The Many Faces of Autonomy:

The Normalised Dynamics of Claiming

"Autonomy" Through a

Creative Policy Game

Susan Divald

St Cross College

University of Oxford

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ABSTRACT

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Susan Divald (St Cross College, University of Oxford)

Hungarian ethnic minority elites in Romania and Slovakia have vouched for autonomy arrangements as possible institutional solutions to deal with ethnic diversity. Yet, in the post-EU accession period, explicit claims to autonomy in Slovakia have essentially dropped off the radar of Hungarian minority elites since 2008. By contrast, most Hungarian political actors in Romania have had their own territorial autonomy plan since 2014. What accounts for these different trajectories of "autonomy" claims in Romania and Slovakia? The project uses elite interviews, party documents and newspaper archives in the original Hungarian language. It draws on qualitative text analysis to unpack how claims to autonomy unfold.

Autonomy claim-making occurs through a "creative policy game" composed of two elements. First, elites frequently engage in a "word-play" which changes the discourse on autonomy to also include "self-governance", "regionalisation" and "decentralisation". In contrast to differentiations in the scholarly literature, these terms are *interchangeable* to elites. Second, elites claim autonomy through reforms across a range of policy areas such as education, administration and regional development which provide *de facto* autonomy for the ethnic minority.

The thesis identifies how particular starting parameters – demographic concentrations, historical legacies and policy frameworks – are more constraining in the case of Slovakia and more enabling in Romania. Moreover, the thesis shines light on the varying nature of intra-group competition and of different claiming strategies which use either a "small steps" or "big claims" logic. The kin-state and European institutions act as financial enablers for autonomy claims, particularly at the local level when the national level is static or blocked. These research findings enrich the comparative politics and conflict studies literature by providing a detailed empirical analysis of how autonomy claiming is part and parcel of "normalised" domestic politics and is not linked to ethnic conflict and secession.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Full Name
AGFI	Advocacy Group for Freedom of Identity
CA	Cultural Autonomy
CEE	Central Eastern Europe
CEMO	Civic Engagement Movement
CoE	Council of Europe
ECL	Education, Culture and Language
ECRML	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EMNP	Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt; Hungarian People's Party of Translyvania
EMNT	Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács; Hungarian National Council of Transylvania
FMK	Független Magyar Kezdeményezés; the Independent Hungarian Initiative
FCNM	Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
FUEN	Federal Union of European Nationalities
KDH	Kresťanskodemokratické hnutie; Christian Democratic Movement
KDSZ	Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia; Bilingual Southern Slovakia
KMAT	Kárpát Medence Autonómia Tanács; Autonomy Council of the Carpathian Basin
MKDSZ	Magyar Keresztény Demokrata Szövetség; Hungarian Christian Democrat Alliance
MKP	Magyar Koalíció Párt; Party of the Hungarian Coalition. Later to be renamed to Magyar Közösség Pártja; Party of the Hungarian Community
MPP	Magyar Polgári Párt; Hungarian Civic Party
NTA	Non-Territorial Autonomy
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RMDSZ	Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség; Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania
SaS	Sloboda a Solidarita; Freedom and Solidarity
SDKU-DS	Slovenská demokratická a kresťanská únia – Demokratická strana; Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party
SMER-SD	Smer – Sociálna Demokracia; SMER(Direction)-Social Democracy
SNS	Slovenská Národná Strana; Slovak Nationalist Party
SZEP	Szabad Emberek Pártja, Party of Free People
SZNT	Székely Nemzeti Tanács; Szekler National Council;
VPN	Verejnosť proti násiliu; Public Against Violence

Hungarian and Titular Names of Geographic Locations

This thesis engages with the perspective of Hungarian minority elites and their claims to autonomy. As such, the Hungarian version of the geographic names of cities and towns are used in the thesis. A table is provide below with the Hungarian version and its translation to either Slovak or Romanian.

Hungarian Translation	**Slovak Translation**
Komárom	Komárno
Rimaszombat	Rimavská Sobota
Csallóköz	Žitný ostrov
Nagyrőce	Revúca
Rozsnyó	Rožňava
Ipolyság	Šahy
Losonc	Lučenec
Tornalja	Tornaľa
Szepsi	Moldava nad Bodvou
Királyhelmec	Kráľovský Chlmec
Nagykapos	Veľké Kapušany
Hungarian Translation	**Romanian Translation**
Marosvásárhely	Târgu Mureș
Kolozsvár	Cluj-Napoca
Sepsiszentgyörgy	Sfântu Gheorghe
Csíkszereda	Miercurea Ciuc
Bihar	Biharia
Szatmár	Satu Mare
Torockó	Rimetea

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year at University. Studying political science allowed me to situate the frequent discussions at home about their own experience under communism and of the different world of the West. This doctoral project was special because it allowed me to better understand my own background and the history and political dynamics of the different Hungarian communities in the Carpathian Basin. I hope the project can somehow shed light and contribute to a better understanding between Eastern and Western Europe at a time when it seems the two are drifting apart.

1 Introduction

> *"…you have to find those terms, those technical terms and those concepts that you can work with in the 21st century so that the region does well and also that the cultural identity and the linguistic rights can be assured. So I'm the 'modern autonomist'"* (Interview Benkő, 2018).[1]

As a result of World War I's border revisions, between 20.1 per cent and 29.2 per cent of the population in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) counted as a national minority, with many simply "ending up" on the wrong side of the border (Pearson, 1983, p. 148). Finding solutions to the "nationalities question" – understood as the "lack of fit between state borders and national groups" (Keating, 2004, p. 367) – remains a challenge facing political leaders across the region.[2] Given that institutions provide the channels through which differential power resources are distributed between and within ethnic groups living in the same state, ethnic minority elites need to decide what type of "living together" arrangement to advocate. Proposed institutional configurations and their respective terminology range from federation, territorial autonomy, self-government, cultural autonomy, decentralisation and others. "Autonomy" is one option on the table, used by different political entities over the past 600 years as a particular "diversity management tool" (Malloy, 2015a, p. 6).

While many CEE countries have "returned to Europe" and joined the European Union, one important difference between the two regions is Western Europe's prevalence of institutionalised forms of autonomy for ethnic minorities.[3] For example, residents of the Åland Islands in Finland have their own regional assembly and speak Swedish as the official

[1] The list of Interviewees is provided in Appendix B. Please also note that most of the quotes were translated by the Author from Hungarian.
[2] Which countries fall into this region is much debated. For my purposes, I am including the non-Soviet post-communist countries which have either joined the EU or are part of the former-Yugoslavia. They are: Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Romania, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo (although not fully recognised), Bosnia-Herzegovina, and North Macedonia.
[3] The scarcity of autonomy provisions in CEE countries is with the exception of post-conflict former Yugoslav countries. However, these arrangements arose as a result of violent ethnic conflict and international negotiations which sets it apart from other CEE countries. For details on autonomy arrangements in Western European countries, see Kántor (2014a).

language. In Italy, the province of South Tyrol also has its own assembly with primary competencies in economic, cultural and social issues. Moreover, the rights of the three linguistic groups in the province – the Germans, Ladins (marginal at 4.5%) and the Italians – are protected and enforced through the use of bilingual or trilingual signs. German and Italian are also mandatorily taught in schools (Benedikter, 2009; Alber and Zwilling, 2014; Rautz, 2014). Other examples include Spain, which considers itself a "state of autonomous communities", Denmark which has granted autonomy to Greenland, and Portugal with the autonomous Azores and Madeira Islands (Benedikter, 2009, p. 15).

Looking slightly eastward, autonomy provisions in CEE countries are much less prevalent due partly to the historical legacies of changing borders and the evidence of the break-up of previous federal countries such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b). Yet, *claims* to autonomy are nevertheless still made by ethnic minorities living in the region, and remain the preferred arrangement compared to others such as federalism. From the Russophone minorities in Estonia to the Hungarians in Romania, autonomy is claimed and Western European examples such as South Tyrol are often cited. Yet, ethnic *majorities* in CEE countries are generally unconvinced and reluctant to provide ethnic minorities autonomy, whether in the form of cultural or territorial autonomy out of fear of secession (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b).

It is this angle of autonomy *claims* by ethnic minorities that is the focus of the thesis. These claims will be examined through a comparative case study of the Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia. The questions surrounding their integration originate from the border revisions following World War I in the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. The Treaty reduced the territory of Hungary – or the Kingdom of Hungary as it was known then – by two-thirds and resulted in 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians finding themselves in a new state (Pytlas, 2013, p. 167). The Treaty of Trianon is an important reference point in the region, including

from the perspective of the Hungarian government, and shapes the kin-state's interest in the plight of its neighbouring ethnic kin.[4]

Comparing the political dynamics of the different Hungarian minority populations is not uncommon amongst comparative politics scholars as well as those in international relations (Csergő, 2007; Jenne, 2007; Saideman and Ayres, 2008; Stroschein, 2012; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, 2013b; Székely, 2014). Similarities include comparable population proportions and territorially concentrated minorities, the presence of well-organised ethnic minority political parties, a common kin-state (Hungary) and the shared experience of communism as well as EU accession requirements. Yet, despite having so many characteristics in common, claims to autonomy by Hungarian minority elites are much stronger in Romania than in Slovakia in the post-EU accession period.

In Slovakia, Hungarian elites have not lodged many explicit claims to autonomy, and when they do, claims are weak or lack support. In 2007, a small town businessman and mayoral candidate named János Bósza put forward the only clear plan for territorial autonomy by a Hungarian actor in Slovakia since the failed December 1993 Komárom Declaration for territorial autonomy (Csallóközi Városok es Községek Társulása (1994), 1999; Commora Aula, 2007). Bósza was dismissed as an eccentric by his own Hungarian community's political leaders and did not gain much support. In 2014, the ethnic Hungarian political party MKP[5] released its key document on autonomy entitled *The Institutional Requirements for the Slovak-Hungarian Community's Preservation, Growth and South-Slovakia's Economic Development.*[6] The document, however, does not mention the word

[4] For example, June 4th was made a national holiday in Hungary in 2010 to remember the signing of the Treaty of Trianon. It is seen as a day of mourning (Sandford and Magyar, 2020).
[5] *Magyar Közösség Pártja*, Party of the Hungarian Community. I use the Hungarian versions of organisations and geographic locations throughout the thesis.
[6] Translation of author. The actual title in Hungarian is *A Szlovákiai Magyar Közösség Megmaradásának és Gyarapodásának, valamint Dél-Szlovakia Gazdasági Felzárkoztatásának Intézményi Feltétele*. I refer to the document interchangeably as MKP's autonomy plan.

autonomy in its title, nor does it use the term in outlining the party's demands. It rather couched the debate in terms of *önkormányzatiság*, or self-governance. Yet, MKP stood by this document as its autonomy plan (Interviews with Farkas, 2017; Kőrösi, 2017; Őry, 2017). Finally, while serving in government in 2017, the other Hungarian political party in Slovakia – Most-Híd – garnered support to pass a law for the funding of minority cultures. Many elites, including minority experts and activists, did not perceive this as a successful instance of claiming cultural autonomy (Interviews Horony, 2017; Öllös, 2017; Tokár, 2017).

By contrast, in Romania, smaller political actors have made claims to territorial autonomy and are eventually joined by the main Hungarian political party, RMDSZ[7]. In March 2013, following a lull of claiming, a small but influential Hungarian splinter organisation called the SZNT[8] mobilised a mass rally for autonomy in Marosvásárhely with a record turnout. In 2014, RMDSZ released its own plan for the territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland (a compact region in central Romania with approximately 600,000 ethnic Hungarians). In 2017, RMDSZ also tabled a bill for cultural autonomy in Parliament during a crunch vote of no confidence in the government, but Parliament dismissed the bill. One year later, in 2018, an MP from a smaller Hungarian party MPP[9] tabled the SZNT-backed *Autonomy Statute for the Szeklerland* in Parliament. This plan was also previously tabled in Parliament in 2004 and 2005. Finally, unlike their Hungarian counterparts in Slovakia who often speak of *önkormányzatiság,* or self-governance, Hungarian minority actors in Romania couch the autonomy debate not just with the term "autonomy" but also with calls for "regionalism" and "inner self-determination."

[7] *Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség,* Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania.
[8] *Székely Nemzeti Tanács* or Szekler National Council.
[9] *Magyar Polgári Párt,* Hungarian Civic Party.

1.1 Research Question

As the above examples illustrate, Hungarian minority elites in Romania have made stronger claims to autonomy than those in Slovakia in the post-EU accession period. The former have put forward many plans for territorial and cultural autonomy – both small actors in the political playing field as well as powerful ones. This is in contrast to the seemingly timid or non-existent embrace of territorial autonomy by the Hungarian elites in Slovakia and the successful passage of a mild form of cultural autonomy with the *Law on Financing of Minority Cultures* (2017). Moreover, it seems that there is a certain element of ambiguity in the term "autonomy" that is not easy to account for. It is considered eccentric and offensive to claim in Slovakia – as the dismissal of Bósza demonstrates – yet in Romania it is claimed alongside other concepts such as "regionalism" and serves to mobilise popular support.

The research question guiding the analysis in this dissertation is:

What accounts for the different trajectories of "autonomy" claim-making by Hungarian minority elites in Romania and Slovakia since EU accession?

