the existing political-administrative regions, nor with the old historical provinces and territories, nor with the so-called 'ethnic regions', which are defined by language and culture. In his view, regions are rather 'multifunctional associations of persons that are formed on the basis of economic, social and cultural interdependencies […]'. (Ruge 2004: 505, author's translation) The regions thus do not constitute 'nation states on a smaller scale' (*mini États-nations*). As '*clusters of municipalities*', they are supposed to support the municipalities in carrying out concrete tasks in the service of the citizens (e.g. provision of basic needs) which exceed their material and political capacities, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity. This being so, the municipalities are free to decide how they want to associate – possibly across national and administrative borders – so that regional boundaries may vary (*géométrie variable*) depending on the policy area at hand.

Thus, while functional aspects are important to Rougemont, preserving local autonomy is even more crucial. The region should enable the municipalities to remain as autonomous as possible despite their limited size and resources, attempting to solve the equation: '*Comment être assez grand pour être fort, tout en restant assez petit pour rester libre?*'[13] In line with the key role played by autonomy and responsibility in personalist thought, Rougemont conceives of the regions as areas of civic participation. The human desire for political self-determination can only be fulfilled at the local and regional level, as it is only there that the citizens can have a real influence on problems they understand and that directly concern them. National centralism and bureaucracy, by contrast, generate political passivity and cultural homogenisation.

Just as nation states cannot meet the diversity of local and regional needs, they cannot, conversely, cope with tasks of a larger scale. '*Aujourd'hui, il faut penser par problème, pas par nation*', posits Rougemont.[14] Transnational or continental problems therefore require European solutions. Such solutions can only be provided by a

12 Cited in Reszler 2008.
13 Quoted in Saint-Ouen (2000).
14 Quoted in Saint-Ouen (2000).

European federation that does not consist of national sovereign states but is rather conceived of as a free association of functional regions. In such a 'Europe of the regions', Rougemont expects nation states to eventually become redundant, their powers being transferred 'upwards' to the European level and 'downwards' to the regions.

The Ethnic Conception

While Rougemont was sceptical about ethnic claims and warned of the danger of 'ethnic regions' turning into culturally homogeneous and centrally governed 'nation states on a smaller scale' (*mini États-nations)*, other thinkers pushed the emerging regionalist discourse in a clearly ethnic or culturalist direction. The most influential of them, Guy Héraud (1920-2003), a French constitutional lawyer and ardent supporter of the Occitan cause, was close to Alexandre Marc and Denis de Rougemont, with whom he occasionally collaborated. However, his worldview and thinking were fed by other sources: the protection of European minorities and 'ethnic groups'. Héraud thus engaged in the 'Federalist Union of European Ethnic Groups' (FUEV) and was co-editor of the journal *Europa Ethnica*, which was founded in 1961.

Héraud advocated a 'Europe of ethnic groups', a term he introduced in 1963 – almost at the same time as Rougemont's 'Europe of Regions' – in his book *L'Europe des ethnies*. There, Héraud laid down his plans for a three-tiered federation consisting of (linguistically and culturally homogeneous) ethnic groups, which would be members of the European Federation, on the one hand, and subdivided into smaller 'mono-ethnic' regions, on the other. In later drafts, he made regions the direct constitutional units of the European Federation. According to Héraud, ethnic groups are defined and united primarily by common language and culture (and, in his earlier writings, by mentality ['*ethnotype*']). In this sense, individuals or even entire ethnic groups have only limited freedom to decide for themselves which ethnic group they belong to: '[…] a people is what it is. No one can change their ethnotype. It is therefore wrong that by an arbitrary profession of ethnicity (usually based on complexes) one should take oneself for what one is not and attaches oneself to a community that is not, in nature, one's own.'[15]