This question is then broken down into two sub-components:

a) ***How have autonomy claims by Hungarian minority elites evolved over time since EU accession?***

b) ***How have elites claimed autonomy in response to different opportunities and constraints faced at the local, national and international levels?***

This thesis bridges academic discussions between the prescriptive and explanatory study of autonomy. The former debates if and when autonomy arrangements *should* be put in place while the latter examines what affects the *claiming* of such arrangements. Both angles engage in discussions which are often concerned with the role autonomy arrangements have

in either avoiding or encouraging conflict, and particularly their link to eventual secession. However, this thesis attempts to answer Csergő (2013)'s call for greater attention to distinguish non-secessionist claims from secessionist claims and violence. Indeed, by unpacking the different aspects of autonomy claim-making, this thesis demonstrates the extent to which claims to autonomy are part and parcel of normal domestic politics rather than an attempt to subvert the state and promote secession. Furthermore, I extend the study of Hungarian autonomy claims into the post-EU accession period through to 2018, thus further complementing already existing studies which have focused on the pre-EU accession period or stopped in the early 2010s (Jenne, 2007; Stroschein, 2012; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, 2013b; Székely, 2014).

1.2 Autonomy in the Academic Debate

The academic literature has, generally speaking, broken down autonomy along two main dimensions: territorial and non-territorial autonomy. While Chapter 2 discusses this in depth, I adopt a working definition of autonomy which encompasses *territorial autonomy* as understood by Lapidoth (1997) which – when it is ethnically motivated[10] – allows a particular ethnic group that is the majority of a region to express its identity and exercise powers over a range of policy areas linked to culture, economics and social affairs. Non-territorial autonomy (NTA) is understood as an umbrella term for institutional arrangements which are independent of residency and grant the ethnic minority control over the policy spheres of culture, language, religion and education. NTA is often associated with cultural autonomy (CA), such as by Lapidoth (pp. 39–40). I define CA in terms of collective rights and its neighbouring concept of personal autonomy as an individual right. Importantly,

[10] Palermo (2012) argues that territorial autonomy has become a way to create a 'quasi-nation state' and that instead the concept should become de-ethnicised and focus on territorial management and good governance.

autonomy is conceptually different to institutional arrangements like federalism, decentralisation and self-government.

As Chapter 2 elaborates, the discussion of autonomy arrangements is either *prescriptive* and discusses whether autonomy arrangements should be put in place or is *explanatory* and tries to uncover what impacts claims for such arrangements. As such, this project engages with (1) the normative debate on how to accommodate national minorities and how this has been done through international legal instruments; (2) literature on comparative democratic institutions with a focus on ethnic parties, intra-group competition[11] and consociationalism; (3) the conflict studies scholarship which examines the effects of autonomy arrangements as well as what influences demands for them so as to determine autonomy's role in the prevention or promotion of ethnic conflict. Finally, focusing on ethnic minorities in two EU states in CEE, this research contributes to (4) the literature on Europeanisation and multi-level governance.

I address several gaps in the above-mentioned literature. First, the conflict studies scholarship generally focuses on the main political actors involved in autonomy claiming. In my study, however, I include a range of elite actors including civil society elites to better incorporate how intra-group competition can impact autonomy claims. Second, I examine the local level perspective of autonomy claim-making. This is a level often overlooked in the conflict studies and comparative politics literature which tends to predominantly focus on the national level. Examination of the local level also highlights how a range of political arenas can be used to make autonomy claims, such as the kin-state and European arenas, in addition to the national level. Third, studies of autonomy claims are often a-historic and do not put claims into a broader context which incorporates historical legacies and how

[11] This refers to competition within the ethnic minority. When mentioned in the context of this thesis, intra-group competition refers to competition within the Hungarian ethnic minority, such as between Hungarian ethnic political parties.

particular elements of the past are activated to constrain or enable the claim to autonomy. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, I take the examination of autonomy claims out of the lens of security and secession and examine it through the lens of ordinary domestic politics.

1.3 How to Study Claims to Autonomy

The goal of this research project is to unpack how and why claims to autonomy differ in Romania and Slovakia. As such, a detailed comparative case study is the best way to be immersed in each country's context, in the language and framing of the claims and to take advantage of the richness and depth of data to assemble an analytically rich and coherent account. The goal is case-specific insights rather than generalisation. As the Methodology Chapter 3 explains in detail, I collect and analyse elite interviews, policy documents and newspaper archives, with the primary language of the data being Hungarian (I am a native speaker). The time period I focus on is post-EU accession until 2018. While early post-communist claims to autonomy have been studied in more detail, the post EU-accession period has not yet been adequately analysed.

I combine a discourse analytic and content analytic framework. Although some argue that the two methods are incongruent (Laffey and Weldes, 2004), others disagree (Hardy, Harley and Phillips, 2004). I take reality as objective which can be studied scientifically – more in line with content analysis. However, I also draw on discourse analysis which emphasises context and the reproduction of meaning. In this thesis I find that context – particularly history and intra-group competition – can constrain actors and affect how they make their claims. To uncover *how* this happens, I use qualitative content analysis for my interview transcripts and newspaper archives. The qualitative approach to content analysis allows me to account for how claims happen and how meaning changes over time. This is different from a quantitative content analytic approach which has been traditionally more

concerned with word-counts and frequency tables (Schreier, 2012, pp. 10–17; Ban *et al.*, 2019).

The primary lens through which I carry out the research examines *claims* and then traces them back to the actors making the claims. It is in this sense that I adopt a broader understanding of the term "elites". I include actors who are not just the leaders of political parties but also those within the political party or within civil society organisations or indeed economic elites with access to power. While the conflict studies literature generally focuses on autonomy claims lodged at the national level (Jenne, 2004; Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, 2007; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b), I expand the claim-horizon by looking not just at bids targeting the centre but also the local, kin-state and European levels.

"Claims" are not well-defined in the literature thus far. I define a *claim* by a minority elite as a need for something (e.g. "we need better control over educational institutions"), a lack of something (e.g. "there is not enough funding for cultural institutions), a demand for something (e.g. "we want the establishment of the Szeklerland region"), an application for something (e.g. "we applied for funding to Hungary for education materials"), or a project goal that is sought to be achieved (e.g. "to increase funding for minority-language educational materials"). The latter two are mainly relevant for the newspaper archival analysis. Claims can target a particular actor – such as the national government (as is Jenne (2007)'s focus), but also the kin-state or European Union – or be a statement in a public forum or newspaper not explicitly targeting an actor. This framework – further elaborated in Chapter 3 Section 3.4.1 p.62 – provides a clearer understanding of what claims are, how to identify them and measure them. It captures the flexible way in which claims are made and attends to the nuances of the political actors involved.

The general definition of "autonomy" by Hungarian minority elites is control over decision-making in areas affecting the life and well-being of the minority (Chapter 5).

Claiming entails a discourse as well as a strategy of how to claim autonomy. As uncovered through elite interviews and confirmed through the examination of policy documents – the discourse surrounding "autonomy" is interwoven with discourse that equally claims "self-governance", "regionalism", "decentralisation" and "self-determination". From the perspective of elites, the terms are *interchangeable*. Therefore, the study of autonomy claim-making is not simply a tabulation of the frequency with which "autonomy" is mentioned by elites or the number of times an "autonomy" plan is tabled in Parliament. It rather takes into account claims to decentralisation, self-governance, and most importantly, policy area reforms.

Strategically speaking, elite interviews and the examination of policy documents demonstrate how the pursuit of policy reforms in areas linked to autonomy is part of the autonomy claim-making strategy of elites. The most important policy areas are those of education, culture, language, administrative reform and regional development. These serve the minority's ability to make decisions about its own well-being and cultural reproduction. For example, the education system is "an institution of primary political significance" when it comes to the reproduction and sustainability of the minority culture (Csergő, 2007, p. 146), while language policy is about the inclusion and recognition of the minority culture and the ability to perpetuate it (Csergő, 2007, pp. 6–9). Having favourable administrative divisions and large powers of decentralisation means the minority has more control over decision-making in units where it forms a majority. Encouraging regional development economically benefits the minorities living there and gives them a prospective for the future.

Therefore, examining "autonomy" claiming is not as straightforward as one would think and cannot be done by simply surveying when the term "autonomy" is used. It involves analysing the explicit claiming of autonomy – whether through an autonomy plan or in an election manifesto or a speech in parliament – along with claims to policy area reforms as

well as claims using other language such as “decentralisation” and “self-governance”. Unpacking the diversified nature of autonomy claims made by a range of elite actors who lodge demands to the local, national, kin-state and European levels provides the guiding framework of this research project.

Understanding the dynamics behind the changing claims to autonomy is important for several reasons. First, the issue of how best to accommodate ethnic minorities in CEE relates to normative questions of what is owed to these historic minority groups. This links to the political theory literature often traced to Kymlicka (1995) asking what rights to grant historic minority groups. He makes the argument for self-government rights as a group-specific right which would guarantee the development of the group’s culture and their best interests (p.26-30). Moreover, the mobilisation behind the Minority SafePack Initiative from 2013-2018 – demanding language and cultural measures from the European Union and collecting over 1 million signatures – brought to the attention of the European Commission that Europe’s autochthonous minorities were not feeling adequately protected and integrated in their host societies. This thesis follows up on these issues from an empirical and academic perspective. Finally, the approach provided in this dissertation incorporates a range of elite actors and engages with the local level. It therefore adds flesh to the bones of how autonomy is pursued is practice and whether or not the issue needs to be treated as a security one.

1.4 The Argument

An overall thread throughout the dissertation is exploring how the pursuit of autonomy is ubiquitous and desirable yet at times is evasive and implicit rather than explicit. The Hungarian elites I interviewed – across political persuasions – define autonomy as essentially a means through which the community can make decisions linked to its own affairs. It is linked to the survival of the community and its well-being. As such, it is difficult to argue against autonomy. Some elite actors interviewed issue the critique that autonomy

is thought of as a "wondertool" (Interview Tokár, 2017) or "medicine for all ills" (Interview I. Székely, 2017) and is being emptied of content. Yet the fact that elites have claimed autonomy in many different ways and that a technique of word-play – to be detailed below – is widespread, demonstrates the extent to which claiming autonomy is pervasive yet not explicit.

As Chapter 5 highlights, "autonomy" is a historically-embedded concept, which constrains actors in how they frame their claims. The term is very negatively viewed in the Slovak context due to its association with Slovak independence in the interwar period, while in Romania the term is more of a "dirty word" than "historical dynamite".[12] This constraint on claiming, however, does not mean that minority elites have given up on claiming autonomy. Rather, it leads to what I call a "creative policy game" surrounding autonomy claims.

The first component of this game is "word-play", carried out differently in the Romanian and Slovak context. In the Slovak context, the word-play occurs almost exclusively with claims to "self-governance" whereas in Romania ethnic Hungarians use several concepts such as "regionalism" and "decentralisation" alongside "autonomy". Yet, and most importantly, in direct contrast to the scholarly literature, the different terms mean the same thing to the minority elites in Romania and Slovakia.

In addition to this "word-play", the second component of the "creative policy game" is claiming policy reforms which would grant *de facto* autonomy. Faced with opposition from the titular majority towards the provision of autonomy, Hungarian minority elites strategically pursue reforms in areas such as education, language, culture, administrative reform and regional development which would provide *de facto* autonomy. With reticence at the national level in Slovakia, claiming across policy areas is further unpacked through

[12] Author's own terms.

an examination of the local level perspective of claim-making. Analysis of the newspaper archives in two small towns reveals the extent to which actors claim across different policy areas and utilise the kin-state and European Union arenas for additional funding support (Chapters 8 and 9).

Moreover, there are significant differences between the two countries and between elite actors in their approach to claiming. In Romania, by the end of the 2018, every political actor is an "autonomist" and has its own autonomy plan. The autonomy issue is one of valence competition (Székely, 2014) rather than one ordered on a continuum of more-or-less autonomy. Small actors such as SZNT and MPP table territorial autonomy plans in Parliament whereas the major political party RMDSZ prefers a strategy of small steps, incremental policy reform and strategic rather than symbolic tabling of autonomy plans. For RMDSZ the primary arena for bargaining is the domestic national arena, whereas smaller actors who do not have easy access to this arena pursue a diversified strategy of claiming to the domestic, kin-state and European arenas.

In contrast, there is less explicit claiming of "autonomy" in Slovakia. Claim-making in Slovakia focuses primarily on policy reforms which encourage "self-governance". There is convergence between the two Hungarian political parties of MKP and Most-Híd in demanding educational and cultural self-governance (i.e. autonomy) by 2012. However, MKP differentiates itself from Most-Híd with its own plan for administrative reform and regional development in 2014. For MKP, a strategy of "big claims" is necessary to help ensure the Hungarian community's future whereas Most-Híd prefers a strategy of small steps. Over the course of this post-accession period, national progress in policy reform is slow. Consequently I shift my focus to the local level of analysis to highlight how the local perspective brings creativity to the stymied national political scene. Claims are lodged to a range of political arenas, with the kin-state and European Union acting as financial enablers.

Moreover, the ethnic dimension is less salient at the local level in the field of regional development where the policy issue encourages inter-ethnic collaboration.

The analysis uncovers that certain original parameters – such as territorial concentrations, historical legacies and institutional frameworks – shape the starting conditions of minority elites in claiming autonomy. Moreover, there is an element of path dependence[13] from the early post-communist period that constrains which autonomy conceptions or word-play tactics minority actors use. The combination of these starting parameters – with historical legacies and path dependence playing a primary role – shapes the creativity of claiming by elites, including their word-play tactic and claims for policy reforms. As the chapters throughout the thesis illustrate, autonomy claim-making is a more dynamic process than previous studies have suggested. Elites move within their constraints and creatively utilise resources and opportunity structures to further their claims for autonomy.

1.5 Contributions

This project makes conceptual and empirical contributions to the literature on autonomy. On the conceptual level, case studies are useful in improving conceptualisation and measurement, which is one clear outcome of this study. The way autonomy is defined by the scholarly literature and studied empirically does not translate into how ethnic Hungarian minority elites conceptualise the term themselves. Moreover, autonomy can have different country-specific sub-components. In Slovakia it has educational, cultural and linguistic dimensions while in Romania it falls under the general territorial-cultural autonomy divide. Importantly, even elites within the same political party do not have the same definitions of the sub-components of autonomy. The empirical reality that unfolds is

[13] I follow Stroschein (2012, p. 39)'s definition of path dependence, "the notion that in any given trajectory, past events will affect the probability of the events that follow".

that the concept of autonomy is a flexible one, used differently in elite discourse and often in reference to a particular historical context. This leads to questions of validity of how one can study and compare autonomy claims in large-N studies if the coding of claims rests on arguably false assumptions of a consistent interpretation of "autonomy" across elites.

Comparative studies of Hungarian minority autonomy claims mostly focus on the period prior to EU accession, with the exception of Bochsler & Szöcsik (2013a, 2013b) and Székely (2014) who incorporate national-level claims in the post-EU accession period until 2011 and 2013, respectively. I extend the study into 2018 and also access a range of data sources in the original Hungarian language. Moreover, I move down from the national level to include local level claims of two towns in Slovakia with different ethnic Hungarian population concentrations. This enables me to unpack and explore with much more detail the way elite actors frame and lodge their claims to autonomy and I construct a fuller picture of the Slovak case. Importantly, by delving into the context and historical nuances of each case in the Hungarian language, I highlight the important role of history, the strategic usage of the past by elites, as well as the significance of country-specific understandings of autonomy.

Furthermore, the literature on autonomy claim-making often overlooks the role of the local level and the range of elites who can be active in claiming autonomy. I fill this gap and demonstrate how actors such as local mayors, advocacy organisations and small political parties can also lodge claims to autonomy and impact the trajectory of claims. These smaller actors also demonstrate how other political arenas outside the national are utilised for lodging claims. The local level, the kin-state and the European levels are targeted, especially when the national level is blocked, slow, or inaccessible. I uncover how the kin-state and European arena act as financial enablers for autonomy claims, which is a perspective not yet elaborated in the literature. Through certain funding mechanisms and opportunity structures,

elites are able to place claims across policy areas such as regional development, education and culture. This enables them to attain *de facto* autonomy with control over decision-making in areas linked to the life of the minority.

Most importantly, the study shows how minority elites have creatively and strategically adapted their tactics of claiming autonomy within a domestic political context that is generally averse to such arrangements. This has unfolded without claims to secession and ethnic violence. Consequently, the findings make a significant contribution to the literature on ethnic minorities, autonomy and state-building in the CEE region by taking it out of the "security paradigm". This paradigm is preoccupied with the escalation of conflict and views autonomy on a spectrum of claims which precedes claims to secession. What my research shows is that claim-making is part and parcel of normalised domestic politics. It can still be contentious but it is not violent and does not risk secession.

1.6 Thesis Outline

The thesis will progress as follows. The next two chapters provide the literature review and methodology for the empirical analysis. Chapter 4 then gives the historical and political context for the autonomy claims in Romania and Slovakia. The core analysis is concentrated in the five empirical chapters 5 – 9. Chapter 5 examines in detail how Hungarian elites themselves conceptualise autonomy, highlighting how this is different from the scholarly literature. This analysis supplies the basis for the discussion of the "word-play tactic" of elites. I then examine the dynamics behind the claims to autonomy by Hungarian elites in Romania (Chapter 6) followed by Slovakia (Chapters 7-9). The analysis of the Slovak case first focuses on the national level and then, partly in response to slow national level progress on autonomy claims, I move to examine the dynamics behind local level claims in Slovakia in Chapters 8 and 9. This is then followed by a comparative chapter which offers

explanations for the different claim-making trajectories in Romania in Slovakia. I conclude with an overview of the major findings of the study and its contributions to the field.

2 Literature Review: Autonomy as a Concept, Solution and Claim

> *"If it (autonomy) is a completely accepted norm from the Leitha onwards, so from Austria westwards, then it should be so here as well"* (Interview Farkas, 2017).

Autonomy is one option on the table as a particular "diversity management tool" (Malloy, 2015a, p. 6) and a solution to managing ethnically diverse societies. The conceptualisation of "autonomy", what it entails and how it distinguishes itself from other institutional arrangements, is an important starting point of this chapter as well as this thesis. The further study of autonomy can be sub-divided into debates which are prescriptive and those which are explanatory. The prescriptive literature examines whether states should put in place autonomy arrangements while the explanatory literature focuses on the factors which influence claims for autonomy. The debates cut across different fields including political theory, international legal norms, comparative politics, conflict studies and Europeanisation. The literature provides useful insights which form the basis of this study such as the "quadratic nexus" model and the importance of intra-group bargaining. However, the accounts fall short in accounting for politics at the local level, in incorporating a broader span of actors involved in autonomy claims and in recognising the role of history in enabling or constraining autonomy claims. Most importantly, however, is that the study of autonomy claim-making needs to be viewed less through the lens of security and more through the lens of "normalised" domestic politics.

2.1 "Autonomy"

"Autonomy" itself comes from the Greek work "auto" (self) and "nomos" (law or rule), thus denoting the ability to make one's own laws (Benedikter, 2009, p. 18). Different scholars have defined autonomy in the following ways:

- Lapidoth describes "political autonomy" as "a means for the diffusion of powers in order to preserve the unity of the state while respecting the diversity of its population" (1997, p. 3). An autonomous entity is one "with the exclusive powers of legislation, administration and adjudication in specific areas" (1997, p. 33).
- Hannum (1990, p. 468) argues a "fully autonomous territory" would have a (1) locally elected legislative body; (2) a locally selected executive; (3) an independent local judiciary for interpreting local laws; and (4) power-sharing arrangements between the local and central governments in areas of shared concern.
- Benedikter (2009, pp. 60–64) defines a "modern autonomy system" as one in which (1) there is the rule of law in the state and autonomous entity; (2) the permanent devolution of a minimum of legislative and executive powers (3) democracy and free elections; and (4) equality of fundamental political and civil rights within the state and autonomous region.
- According to Wolff & Weller (2005, p. 13), autonomy is "the legally entrenched power of ethnic or territorial communities to exercise public policy functions (legislative, executive and adjudicative) independently of other sources of authority in the state, but subject to the overall legal order of the state."

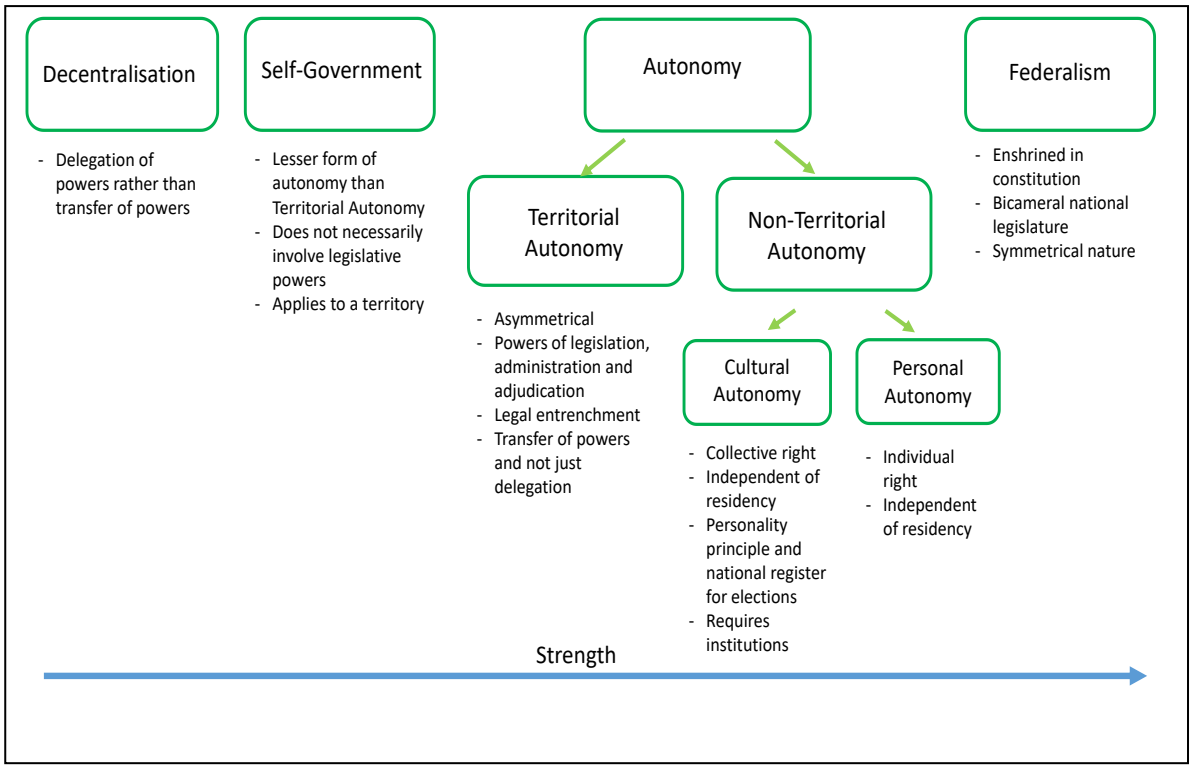
Autonomy expert and political scientist Levente Salat (2014) argues there is not a consensus within the scholarly literature around the term autonomy. Others such as Suksi and Légaré (2008) argue that more coherence of terminology would be beneficial. Whilst sympathetic, I argue there are enough common points within the scholarly discussion to differentiate autonomy from other conceptual cousins such as federalism and decentralisation. Importantly, the literature also agrees upon the two main sub-categories of "autonomy" – territorial and non-territorial. Where views diverge are in the minimum requirements needed to fulfil the "autonomy" definition and on the sub-components of non-

territorial autonomy. There are debates over the need for constitutional enshrinement, the need of a legislative body as opposed to only having administrative competencies, whether or not autonomy is given to a collective or to an individual and the nature of autonomy's relationship with self-government. After providing my own working definition of autonomy, the ensuing discussion highlights the similarities and differences in the theorising of "autonomy" to set the stage for the empirical analysis of autonomy claims in the thesis.

2.1.1 A Working Definition

The working definition I adopt of autonomy defines it as the powers of legislation, administration and adjudication whereby there is a representative legislative body for a territory or group of people which does not challenge the sovereignty of the state. Moreover, autonomy involves a *transfer* of powers rather than a simple *delegation* of powers. The two main types of autonomy are territorial autonomy and non-territorial autonomy (NTA); underneath the latter, I use the understanding of cultural autonomy as espoused by Lapidoth (1997) and elaborated in Section 2.1.3 below and take it as a collective right, but differentiate it from personal autonomy which refers to individual rights. Territorial autonomy and cultural autonomy can exist together. I differentiate autonomy from other concepts such as federalism and decentralisation. For the former, autonomies are asymmetric in character and for the latter, decentralisation entails a delegation rather than transfer of powers and has a weak local legislative basis. The working definition is illustrated in Figure 1 below. A necessary condition for autonomy to be present is the presence of an elected legislative body for the case of territorial autonomy or an elected representative body in the case of cultural autonomy.

Figure 1 The Concept of Autonomy in Relation to Other Concepts



2.1.2 Territorial Autonomy

Beginning with territorial autonomy, at the "minimum" there is an elected legislative assembly as well as an executive to implement the legislation (Smith, 2014, p. 17). Given that the reasons for territorial autonomy are usually linked to national minorities, the areas of competence cover at the very least cultural questions, education, media and provide official status to the minority language. Other policy areas can include taxation, social services, infrastructure and natural resources (Smith, 2014, pp. 17–18). Territorial autonomies are generally asymmetric in a national polity since the special transfer of powers to a region does not occur across the whole country. While generally thought of in ethnic terms, some scholars such as Palermo (2012) argue that territorial autonomy should become de-ethnicised to avoid the creation of a "quasi-nation state". Instead, the concept should focus on territorial management and good governance. However, in general, autonomy arrangements are empirically implemented for national minorities.

In creating a framework for territorial autonomy, whilst accepting some internal variation for a complex empirical reality, one must draw the boundary line of inclusion-exclusion along some criteria. Suksi (2014) discusses two axes: (1) constitutional law – ordinary law; (2) legislative powers – regulatory powers. "Proper" autonomies have the institutional arrangement enshrined in the constitution and provide legislative powers to an assembly. "Practical" autonomies would still fall under the autonomy category but have their powers provided through ordinary legislation, with a legislative body making its own laws. Empirical cases where the territory has regulatory powers and no powers of legislation do not fall under the territorial autonomy category – such as Aceh in Indonesia, where the assembly does not have legislative powers .