Despite his undeniable proximity to Rougemont – both shared the rejection of the sovereign nation state and the idea of a strongly decentralised federal Europe – Héraud's theses are permeated by a very different spirit. While Rougemont focuses on the autonomous and responsible person, Héraud subordinates individual self-determination and democracy to the right of existence and self-determination of ethnic groups. Unlike Rougemont's, Héraud's criticism of the nation state is not of

15 Quoted in Melkevik (1994), author's translation.

a principled nature, but due to the historical fact that the formation of nation states in Europe went hand in hand with the suppression of 'stateless ethnic groups' and other minorities. The right to self-determination of ethnic groups he advocated involves the right to, and indeed the demand for 'a state of one's own' as a guarantee of the collective existence and independence of ethnically homogeneous groups. Héraud's 'Europe of ethnic groups' and all similar concepts of Europe based on ethnicity[16] are thus fundamentally ambivalent: A European Federation appears less as a goal to be pursued for its own sake than as a mean for the emancipation of stateless peoples and ethnic minorities from the supposedly oppressive grip of the nation state. Héraud therefore seems to be more concerned with the dismantlement of existing, mostly polyethnic nation states than with overcoming the idea of nation state as such.

The Anti-Authoritarian (herrschaftskritisch) Conception

Leopold Kohr (1909-1994), a political scientist and national economist of Austrian origin, is not always counted among the spiritual fathers of the 'Europe of the Regions', perhaps because he did not use the *term* 'Europe of the regions'. He nevertheless anticipated the *idea*. In an article from 1941, 'Disunion Now', Kohr advocated the unification of Europe according to the Swiss model, i.e. not along linguistic or national boundaries, but on the basis of a balance between smaller independent units (Kohr 1941). This, however, would require the division of the major European states – above all Germany, but also France, Italy and others – into smaller states of seven to ten million inhabitants, which would then be unified under the umbrella of a 'Pan-European Union'. 'If Europe is to be united', he later wrote in his main work, The Breakdown of Nations, 'great powers must first be dissolved to a degree that […] none of its component units is left with a significant superiority in size and strength over the other.' (Kohr 1978: 183) For federations of states to be successful, they must consist of smaller units of relatively equal size and power. Where this condition does not hold, Kohr warns, a federal union cannot last: 'If a federation has several great-power participants, it will break apart. It will end in disintegration. If it has only one, it will turn the smaller members into tools of the biggest. It will end in centralization.' (Kohr 1978: 179)

Unlike Rougemont and Héraud, Kohr's call for small political units is based on empirically verifiable (or at least 'falsifiable') statements about the influence of state size on democratic government, international relations and the stability of federal unions. His critique of excessive size – '*oversize*' in his terminology – as the root of all evil plays a central role here. Thus, he states concisely – although admittedly in a

16 See, in particular, Fouéré (1968).

somewhat undifferentiated fashion: '[…] there seems to be only one cause behind all forms social misery: bigness. […] bigness, or oversize, is really much more than just a social problem. It appears to be the one and only problem permeating all creation. Wherever something is wrong, something is too big.' (Kohr 1978: xviii)

The harmful effects of oversize *are* particularly obvious in the field of international relations, as Kohr explains in his 'power theory of aggression'. In his view, the primary cause of war does not lie in political, ideological or economic conflicts, but simply in the accumulation of a 'critical' mass of power. Power is often abused and rarely remains unused: Whenever a society is large enough and has accumulated a critical mass of power, it will use it, especially when it feels safe from reprisal. According to Kohr, this explains why most nations, regardless of racial background, degree of civilisation or ideology, have at some point in history committed atrocities. Kohr's proposed solution is as radical as his diagnosis: 'The solution […] does not seem to lie in the creation of still bigger social units and still vaster governments […]. It seems to lie in the elimination of those overgrown organisms that go by the name of great powers, and in the restoration of a healthy system of small and easily manageable states such as characterized earlier ages.' (Kohr 1978: xix) Smaller states tend to be more peaceful and conciliative, not because they are more virtuous *per se*, but for the simple reason that they have less power and are more aware of their vulnerability. If small states nevertheless do provoke wars, they can easily be kept in check by coalitions and therefore do only limited damage. Hence, the coexistence of many small states appears to be a prerequisite for peace, or at least the containment of war.