For a working definition, I follow Lapidoth and adopt her definition of *territorial political autonomy*. When ethnically motivated, it allows a particular ethnic group that is the majority of a region to express its identity and exercise powers over a range of policy areas linked to culture, economics and social affairs. These powers include legislation, adjudication and administration. Generally foreign relations and security are kept for the central government. The extent of the powers transferred to the unit can vary, but it is necessary for the powers to be clearly demarcated between the autonomous unit and the central government. Some powers will be reserved only for the central authorities while others only for the autonomous unit, and some powers will be exercised jointly whilst others in parallel (Lapidoth, 1997, pp. 34–34, 174–5). As other authors mention above, it is usually asymmetric in nature and involves a transfer – not delegation – of powers.

Empirically speaking, Europe has been the "cradle of territorial autonomy" (Benedikter, 2009, p. 15). As elaborated in Chapter 1, examples include Spain, Denmark, Finland and Italy. One of the Italian regions – South Tyrol – is "one of the most successful examples for the accommodation of minorities through territorial self-government" (Alber

and Zwilling, 2014, p. 34). It has a large amount of fiscal autonomy, the two official languages are German and Italian and the provincial level legislates on economic, cultural and social issues (Benedikter, 2009; Alber and Zwilling, 2014; Rautz, 2014). It is often cited as a success case by Hungarian elites and was a template for RMDSZ's own territorial autonomy plan for the Szeklerland (Interviews Horony, 2017; Őry, 2017; Antal, 2018; Izsák, 2018; Kelemen, 2018; Tőke, 2018).

2.1.3 Non-Territorial Autonomy

The idea of Non-Territorial Autonomy (NTA) is often used interchangeably with cultural autonomy or personal autonomy. Nimni (2013, p. 15), however, argues NTA is a term under which different models fall, such as national cultural autonomy (CA) which is an important model of NTA. CA was first developed in detail by Karl Renner and Otto Bauer in the context of the Habsburg Empire which consisted of many national communities. They based the model upon the "personality principle" (as opposed to the territorial principle) where members of a national group received rights irrespective of where they were located in the Empire. This created a deliberate disassociation between territory and national rights. Other models of NTA are consociationalism – which provides a model of power-sharing with four pillars of proportional representation, segmental autonomy, a grand coalition and a minority veto – and the Ottoman millet system where minority communities had the right to organise themselves and oversee their cultural affairs with minimum Ottoman oversight (Nimni, 2013, pp. 16–17).

NTA pertains to individuals who are part of a particular group (ethnic, national, religious, etc.) and enjoy certain rights which are independent of their residency location. The policy spheres such arrangements apply to are matters of culture, language, religion and education. To implement NTA according to the personality principle, there ideally needs to be a public register where members declare their nationality. The public register can create

difficulties in implementation where, for example, ascertaining and identifying ethnic group membership can be laden with difficulties as well as fears of safety and security (Smith, 2014, pp. 18–20). Nevertheless, NTA arrangements can benefit minorities which are small in number and/or are not territorially concentrated.

NTA arrangements are receiving more attention in the academic and policy debate due to the reluctance of countries to offer minorities territorial autonomy (Nimni, Osipov and Smith, 2013; Dembinska, Máracz and Tonk, 2014; Malloy, 2015b). Malloy et al (2015) provide a fruitful attempt at spelling out the different types of existing NTA arrangements and assess their strength. In their account, the strength of arrangements is accounted for by several elements: the policy spheres it applies to, the nature of the institutions established (whether they are consultative or decision-making bodies), the level of legal entrenchment, the level of financing and guarantees of political representation (Malloy, 2015b, pp. 9–15). They emphasise the important role of institutions for NTA implementation.

There does emerge a confusion in the literature whereby some authors differentiate personal autonomy from cultural autonomy and non-territorial autonomy, and others use the terms interchangeably. For example, Malloy (2015) uses the term non-territorial autonomy when speaking about Lapidoth (1997)'s work, but the latter uses the term "personal/cultural autonomy" rather than NTA. Moreover, Lapidoth does not differentiate between personal and cultural autonomy while other scholars do. Tkacik (2008, pp. 370–377) sees personal autonomy as freedom of association and cultural autonomy as community-based, with the latter having at least some legal structure and applying to a group. In contrast, Heintze (1998, pp. 22-23) sees personal autonomy as applying to a group.

For a working definition, I take the term NTA to be the broader umbrella term above cultural autonomy and distinguish cultural autonomy from personal autonomy. Cultural autonomy is a community-based concept, or collective right, linked to a particular national,

ethnic, religious or linguistic group for whom institutions are put in place which are not linked to territorial residence. The policy spheres are linked to the minority's cultural reproduction, such as culture, language, religion and education. It is broader than *personal autonomy* for which I follow Tkacik (2008, pp. 370–371)'s definition as a "guarantee of certain basic rights to the individual, and not necessarily in the individual's capacity as a member of a distinct group." Civil rights fall under this type of autonomy.

Versions of NTA – particularly cultural autonomy – are found in countries such as Croatia, Slovenia and Serbia (Malloy et al. 2015; Székely and Horváth 2014). Cultural autonomy was implemented in interwar Estonia for the German minorities (1.5% of the population) and has also been applied in Hungary as of 1993 for 13 national minorities who comprise approximately 10% of the population (Smith, 2014, pp. 19–20). Cultural autonomy is seen as a solution for the Hungarian minorities in both Romania and Slovakia, particularly those who do not live in territorially concentrated areas.

2.1.4 Other Forms of Autonomy

Whilst there is a general consensus in the autonomy literature between territorial and non-territorial autonomy (with the usage of the latter term either serving an umbrella function or an equivalence function with cultural and personal autonomy), other forms of autonomy have been mentioned. For example, Benedikter (2009, pp. 38–41) subdivides autonomy into three types: (1) territorial; (2) personal/cultural; and (3) local/administrative autonomy. The latter form is applicable to those minorities who form a local majority in an administrative unit "island" surrounded by the majority population. Local autonomy is a form of territorial autonomy where – through decentralisation – the minority can look after its own affairs since it forms the majority in the administrative unit. It does not, however, have the powers of legislation. Wolff & Weller (2005, pp. 13–14) also take administrative autonomy to be one weak form of territorial autonomy where the territory does not have a

legislature but which does have "executive independence within the framework of central legislation." By contrast, McGarry & Moore (2005) argue "local government" only passes minor regulations and bi-laws and is distinguishable from autonomy. If one takes a stricter definition of territorial autonomy as needing to embody some form of elected legislature, administrative autonomy does not fit the requirements for territorial autonomy.

Another term is *functional autonomy*. Tkacik (2008, p. 371) understands functional autonomy as the "decentralisation of control over a single functional subject matter in a semi-distinct geographic sense" such as schooling in the mother tongue. With many functional autonomies one arrives at *administrative autonomy* which involves different functional autonomies within a set geographic area and is provided for a certain group (Tkacik, 2008, p. 371). However, according to Heintze, functional autonomy is a type of *personal autonomy* which gives state functions as well as rights to private minority group organisations. The minority organises itself in private form so that it is independent of state influence (Heintze, 1998, pp. 23–24). To Heintze, *personal autonomy* (as mentioned on p.22) derives from the personality principle and has a collective element to it. Again, the group has to be organised as a legal person, but it can operate in private or public law. In public law, personal autonomy can serve the minority's political participation in the state (Heintze, 1998, pp. 22–23). These distinctions and additional categories are certainly useful to the conceptual debate and add refinements; however, there is no broad consensus similar to the major concepts of territorial and non-territorial autonomy.

2.1.5 What Autonomy is Not: Other Concepts

Autonomy is differentiated from other concepts such as federalism, decentralisation and self-government. There are other institutional arrangements such as confederation, reservations and associated statehood, but these are less likely to be confused with

autonomy. For a full discussion please see Lapidoth (1997) and Benedikter (2009). I focus on the most important conceptual differentiations.

One important distinction to make is between territorial autonomy and federalism. Whilst federalism can be seen as a form of autonomy different in degree and scale, there are nevertheless important differences. These include the method of establishment which – in a federal system – is through the constitution, whereas for an autonomous region establishment can be through different legal means. In addition, a federal system has representation at the central level of its constituent sub-units whereas there is an absence of the autonomous unit's representation at the central level. In this sense, territorial autonomies are generally asymmetric whilst federal systems are generally symmetric. In terms of reasons of establishment, autonomous units are generally – though not always as in the case of Vojvodina, Serbia – set up due to their historical ethnic character, whilst federations apply to the whole country's territory (Lapidoth, 1997, pp. 50–51). Finally, as Suksi (2014, pp. 48–49) argues, federal systems usually have the federal level legislate on enumerated powers whereas the sub-state entities legislate on the residual powers (with the exception of Canada where it is the reverse). The federal level has a "supremacy clause" in this sense. In a territorial autonomy, however, there is generally no supremacy clause and the autonomous unit has the enumerated powers. Therefore, the competencies of the autonomous unit cannot be legislated upon at the federal level. These institutional differences are significant to differentiate federal and autonomous structures.

Compared to *decentralisation* which concerns a *delegation* of powers from the centre, autonomy involves a *transfer* of powers and these powers are exercised by the elected leaders of the autonomous unit. Moreover, in a decentralised state, the centre still retains the ability to adjust the powers of the decentralised authorities. In the case of an autonomous unit, such revisions would be only in extreme cases (Lapidoth, 1997, pp. 50–52).

Decentralisation also assumes the ethnic minority is concentrated in particular administrative units, whereas the reality in countries such as Romania and Slovakia is that administrative units do not necessarily follow ethnic territorial concentrations. Moreover, and importantly, decentralisation does not include powers of legislation of an elected assembly, which is one of the key components of autonomy to many scholars (Hannum, 1990; Smith, 2014).

Finally, there is the distinction between autonomy and self-government. Scholars disagree on the exact hierarchical relationship between the two concepts. Wolff (2011) labels "territorial self-government" as an umbrella category for different types of institutional arrangements for minorities, spanning from confederation – federation – autonomy – devolution – and decentralisation. In a different work, Wolff & Weller (2005, p. 14) argue that "full self-government" would be an elected legislature with executive and administrative functions, as well as judicial powers and form a complete understanding of autonomy. Self-government would have to be constitutionally guaranteed and a judicial mechanism would have to exist to deal with clashes of authority (2005, pp. 266–267). They argue that autonomy can still occur with less powers than full self-government. Similarly, Nootens (2015, p. 34) affirms that territorial autonomy (as well as non-territorial autonomy) are "devices of self-governance" and therefore autonomy also remains one step underneath the "self-government" category.

In contrast, according to Lapidoth (1997, pp. 53–4), self-government constitutes "one room" in the "house" of autonomy. Autonomy is a much broader concept and the types of powers and spheres can vary significantly in their application, with a fuller range of how much power is granted and in which spheres. Self-government is generally applied to a territory, while autonomy has its cultural form. Moreover, as in the case of decentralisation, self-government would have to have a legislative body if it were to fall under the realm of

territorial autonomy. Suksi (2014, pp. 54–55) also differentiates territorial autonomy from regional self-government in terms of the powers given to the sub-state unit where regional self-governments have less powers than territorial autonomies. McGarry & Moore (2005) show similar views where autonomy is distinguished from "regional self-administration" which only implements central government policies. In these accounts, autonomy is one level above self-government. For the purposes of a working definition as elucidated in Section 2.1.1, I follow a similar view where autonomy and self-government are distinct, with autonomy having a fuller range of powers and is hierarchically higher than self-government. The importance of these definitions and conceptual debates in the literature will become apparent in Chapters 5, 6 and 7 in particular. These chapters examine how elites themselves use these concepts, how their autonomy claiming relates to the scholarly definitions of autonomy and if or how certain understandings of autonomy dominate or change over time.

2.2 Autonomy as a Prescriptive Institutional Solution

Which approach to have towards national minorities – policies ranging from assimilation to accommodation – is an important question in the region of Central and Eastern Europe where the "nation" and "state" often do not coincide.[14] Regarding autonomy, international conventions have been lacking in strong support for autonomy provisions. A significant issue to contend with is the problem of definitions: "autonomy" does not have a definition in public international law (Kettley, 2014, p. 3), nor is there a definition of "national minority" – the population group most likely to benefit from autonomy provisions – nor has the international community come out unwaveringly in support of "minority

[14] This takes the view of the nation as primarily ethnic. Whilst the civic-ethnic dichotomy as first developed by Hans Kohn (1944) is overly simplistic and has been criticised on normative, conceptual and empirical grounds (Shulman, 2002; Brubaker, 2004), nationalising elites in the CEE region have tried to make the "nation" and "state" coincide, showing support for a more ethnic view of the nation in the CEE (Brubaker, 1996; Mylonas, 2012).

rights" in the ways minorities have wanted it defined (as a collective right). The absence of standard accepted definitions – whether legally or politically – will doubtlessly continue.[15] This section examines the fault lines which run through the discussions over the extent to which autonomy should be promoted as an institutional solution for national minorities. Debates cross the work of political theorists, of the international legal community and of comparative politics and conflict studies scholars.

2.2.1 Political Theory

In the normative debate of what rights and institutional provisions states "should" grant to ethnic minorities, the debate on how to handle diversity has been dominated by the divide between liberal individualists (Rawls, 1993; Appiah, 1994; Barry, 2001; Deets, 2002) on the one hand and multiculturalists (Taylor, 1994; Kymlicka, 1995; Parekh, 2002) on the other. In question is whether liberal democracies can incorporate policies of multiculturalism and still adhere to principles of freedom, justice and equality, and whether the state should grant individual or collective rights to ethnic minorities.

A *liberal individualist* approach emphasises the universal nature of civic and political rights, views education and culture as public goods rather than as issues of rights and justice, and focuses on socio-economic redistribution (Deets and Stroschein, 2005, p. 290). The *collective* approach, by comparison, is understood as multiculturalism, the politics of difference, or the politics of recognition. It aims to grant legal recognition to – and therefore politicisation of – ethno-cultural identities. This approach argues that certain

[15] It is nearly impossible to get all countries to agree on an acceptable definition of "national minority"; in practice states have defined their own criteria (Dembinska, 2012). For this thesis, I use the term *minority* as defined by Jackson Preece (1998, p. 28):

> *"a group numerically inferior to the rest of the population of a state, in a non-dominant position, well-defined and historically established on the territory of that state, whose members – being nationals of the state – possess ethnic, religious, linguistic or cultural characteristics differing from those of the rest of the population and who, if only implicitly, a sense of solidarity, directed towards preserving their culture, traditions, religion or language."*

minority rights are needed in addition to human rights. These provisions would affirm the importance of cultural self-preservation of the minority group.[16]

Kymlicka (1995) argues that cultural differences may have to be accommodated by special laws. He delivers a three-fold classification of group-differentiated rights (self-government, poly-ethnic and special representation) which have been a frequent reference point in the collective approach. The case of autonomy arrangements would fall under what he terms "self-government rights" where the sub-unit with a high concentration of the national minority receives special territorial jurisdiction. He does not, however, provide an institutional solution (such as cultural autonomy) which would provide some form of collective right of self-governance for those national minorities who are not territorially concentrated. In any case, his differentiation of historic minorities (termed *national minorities*) from immigrants (termed *ethnic minorities*) and the different obligations of the state towards the two groups is a useful one for the region (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 11–15). It also resonates with the Hungarian minority communities who mobilised to sign the Minority SafePack Initiative aimed at the European Commission (Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3.2).

2.2.2 The International Legal Framework: The Nexus of Minority Rights-Autonomy-Self-Determination

An important moment linking minority rights, autonomy and self-determination occurs at the end of World War I when US President Woodrow Wilson's ideal of "national self-determination" was seen to be one of the founding principles of a new liberal world order. The norm was understood as synonymous with independence. It was implemented strategically rather than unequivocally across the colourful ethnic mosaic of Central and Eastern Europe to suit the geostrategic interests of the Great Powers and their desire for

[16] This self-preservation argument was found frequently in my interviews with Hungarian minority elites. See Section 5.2.1 of Chapter 5 for more information.

stability, security and staving off the Bolshevik threat (Andleman, 2014). As a remedy for the problematic borders, Minorities Treaties were put in place in Poland, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, Austria, Romania, Hungary and Greece through the League of Nations (Heater, 1994, p. 84). However, they lacked adequate enforcement mechanisms and the political buy-in and support from the ethnic majority (Fink, 1995; Jackson Preece, 1998).

Importantly, with the League of Nations and Minority Treaties, minority rights were thought of as collective rights. This did not last long, however. With the dangers of nationalism unveiled in World War II, the international community discredited minority rights as *group rights* and instead focused on *universalism* and human rights, embraced by the United Nations' *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* in 1948 (Kymlicka, 1995, pp. 1–3). Following the end of the Cold War, the minority rights regime of the European institutions was formulated out of a concern for European security (Sasse, 2008; Galbreath and McEvoy, 2012; Dembinska, Máracz and Tonk, 2014). The institutions embraced a middle point, viewing minority rights as for "persons belonging to a national minority". Provisions (to be elaborated below) promote the minority identity but fall short of collective rights.[17] International provisions are deliberately vague because they have to account for the tension between the collective and individual rights approaches (Dembinska, Máracz and Tonk, 2014, pp. 356–357).

The post-Cold War era also has an important new development: autonomy arrangements are seen as a possible solution for ethnic minorities in the CEE region. Autonomy, until this point, was either dangerous or seen as unusual and obscure (as was the

[17] For example, the Copenhagen Document (1990) Section IV Article 30 states that "respect for the rights of persons belonging to national minorities...is an essential factor for peace, justice, stability and democracy." Article 3(2) of the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995) states "Persons belonging to national minorities may exercise the rights and enjoy the freedoms flowing from the principles enshrined in the present Framework Convention individually as well as in community with others." The Explanatory Report (paragraph 37) specifies that the rights and freedoms are "distinct from the notion of collective rights."

case of the Åland Islands). Autonomy had been side-lined in the past by governments who associated it with the discourse on national self-determination and independence. The complete reversal comes in the early 1990s when the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and governments of the European Community cautiously endorse autonomy as a prospective antidote to independence claims (Wolff and Weller, 2005, pp. 1–3).

The disassociation of autonomy with independence emerges more clearly as a consequence of the Yugoslav crisis. The Badinter Arbitration Commission – set up in 1991 by the European Community to provide legal advice during the disintegration of Yugoslavia – essentially shifted the meaning of the norm of self-determination to encompass autonomy measures distinct from independence. Rather than acknowledging the rights of the Serbs living in Croatia and Bosnia to change the borders of the countries and join Serbia, the Commission argued that self-determination meant the right to autonomous structures as a minority group. Autonomy could offer *internal* self-determination. Moreover, there were other motions to encourage the inclusion of "autonomy" as an expression of self-determination such as the motion put forward by Lichtenstein in the United Nations in 1993 and support for communal self-determination in South Africa (Kovács, 2003, pp. 438–9).

What has emerged today, therefore, is the trend of associating the provision of minority rights – in the form of autonomy – as a fulfilment of national self-determination which does not threaten the territorial integrity of the already existing state (Kovács, 2003, pp. 436–445). This has happened within a broader international context where autonomy is increasingly viewed as the legitimate expression of "internal" self-determination (Vizi, 2014, p. 31). For example, the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007)'s Article 4 allows indigenous peoples to "exercise their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal or local affairs."

Within the scholarly literature as well, there is a clear trend associating autonomy with internal self-determination and not with independence (Nootens, 2015, pp. 36–37).

There are some international documents which cautiously make the case that autonomy arrangements can be beneficial for minorities whilst maintaining the territorial integrity of the state. However, there is a significant dilemma impinging on the codification of such a link: both "autonomy" and "minority rights" do not have definitions in the legal realm, as mentioned above. The different resolutions and agreements by European international institutions, to be detailed below, can provide minority elites with an arena for contestation to push forward autonomy claims.

2.2.2.1 The Council of Europe

Regarding rights for minority protection, two key documents are the Council of Europe's *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995) and the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (1992). The *FCNM* does not mention the provision of autonomy as one of its main articles, but does mention the positive obligation of the state to recognise different rights to preserve the minorities' cultural and ethnic identity. Measures include the provision of education in the mother tongue, freedom of religion, freedom of expression in the minority language, as well as creating conditions for minorities' effective participation. Regarding the latter, the Explanatory Report includes a recommendation for decentralised or local forms of government (Par80).

The *ECRML* encourages states to protect their minority languages, but it "does not confer any specific rights on those who speak them" (Benoit-Rohmer, 1996, p. 51). It covers the areas of language usage in education, with judicial authorities, with administrative authorities and public services, in the media, in economic and cultural activities. It also does not mention autonomy as a general provision for language usage (except for "the principle of independence and autonomy of the media" (Council of Europe, 1992, Art 11(1)). These

two documents – the *ECRML* and *FNCM* – are signed and ratified by Romania and Slovakia but have not been signed and ratified by all Council of Europe states – such as France. Moreover, while there are monitoring mechanisms in place, these are relatively weak and there are no serious consequences to breaches. At the same time, the *FCNM* in particular stands out as the highest level of legal guarantee that a state can make regarding the treatment of its minorities (Benoit-Rohmer, 1996, pp. 40–51).

The Council of Europe has issued three relevant recommendations linked to autonomy. The first is Recommendation 1201 (1993) which recognises autonomous structures as a right of persons belonging to national minorities, in particular Article 11.[18] The Recommendation was to serve as an additional protocol for the European Convention on Human Rights. However, it was not adopted by the Committee of Ministers but only accepted by the Parliamentary Assembly and as such is not legally binding. It does, nevertheless, carry with it the support of the Parliamentary Assembly (Benoit-Rohmer, 1996, pp. 36–37). The second recommendation is 1609 (2003) "Positive Experiences of Autonomous Regions as a Source of Inspiration for Conflict Resolution in Europe." The Recommendation follows from the Gross Report (2003), by Swiss rapporteur Andreas Gross. It elaborates how autonomy could provide a solution to internal political conflicts and was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly in 2003. It recommended the Council of Ministers to promote the principles of regional and cultural autonomy and to pass a European convention on the topic of autonomy. It understood autonomy to entail a legislative body with a democratically elected executive. Finally, the 2014 Kálmár Report (by an MP from Hungary) was presented to the Parliamentary Assembly and accepted as a Resolution (1985/2014) and Recommendation (2040/2014). It highlights the particular characteristics

[18] Article 11 states, "In the regions where they are in a majority the persons belonging to a national minority shall have the right to have at their disposal appropriate local or autonomous authorities or to have a special status, matching the specific historical and territorial situation and in accordance with the domestic legislation of the state."

of historic national minorities and that they require collective rights and territorial self-government arrangements. The Report's acceptance was seen as a victory by Hungarian ethnic minorities (Kalmár, 2014; Waterbury, 2017, p. 235).

2.2.2.2 The OSCE

Another important organisation in the European context is the CSCE – Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe – later to become the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). The CSCE's *Copenhagen Declaration* (1990) Article 35 suggests autonomous structures can facilitate the effective participation of national minorities in public affairs for the promotion of their identity. There have been follow-up documents by the OSCE such as the *Hague Recommendations* (1996), the *Oslo Recommendations* (1998) and the *Lund Recommendations* (1999) covering educational rights, linguistic rights and the rights for effective public participation of national minorities, respectively. Importantly, the *Lund Recommendations on the Effective Participation of National Minorities in Public Life* (1999) includes territorial and non-territorial arrangements to encourage effective minority participation. In particular, non-territorial arrangements can help regulate matters in the fields of education, culture, religion, and the minority language (Articles 15-18). The *Lund Recommendations* offer the "most comprehensive" support for autonomy as a means of good governance (Wolff and Weller, 2005, p. 3). However, OSCE recommendations are not legally binding and merely serve as policy recommendations. There is thus a division of labour between the OSCE and the Council of Europe whereby the former plays a political role and the latter a legal one (Benoit-Rohmer, 1996, p. 56). Hungarian political parties also cite these recommendations

in their policy programmes to highlight European standards (MKP, 2014; RMDSZ, 2014a).[19]

2.2.2.3 The European Union

The European Union itself does not have binding measures or recommendations in the field of autonomy and is weak in minority rights. Its *acquis communautaire* – the requirements of accession to the European Union which the CEE countries had to fulfil – included "respect for and protection of minorities". In practice, however, this was overlooked for economic criteria (Hughes and Sasse, 2003). Minorities are protected in terms of anti-discrimination provisions – such as the EU's *Racial Equality Directive* (2000a) and *Employment Directive* (2000b). The legally binding *Charter of Fundamental Rights* (2000) ensures that minority rights are a common value within the Union and its Article 21 on non-discrimination covers national minorities. This enshrined the legal status of national minorities in EU law. However, the EU lacks the competences in policy areas for issues touching minorities, such as education and culture, because they impinge on state sovereignty (Barten, 2016, pp. 104–113).

To conclude, there are some provisions in place from the OSCE and CoE which support the provision of autonomy for national minorities under the banner of promoting minority rights. This shift in support for autonomy arrangements by European institutions as an expression of *internal* self-determination can provide minority elites with a European arena for contestation to push forward their own autonomy claims. However, given the weak enforcement provisions and regulations, these institutions may be weak arenas to be appealed to. In addition to serving as an arena for claims, the European institutions also serve as actors who put pressure on governments to implement autonomy measures or other

[19] Although not linked to the question of autonomy as such, the OSCE has its 2008 *Bozen Declaration on National Minorities in Inter-State Relations* which lays out principles of how the three-way relationship between (1) states with national minorities, (2) national minorities themselves and (3) their kin-state can be governed whilst respecting the sovereignty of each state and protecting the rights of national minorities.

minority rights. One would expect that once EU accession is achieved and Frameworks (*FCNM, ECRML*) signed, the pressure from European institutions on member states decreases since accession has already been achieved. At the same time, the minority's usage of the European arena for their own claims – particularly the CoE for FCNM and ECRML monitoring – would be expected to be targeted post-ratification.