In addition to the concern for peace, Kohr has a number of other arguments against the excessive size and power of states. He is thus part of the long tradition of political thinking about the 'optimal size of states', which, from Plato and Aristotle to Montesquieu and Rousseau, emphasizes the advantages of small states.[17] Kohr's plea for small states is as one-sided as his condemnation of the great powers: 'the worst of small states provides greater happiness to man than the best of large ones' (Kohr 1978: 98). Small states are inherently more democratic, since the government does not confront the individual with the strength and pomp of a powerful state apparatus, but with means of power limited from the outset by the modest size of the country. The government of smaller states is therefore less inclined to lose sight of its true purpose – serving the *individual*. However hard they may try, great powers are, by contrast, constitutively incapable of a truly democratic government because they must serve (mass) society (Kohr 1978: 101). Accordingly, Kohr sets the upper limit for a 'healthy and manageable' society at eight to ten million people (Kohr 1978: 108).

17 For more recent contributions to the debate see Dahl & Tufte (1973), Alesina and Spolaore (2003) and Jörke (2019).

Among the advantages of smaller states, Kohr also mentions the fact that the administration of public affairs requires less effort and attention, because they are more straightforward, and stir less ambition and power struggles, the stakes being less high. Largely liberated from the temptations and trouble of 'great politics', individuals have more leisure for the cultivation of the arts and sciences ('the glory of the small'), as the cultural heyday of the Italian and German states in the period *before* national unification shows. Smaller units are also advantageous in the economic sector. According to Kohr, competition between many small economic actors was a decisive factor for the emergence of capitalism in early modern Europe. Today, on the contrary, a few large players, some of which even enjoy monopolies, dominate huge markets, at the expense of diversity and creativity. Thus, according to Kohr, the main cause of the instability and crisis susceptibility of the modern economy is not to be found in the 'immanent laws of the capitalist mode of production' (Marx), but rather in its *vast scale*.

Institutionalised Solidarity

Obviously, this lasting and to some extend idle debate, this increasing arm-wrestling between regions and nations on their place and say in a European polity depends largely on the definition of what a nation state is.[18] This is obviously a vast debate, but stands at the centre of the classical discussion of federalism in Europe. Does a nation state depend on an autochthonous, 'pre-political' substance (identity, ethnicity, language, culture); or is a 'nation state', in the end, more the product of processes of socialisation, of collective law-making and the joint exercise of power? Modern, *functional* definitions of nation states tend to advantage the latter. A nation state, in this view, is basically where the level of solidarity is institutionalised. In other words: independently of 'pre-political' origin, language or culture, a nation – or *demos* – is composed of those who collectively decide on societal affairs.[19]

Reviving ideas and thoughts towards a regional genealogy of Europe, therefore, does not – and should not – aim at making new nations out of old regions, e.g., with respect to Catalonia or Scotland. Rather, the notion is to conceive a horizontal network of European regions and metropolitan areas, protected under the common roof of a political European entity that guarantees not only the same democratic conditions for decision-making for all European citizens in European affairs, but

18 Cf. for an overview of this: Ulrike Guérot (2019), Was ist die Nation?, especially parts I & II.

19 On this, cf. Marcel Mauss (2017), Die Nation oder der Sinn fürs Soziale: Frankfurter Beiträge zur Soziologie und Sozialphilosophie, Institut für Sozialforschung, Band 25, Campus: Frankfurt/ New York 2017. Cf. also the ongoing research on the social and not the identitarian dimension of a nation, e.g. in France the writings of the leading experts on Marcel Mauss, Bruno Karsenti & Cyril Lemieux (2017): Socialisme et sociologie.

also the same social rights for all, if they are ultimately supposed to be equal before the law. This 'federation of small federations' should then be constitutionalised as a Federal Republic of Europe.

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