2.2.3 Comparative Democratic Institutions and Conflict Studies

The debate around the appropriate institutional solution for managing ethnic difference bridges the comparative politics and conflict studies sub-fields. Institutions provide the channels through which differential power resources are distributed between and within ethnic groups living in the same state. The particular constellation of institutional arrangements is of high importance for ethnic minorities and often the implementation of such arrangements comes after a period of ethnic conflict (Bieber and Keil, 2009). The two main schools of thought for such institutional arrangements are the integrative approach (Horowitz, 1985) and the consociational approach (Lijphart, 1977; McGarry and O'Leary, 2004).

Regarding the consociationalist approach, Lijphart (1977)'s model identified four main characteristics: a grand coalition government including all elements of society, segmental autonomy, proportionality in the voting system and a minority veto. As Wolff (2011) writes, many critiques of consociationalism have argued that it reifies identity, entrenches ethnic cleavages and leads to deadlock. Other critics can see the short-term usages of such arrangements but doubt their long-term benefits (Horowitz, 1985; Roeder and Rothchild, 2005) and argue that it is elite-focused and does not encourage cross-ethnic societal cleavages (Nimni, 2007, pp. 357–358). The integrative approach, on the other hand, involves the diffusion of power from the centre and establishing multiple points of power. Rather than having minorities organised in separate "pillars" and including minority parties

in a grand coalition, the integrative approach encourages multi-ethnic parties and cross-cutting loyalties to reduce interethnic competition (Horowitz, 1985; Kettley, 2014).

Both consociationalism and the integrative approach advocate autonomy. For the latter, Horowitz argues autonomy needs to be counterbalanced by representation in central institutions for the group in question and introduced sooner rather than later in ethnic conflict (Horowitz, 1985; Murphy, 2012). Regarding consociationalism, "autonomy" is referred to quite broadly encompassing territorial and non-territorial arrangements. Wolff (2011:1784–85) defines five types of territorial self-government as confederation, federation, autonomy, devolution and decentralisation. These have been the focus of consociational arrangements in divided societies. The concept of cultural autonomy, however, has been overlooked by consociationalists (Wolff, 2011, p. 1784) similar to how the normative literature overlooks cultural autonomy (Section 2.2.1).

Nevertheless, the effects of territorial self-government is a question up for debate (Wolff, 2011, pp. 1795–96). Some argue that granting autonomy can lead to secession and violence (Roeder, 1991; Hale, 2004; Sorens, 2009). Bunce (1999) argues that in Eastern Europe, federal arrangements under communism led to secessionist tendencies and nationalist movements following communism's fall because the key elements of a nation-state were *de facto* present. This painful federalist past, as well as the legacy of changing border arrangements, plays a role in the post-communist aversion to any form of federal or autonomy arrangements (Bochsler & Szöcsik, 2013b). Others vouch for autonomy or federal arrangements to have a positive effect on stability and avoidance of ethnic conflict through accommodation (Gurr, 1993a; Bermeo, 2002; Saideman *et al.*, 2002).

The debate on the effects of autonomy arrangements – namely of territorial autonomy – is undecided, but outcomes will be context specific. They are shaped by the nature of the minority group, their territorial concentration, previous history, the relationship to the

majority group and whether the arrangement arises in a post-conflict setting or not. For the scholars involved, the concern is predominantly over state stability and the avoidance of ethnic conflict. Historically, autonomy arrangements have often been implemented through international pressure or intervention following post-conflict situations with the guarantee of the integrity of borders (Salat and Székely, 2014; Smith, 2014). Examples here involve the former Yugoslavia (European Union), South Tyrol (United Nations) and the Åland Islands (League of Nations). Successful implementation of new autonomy arrangements may be best when there is a liberal attitude towards minorities domestically and will be difficult to achieve in a strong nationalist context (Suksi, 2014, p. 57). Therefore, without international pressure and supportive Romanian or Slovak political parties, the implementation of autonomy arrangements for the Hungarian minority in these two countries remains unlikely.

2.3 Autonomy as a Claim: Explanatory Factors Accounting for Minority Demands

Another angle of studying autonomy takes autonomy claims as the dependent variable and seeks to explain what affects claims for such arrangements. As with the prescriptive angle, there is a concern over state stability and ethnic conflict. To better understand the various angles to study claim-making of minority elites, I first highlight the important contribution of the study of "claims" and the "quadratic nexus" found in the conflict studies literature. I then extend the conversation on international actors to incorporate the Europeanisation and multi-level governance literature to illustrate how it provides only a weak explanation of variation of autonomy claims. Finally, I discuss relevant arguments found in the comparative democratic institutions literature to highlight how the discussion on coalition belonging, ethnic parties and intra-group competition provide a useful

framework to further complement the legwork of the quadratic nexus and elite 'claims' spectrum.

To examine autonomy claim-making as a dependent variable, the conflict studies literature situates different "claims" along a spectrum of non-radical to radical claims. While authors such as Bochsler & Szöcsik (2013b) have not defined "claims", Jenne (2007, p. 15)'s definition of a group claim is "a bid by minority representatives against the centre for a degree of control over state institutions". Jenne (2007, p. 40) uses the spectrum below for claims:

Affirmative action – cultural autonomy – territorial autonomy – secession/irredentism

Jenne et al. (2007, p. 545) look at minority claims on a slightly different spectrum and also identify claims as bids against the centre:

No salient claims – affirmative action or protection from discrimination – regional/territorial autonomy – secession/irredentism

What is clear from both spectra is that claims become "stronger" as one moves to the right. They become more radical because the claims are greater challenges to the state. Moreover, as one moves to the right, there is a greater concern over ethnic violence. If one moves to the left, for example from territorial autonomy to affirmative action, this is deradicalising.

In seeking to explain variation of minority demands and movement along the spectrum as above, a common framework used is Brubaker (1996)'s "triadic nexus." The model incorporates the threefold relationship between national minorities, nationalising states and external national homelands (the kin-state). Jenne (2004), for example, argues it is the minority's perceived support from the external lobby state which influences how radical their claim is on the host state. The triadic nexus is a useful framework because it highlights the importance of the kin-state. However, it does not account for another important dimension in minority bargaining: European actors. Smith (2002) extends the triadic model to include the "Euro-Atlantic" dimension in his "quadratic nexus" of actors,

and others have also pointed out the need for inclusion of the international dimension (Kemp, N.D). Smith's research points to how Estonian elites had to contend with European pressure to amend the country's citizenship and language policies towards the Russophone minorities.[20] Within the "quadratic nexus" and "triadic nexus" models, the political arena of bargaining is the national level.

The incorporation of external actors – whether through the kin-state or European institutions – is particularly relevant for the CEE region, dotted with minorities on the "wrong" side of borders and with countries who have had aspirations to join the European Union. Examining reasons behind autonomy claim-making also therefore ties into the multi-level governance and Europeanisation literature. The extent of the influence of the European Union can be debated (Hughes and Sasse, 2003; Sasse, 2005; Vachudova, 2005) but it would be difficult to argue that it should not be included in a framework of accounting for elites' claims. Europeanisation[21] – and the emergence of multi-level governance – has arguably changed the organisation of politics and the distribution of authority, with opportunities to empower the regional level and politicise "national minority regions" (Malloy, 2005; Bruszt, 2008). European integration has promoted regionalisation by various funding and incentive structures such as PHARE, Structural Funds, cross-border partnerships such as INTER-REG, European level cooperation in the Committee of the Regions and administrative decentralisation (Keating, 2004; Keating and McGarry, 2006; Bruszt, 2008).

Therefore, how minority elites make claims for autonomy can be influenced by EU funding and regional structures. At the same time, the role of Europeanisation on the domestic level may be limited. Administrative regions have been created for development and statistical purposes – such as the NUTS II Regional Development Regions – but unlike

[20] See also *Strategic Frames* by Schulze (2018) on the role of Russia and the European Union on the minority policy reform debates in Latvia and Estonia.
[21] I define this (often vague) term as "both the enlargement of the European Union (EU) and the diffusion of European norms and practices" (Csergő and Regelmann, 2017, p. 2015).

in many Western European countries, the units do not take into account ethnic minority territorial concentrations (Moore, 2008, p. 524). Moreover, while there may have been administrative reforms – which have been the source of discontent and debate amongst minority populations – in practice CEE countries remain very centralised compared to their Western European counterparts (Moore, 2008, p. 524; Dembinska, Máracz and Tonk, 2014, p. 368). This reality may frustrate ethnic minority groups who would generally prefer a decentralised and pluralistic Europe (Keating, 2004, p. 382), and see deeper political integration as boding better prospects for their regional autonomy prospects (Vizi, 2014).

Much of the literature above looks at how external factors can influence actors' claims at the national level. However, the realm of domestic politics itself also has many variables which can impact claim-making and which need to be unpacked. For example, there has been a focus on the role ethnic parties themselves have in the radicalisation of claims. The study of ethnic parties in CEE has traditionally been analysed through the same lens as that of ethnic parties in the post-colonial world (rather than through the ethno-regionalist party lens of Western Europe) (Székely, 2014, pp. 43–45). As such, organising politics along ethnic lines has led some scholars to fear ethnic outbidding and instability (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972; Horowitz, 1985). Ethnic outbidding is a fear held by the integrationist school which argues that when ethnicity is salient, moderate ethnic parties will be outflanked by more radical challengers who portray the moderate representatives as selling out the community. The consequences of such radicalisation can lead to violence (Rabushka and Shepsle, 1972; Reilly, 2006). At the same time, ethnic outbidding has not been found in the region (Chandra, 2005; Birnir, 2007; Zuber, 2013; Bernauer, 2015).

What has been found, and is particularly relevant for the case of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia, is the presence of valence competition. As accounted for by Székely (2014, p. 73), valence issues "involve some condition that cannot be ordered

on a continuum, as it is regarded as good or bad by the electorate in general". What becomes important is how credible a party is on an issue, rather than where they position themselves on a spectrum. The policy space is narrow since there is convergence between the electorate and political parties (Székely, 2014). If there is valence competition in the context of Hungarian minority claims during the time period under examination, one would expect to find that all actors are pro-autonomy and that competition revolves around who is the most credible pro-autonomy actor.

The comparative democratic institutions literature also examines how different factors linked to the electoral system can radicalise minority demands. The electoral system can provide structural constraints linked to the access to power of ethnic minority political parties. The CEE is characterised by its proportional representation (PR) system or mixed electoral system, with varying thresholds of inclusion. The exact nature of the electoral system such as the threshold to get into parliament and the size and number of electoral districts, for example (Nedelcu and Debardeleben, 2016, p. 9), can influence the ways minority parties organise and the nature of their claims.

With the possibility of inclusion in coalition governments – which has already happened on multiple occasions in both Slovakia and Romania – minority leaders may have to dampen their claims to be accepted by the other coalition parties. This is what Bochsler & Szöcsik (2013a) find with Hungarian political parties in Romania and Slovakia: claims to territorial autonomy weaken when MKP and RMDSZ in Slovakia and Romania, respectively, serve in coalition. These are structural constraints which affect the claiming of elite actors. The dampening of claims, however, can lead to conflict between elites with an office-seeking electoral logic and elites with an ideological and policy-seeking logic (Toubeau and Massetti, 2013; Balazs and Schwellnus, 2014). Therefore, examining the role of intra-group competition is also important in order to understand the way different actors

make their claims in relation to each other and how the claims and strategies of party elites change over time.

The comparative literature on claim-making discussed so far has focused on political elites. Other work (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly, 2001; Beissinger, 2002; Bermeo, 2003; Stroschein, 2012) switches the focus to ordinary people rather than elites. Stroschein (2012), for example, examines the role of protests during the democratisation period. She focuses on the Hungarian minorities in Romania, Slovakia and Ukraine and how their mobilisation through ethnic protest played an important role in the minority's incorporation into the peaceful conduct of politics. There is also the social movements literature – in particular the work of McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) and Tilly and Tarrow (2015). The dynamics of contentious politics provides helpful concepts such as on political opportunity structures and the subject-object-claim structure of contention. At the same time, their work is more focused on collective action, the usage of performances and repertoires which tie to mobilisation, and activity that does not necessarily target the government. While certainly providing useful insights to our understanding of how ethnic politics can play out through the perspective of mass mobilisation and social movements, the focus of this thesis is rather on the elite level and elite claiming for autonomy since elites are the ones with the access to power and policy-making decisions and autonomy claims have generally lacked significant mass mobilisation (as will be discussed in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.2).

The literature above, therefore, provides a framework of analysis for examining how autonomy claims change over time, the drivers behind such changes and how claiming occurs in the domestic political arena. As the quadratic nexus model illustrates, different actors can influence autonomy claims domestically such as the European Union or the kin-state. Moreover, institutional arrangements, such as the electoral system and coalition belonging, can constrain actors and their room for manoeuvre in what they can claim. These

constraints also affect intra-group competition with a conflict between policy-seeking and office-seeking actors. Furthermore, if the issue of autonomy is organised under valence competition, then claims to autonomy will revolve more around who is the most credible actor rather than around stronger or weaker claims to autonomy.

2.4 Identifying Gaps and Reframing the Study of Autonomy

The past 30 years have demonstrated how ethnic conflict and violence have not been prevalent in Slovakia and Romania. Consequently, this dissertation takes the useful elements of the quadratic nexus of actors and examines claims to autonomy not through the lens of security, but rather as a normalised part and parcel of domestic politics.[22] With this step, I also address other gaps in the above-mentioned literatures. The literature overlooks (1) the non-violent nature of claim-making, (2) the breadth of actors involved, (3) the role of the local level, (4) the use of different political arenas for claiming and finally, (5) the role of history in influencing how autonomy claims are made.

As mentioned, the conflict studies literature studies claims to autonomy on a spectrum concerned with the breakout of ethnic violence. The spectrum of claims (Jenne, 2007) has an inherent assumption of radicalisation: claiming autonomy is just one step before claiming secession whereas affirmative action has low chances of radicalisation. However, while ethnicity is a significant political cleavage (particularly in Romania and Slovakia), ethnic party competition has not led to ethnic outbidding in the region nor has there been significant ethnic violence (Schöpflin, 2002; Chandra, 2005; Birnir, 2007; Stroschein, 2012; Bernauer, 2015). The CEE region has actually witnessed less violent conflict than expected and kin-

[22] This also means I do not set up this thesis to test the different variables often studied by conflict studies scholars such as military support, regime type and ethnic primordialist theories etc. Excellent studies have been done in this line of research – some using the Minorities at Risk dataset – such as Jenne et al (2007), Jenne (2007) and Gurr (1993a, 1993b).

state preferences can influence minority claims without leading to violent escalation.[23] At least for Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia, territorial autonomy is not going to lead to secession or irredentism because it has low salience amongst elites and the population.[24] Therefore, this project shifts the study of variation in "autonomy" claims from the currently theorised spectra of radicalisation (such as on Jenne (2007)) popular in the conflict studies literature to an understanding of claims as part of moderate, normalised domestic politics. This responds to Csergő (2013)'s call for greater attention to be paid to the study of non-secessionist claims.

By examining autonomy claims as part of moderate, normalised politics I can shine new light on the ways elites claim autonomy. When engaging with elites, moreover, I seek to incorporate a full range of elite actors. In the conflict studies and comparative democratic institutions literature, national level elites are the privileged actors. The insights of intra-group competition (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a; Székely, 2014) also prompt the question of how other elites might be impacting the nature of autonomy claims. I therefore adopt a broader understanding of "elites" to encompass not just the leaders of political parties but also other actors, whether that be within the political party or within civil society organisations or indeed within EU recognised territorial economic groupings like Pons Danubii in Slovakia.

Importantly, I engage with local level actors to analyse how they make claims to autonomy. The role of local level actors in claims to autonomy has not yet been analysed in

[23] One example of kin-state politics and the (peaceful) action-reaction dynamic is in response to homeland states wanting to grant their co-ethnics with citizenship rights. The amendment to outlaw voluntarily acquired dual citizenship in Slovakia came the same day the Hungarian Parliament passed its 2011 *Act on Nationality* which enabled ethnic Hungarians abroad to take up Hungarian citizenship (Pytlas, 2013, p. 181).

[24] See Csergő (2013) for example who argues that Romania makes non-secessionist claims and Tokár (2014) who writes that Hungarians in Slovakia do not want to secede but that this is what the Slovak population fear because of their own history. The elite interviews I conducted also confirmed the desire not to secede. From the public opinion perspective, Veres (2015, pp. 95–96) shows that when asked for their homeland, an overwhelming percentage of Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia responded that Romania or Slovakia or their subregion was their homeland, not Hungary.

the post-EU accession period (Stroschein (2012) focuses on pre-accession). An incorporation of the local level can be seen in the multi-level governance literature (Hooghe and Marks, 2001), but this literature generally occupies itself with policy areas linked to the EU and its translation to the national and local levels. Autonomy is not within the competence of the European Union. The focus on the local level can highlight interesting dynamics linked to intra-ethnic competition as well engagement with the international level, which would be overlooked if only analysing the national level.

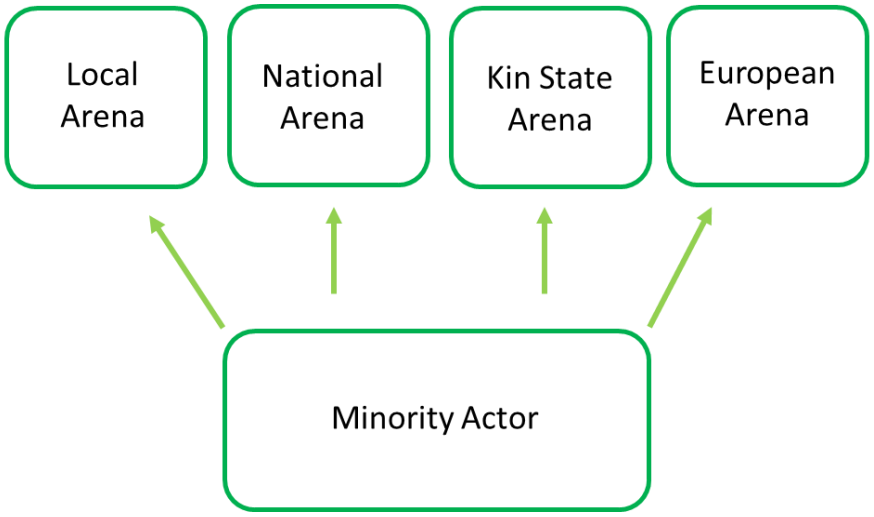
For example, Stroschein (2019)'s work on ethnic enclaves in North Macedonia illustrates how local ethnic enclaves demonstrate not just inter-ethnic competition but also intra-ethnic competition, with different impacts on the relationship between the local and the centre. In addition, as Deets (2019) argues, the local level can be the playground of international actors. The Skopje 2014 Project overlooked the local citizens and the local government in order to become an "international" city for business and tourism. In contrast to the communist era when there was strong engagement at the local level, the post-communist period has seen disengagement from local politics. Through the "politics of kitsch", the local level is disempowered to serve the national government's interests. These studies, therefore, show the importance of examining the local level which can uncover a range of dynamics between local, national and international actors.

Through the analysis of the local level perspective, I therefore expand the claim-horizon by looking not just at bids to the centre but also at bids to the local, kin-state and European arenas. I can better examine how actors make claims, if there is sub-national variation and, if so, what accounts for such variation. I account for which actors focus on certain arenas and when particular arenas are chosen over others. At the moment, these questions are not adequately addressed in the literature mainly because the dominant focus is on claim-making at the national arena (Jenne, 2004, 2007; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b)

and how different actors of the quadratic nexus impact national level claims. Moreover, while there is clearly a pressure for decentralisation from the EU, administrative units in both Romania and Slovakia are unfavourable for the minority which would make decentralisation measures less effective (Moore, 2008, p. 524) and thus questions the strength of the EU's influence on the domestic level.

Tied to the need to expand the understanding of how actors bargain to different arenas, there has been recent progress in analysing the European institutions as an arena to articulate claims. Csergő and Regelmann (2017, p. 216) focus on how ethnic minority actors have used their agency to utilise the European level when faced with limitations at the domestic level. Different ways of engaging include making usage of new *arenas* to make claims, making new *allies* outside of the typical domestic context and *activism* to mobilise resources (Waterbury, 2017). Following Waterbury (2017), I extend the research to how Hungarian minority actors in Romania and Slovakia make claims to the European arena. I examine how local actors make usage of these opportunity structures, and in particular, the financial structures available to pursue their claims to autonomy. I similarly extend the examination to how actors claim to the kin-state arena. Figure 2 below highlights the different way of thinking about minority elite claims in contrast to the current literature which focuses on the domestic national arena as the main arena of claim-making.

Figure 2 Model of Claim-Making to Different Arenas



Finally, while large-N studies using the Minorities at Risk dataset in particular can give us certain generalisations about claiming (Gurr, 1993b, 1993a; Jenne, Saideman and Lowe, 2007), the explanations offered for the variation of elite claims do not unpack the nature of the historical forces and do not explore in depth the role of path dependent legacies and factors. Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013b) account for the role of historical constraints in the titular majority's reaction to demands for territorial autonomy in Romania and Slovakia. This provides a guiding insight into the role that history can play in constraining – or indeed enabling – minority claims to autonomy. If an ethnic minority has previously had autonomy or has claimed it frequently using certain rhetoric or autonomy conceptions, such claims and models can influence the way claims are made and harnessed in the post-EU accession era. Moreover, engaging with the material and data sources in the original language (in this case, Hungarian) provides better contextualisation of how autonomy is claimed and how claims evolve over time.

2.5 Conclusion

What emerges in the discussion above is that "autonomy" as a concept has been broken down into two main subcomponents: territorial autonomy and non-territorial

autonomy. Within the latter category, some disagreements arise in terms of the exact relationship and overlap between ideas of personal autonomy and cultural autonomy. Autonomy is seen as separate from other concepts such as decentralisation, federalism and self-government, with the exact hierarchical relationship between the self-government and autonomy contested. These conceptions of autonomy will form a useful starting point to compare how minority elites themselves claim autonomy, which conceptions resonate and which are claimed over time.

The prescriptive and explanatory literatures on autonomy have viewed autonomy through the lens of ethnic conflict. However, this does not accurately represent the current state of affairs in Romania and Slovakia. Therefore, while taking the useful insights gleaned from the quadratic nexus model, the spectrum of minority claims, the constraining factors of coalition belonging and intra-group competition as potentially impacting the different trajectories of autonomy claiming in Romania and Slovakia, this project moves to de-securitise the study of autonomy claims. I engage with a range of elite actors, incorporate the local level perspective, enlarge the arenas that can be claimed to and importantly, incorporate the role of history in accounting for variations in autonomy claiming.

3 Methodology

Political ideas are seldom invented: they evolve (Heater, 1994, p. 1)

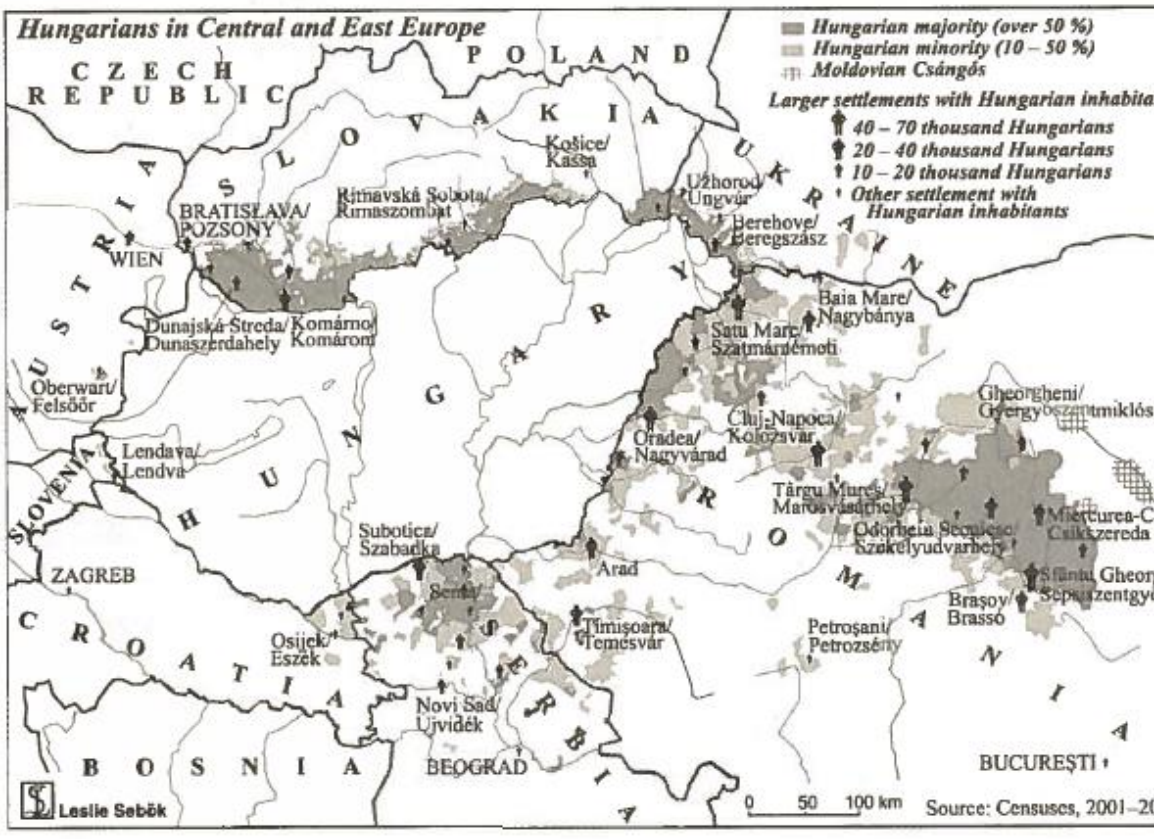
Of the many methods one could choose to study autonomy claims, I embark on a comparative case study, using qualitative techniques, focusing on Hungarian-speaking minority elites. There are other ways to design a study of autonomy claims, many of which have been quantitative in the past, using databases such as *Minorities at Risk* (for example, Jenne et al., 2007). The difficulty with quantitative studies is the trade-off between generalisation and case-specific insights. My goal in this research project is to unpack the "normalised" dynamics of autonomy claim-making in detail and, consequently, to be immersed in the two cases to form detailed knowledge and understanding of the changing claims to autonomy in the native language of the elites making the claims. The types of data collected – elite interviews, policy documents and newspaper archives – provide the depth and detail needed to answer my research questions. Through a combination of qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis, I analyse the data to see how autonomy is claimed over time, how different arenas are used in the claiming of autonomy and, consequently, build a picture of what accounts for the different trajectories of autonomy claiming between the Romania and Slovakia.

3.1 Case Selection

Treading the path of other scholars (Csergő, 2007; Jenne, 2007; Stroschein, 2012; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b; Székely, 2014), I compare the ethnic Hungarians of Romania and Slovakia. They are an attractive comparison for several reasons. One aspect is their similar relative size to the majority population, as well as their territorial concentration. In Slovakia, Hungarians number approximately 458,000 or 8.5 per cent of the population and constitute the largest minority. In Romania they number approximately 1.23 million, or 6.1

per cent of the population and similarly are the largest national minority (Government of Slovak Republic 2014, Table 1; Government of Romania 2016:16). Moreover, the Hungarians are territorially concentrated within the countries. In Slovakia, Hungarians live near the southern border with Hungary and in Romania, Hungarians live in the region of Transylvania. Within Transylvania, they are concentrated in the northwest and in the Szeklerland, in the centre of the country (see Figure 3), and have a long history of living in the territory. Another similarly is that both Transylvania and southern Slovakia were part of the Austro-Hungarian empire before being ceded to their current owners after World War I. The two regions were also under communist rule after World War II.

Figure 3 Map of Ethnic Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia



Source: Csergő 2007, p.xvi

In addition to the above, in the post-communist period, Romania and Slovakia countries have similar international contexts. Romania and Slovakia are exposed to the kin-state activism of Hungary, which has been protective and vocal about the treatment of its

co-ethnics in both countries (Saideman and Ayres, 2008). Furthermore, the pressures of accession to the European Union and meeting the requirements of the *acquis communautaire* were faced by both countries, resulting in significant political and economic reforms. Slovakia joined the EU in 2004 and Romania in 2007 (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, p. 765). In terms of domestic politics and the party system, ethnic cleavages are institutionalised in both countries and autonomy claims have been at the centre of many debates (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b, p. 431; Székely, 2014, p. 92). The Hungarian minorities in these countries are one of the most well-organised minority groups in all of Europe, fielding electoral candidates and also being included in the government executives. In Romania, following the transition from communism and until today, the major Hungarian party is the Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség (RMDSZ) – the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania. In Slovakia, following the transition from communism there were several parties which later integrated into Magyar Koalíció Pártja (MKP)[25] – the Party of the Hungarian Coalition – in 1998. Following an inner party split in 2009, Most–Híd (Bridge) emerged as an inter-ethnic party, but which still relies on the votes of Hungarians and is still considered a Hungarian party (Székely, 2014). Economically speaking, while socio-economic cleavages between the majority and minority do exist in both countries, they are not found to carry enough explanatory weight for contentious minority issues. This is demonstrated by Stroschein (2012) where debates arose around the use of the minority language or governmental powers, rather than material concerns.

There are also differences between the two countries. During communism, the Hungarians in Romania had a short stint of territorial autonomy in the form of the Hungarian Autonomous Region from 1952-1960 (Bottoni, 2003), whilst in Czechoslovakia attention was less on the Hungarians than on the needs of the Slovak minority within the

[25] The party renamed itself in 2012 to *Magyar Közösség Pártja (MKP),* Party of the Hungarian Community.

Czechoslovak federation (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, p. 765). In addition, although in both countries Hungarians are well-organised politically, in Slovakia there have been more parties and configurations than in Romania. Romania has been dominated by RMDSZ, whilst several parties emerge after the fall of communism in Slovakia, later to merge into MKP in 1998. MKP is eclipsed by Most-Híd in the 2010 parliamentary elections. Today, there is a stable bi-party split in Slovakia compared to RMDSZ's hegemony and presence of several small splinter actors in Romania. Most importantly, the countries differ in their claims for autonomy post-EU accession: claims for territorial autonomy have re-emerged in Romania partly due to the work of splinter organisations. Now all political actors have their own plan for autonomy. In contrast, in Slovakia Most-Híd has not pursued a strong autonomy agenda and MKP has unsuccessfully ventured to put autonomy back on the table. Comparing the dynamics behind diverging autonomy claims is the focus of this study.

In terms of other cases which could have been chosen, as the map above also shows, there are Hungarians living in the Ukraine as well as Serbia. These minority communities were not chosen for the comparative study for three main reasons. First, the Hungarian populations in Serbia and the Ukraine constitute a smaller proportion of population – 3.5 % and 0.3% , respectively – than the Hungarian communities in Romania and Slovakia (Gyurgyík, 2011, p. 469; Székely, 2014, p. 164). Second, voting along ethnic lines is less common in Serbia than in Slovakia and Romania, and furthermore Ukraine and Serbia do not share the same EU-accession experience as Romania and Slovakia (Ferenc and Toth, 2014; Korhecz, 2014; Székely, 2014, p. 164).

3.2 Scope Conditions

The project focuses on autonomy claims from the post-EU accession period for two reasons. First, much has been written already of minority politics from the fall of communism, with many authors focusing on the 1990s and early 2000s, and the accession

period (Elster, Offe and Preuss, 1998; Schöpflin, 2002; Vermeersch, 2003; Vachudova, 2005; Brubaker, 2006; Csergő, 2007; Jenne, 2007; Stroschein, 2012). This time period is significant (and indeed will still form part of the contextual analysis), but the added value that archival research would bring is relatively minimal. Second, post-accession comparative research stops around 2011-2013 (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, 2013b; Székely, 2014). Honing in on the more recent time period and its dynamics would add to the body of research about the region. Therefore, data such as policy manifestos and newspaper archives focus on the post EU accession era (2004 for Slovakia and 2007 for Romania) until 2018.

For analysis of the local level perspective via newspaper archives, I decided to privilege the local level in Slovakia. This is because of the slow pace of claims at the national level in Slovakia – compared to Romania – and also partly due to time constraints of the DPhil. With the immensity of data, I chose two time periods. The first time period is 2009-2011 which covers the party-split that occurred within MKP, resulting in the emergence of Most-Híd in 2009. Moreover, 2010 is the year of a critical national election where MKP loses its seats in Parliament to Most-Híd. This is an "earthquake" in minority politics and is a crisis moment. MKP has yet to recover electorally on the national level from the split and enter into parliament. The second time period, 2015-2017, is chosen as the most recent time period. It sees the emergence of more concrete political programmes of Most-Híd and also has the national election in 2016. Moreover, other factors are controlled. Slovakia is already in the EU and the Fidesz government is in power in Hungary throughout. With the different events of these time periods – party splits, elections, time in coalition government – I can analyse how national and local claims are influenced by each other and better understand the dynamics behind the changing nature of the claims.

The *claim* – as discussed in the Introduction Section 1.3 and elaborated below in Section 3.4.1– is the unit of analysis in this study. I examine the claims to autonomy – found in various sources such as policy documents and newspaper archives – and then trace back the claim to the claimant. In this sense, I do not restrict myself to the leaders of ethnic parties and their main positions, but rather encompass the claims put forward by all ethnic minority elites including leaders of civil society organisations, alternative voices *within* parties and experts. The inclusion of these different elite actors allows for a better account of intra-group dynamics, such as interactions between civil society actors and political parties as well as between actors within the same political party.

3.3 Data Selection and Data Collection

Given the comparative nature of the study and the need for data to provide in-depth, detailed information of how and why autonomy claims change over time, the sources for data collection are threefold: elite interviews, policy documents (election manifestos, autonomy proposals, party statements, etc.) and newspaper archives. Some sources were collected through desk research, but most were through fieldwork. Most of the material collected and analysed is in Hungarian. CUREC permission (Central University Research Ethics Committee) was applied for and granted. The main ethical issues identified revolved around informed consent for interviews, recording the interview and quote permission. This was addressed through an email invitation letter which detailed my study and how data from the interview would be used. When I interviewed the elites, I then explicitly asked if I could record and quote them. Regarding safety, given that Hungarian minority elites were already in the public sphere advocating autonomy, interviewing them was not deemed dangerous.

Data collection occurred over different trips in 2017-2018. From January to August 2017, I was Visiting Researcher at the Central European University's (CEU) Nationalism Program in Budapest, Hungary during which I travelled to Slovakia and Romania for elite

interviews and pursued two archival trips to Komárom and Rimaszombat in Slovakia. I returned to Komárom in December 2017, and spent three more weeks in Romania in September 2018 at the heart of the autonomy movement in the Szeklerland and also in the capital of Bucharest.

3.3.1 Elite Interviews

Elite interviews provide key insights into the Hungarian perspective on autonomy claiming. I glean how elites think of autonomy, what they view as key moments in autonomy claiming, their relationship with other actors, the strategies they pursue in claim-making, and more. To interview elites, I first compiled a list of possible elites to contact, including members of political parties at the national and local level, civil society activists, lawyers, and experts (such as researchers and academics). I employed the snowball method of identifying interviewees[26] which held the benefit of enabling access to those who were difficult to contact as well as taking advantage of local knowledge about relevant actors.

I used a semi-structured interview format (Peabody *et al.*, 1990) which was beneficial because it allowed for an element of flexibility in the interview whilst also providing me with comparability across answers to questions – particularly the first one or two questions which I asked every participant. Questions were sometimes added/removed given the context and the person being interviewed. Given the open nature of the interview, not all questions were always answered, but other discussion points addressed instead. I presented the research design and interview questions to the Conflict & Security Working Group at the CEU in June 2017, honed the questions slightly and then conducted the interviews. The baseline interview questions are in Appendix A.

[26] Snowballing, simply explained by Davies (2001, p. 76) is "asking each interviewee to recommend one or more other potential contacts." Many thanks go to Dr. János Fiala-Butora and Dr. István Gergő Székely who were immensely helpful.

I interviewed 11 Slovak-Hungarian elites and 22 Romanian-Hungarian elites (full list is in Appendix B) covering a range of political parties, seniority positions, local and national level elites, civil society activists and experts. These interviews were deliberately chosen to not just focus on the level of national political party leaders, but also to include a broader range of actors to account for internal party disagreements, different viewpoints and any interaction between actors from civil society and the local and national levels. As such, this sample reached saturation and provides a fair representation of the different viewpoints within each country in terms of the voices involved in the debate. Whilst I could have conducted more interviews, the amount of extra and novel information I would have gleaned would have been minimal.

3.3.2 Policy Documents and Statements

Claims can occur in different materials such as election manifestos, autonomy plans, party statements or other similar documents. These documents provide evidence for how autonomy claiming occurs over time and can also corroborate information from elite interviews. I can trace what the different political actors are demanding, how autonomy claims are framed, what historical events are mentioned, the opportunity structures actors appealed to and who actors name as their allies. Moreover, the absence or presence of autonomy claims in policy documents can also illustrate how and when autonomy claiming changes over time.

These documents were found either on political party or research websites, through email exchanges with staff or representatives of political organisations, in books or hard copies collected in the archives or visits to political party headquarters. The elite interviews helped also to focus on the relevant documents and enabled access to some election manifestos and reports not available online in English or Hungarian. For Slovakia, I looked at material from MKP (1998-2016), Most-Híd (2009-2016), and other policy statements and

of actors such as MKDSZ[27], the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia and János Bósza. For Romania, I included material from RMDSZ, EMNP[28], MPP, EMNT[29], SZNT, expert written autonomy plans, as well as material from CEMO (Civil Engagement Movement). Most of the materials were in Hungarian.

3.3.3 Newspaper Archives

I focused on the Slovak local level for three reasons: autonomy claiming at the national level in Slovakia has been relatively slow as well as unsuccessful, national level analysis in Romania already provided a wealth of data and insights and finally, the practical time-constraint of the DPhil meant I could not also analyse the Romanian local data. The usage of data from two Slovak-Hungarian newspapers allow for within-case analysis to construct a fuller picture of the claim-making strategies for autonomy in Slovakia. To be clear, I am not comparing the two towns with each other (which would be difficult given the intermittent data at times as well as different yearly frequency of editions) but rather use both newspapers as a means to construct a fuller picture of the way autonomy claiming is played out in Slovakia.

For the newspaper archives, to better avoid false negatives[30] and given that I am a Hungarian speaker, I chose two newspaper archives. There were not many newspaper archives to choose from, given the limited size of the minority population. Following Stroschein (2012), I chose one newspaper in a city with a Hungarian majority, as well as a newspaper in a city with a Hungarian minority. The papers were the main news source in the town similar to broadsheets and distinct from local tabloids. This was *Komáromi Lapok* for the city of Komárom, where Hungarians form the majority. *Komáromi Lapok* is a

[27] MKDSZ is *Magyar Keresztény Demokrata Szövetség* (Hungarian Christian Democrat Alliance).
[28] *Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt* (EMNP) – Hungarian People's Party of Translvania.
[29] *Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács* (EMNT) – Transylvanian Hungarian National Council. A table of abbreviations is provided on p.xi.
[30] The danger of analysing news in a foreign country through English-only media is that one misses events that are covered in non-English media of the local language (Stroschein, 2012, p. 254).

biweekly local newspaper. For a city with a Hungarian minority, the newspaper from Rimaszombat *Gömöri Hírlap* was chosen. *Gömöri Hírlap* is a weekly newspaper, although it was out of print from 2013-2015 (except for 3 issues in 2015). I analysed the years of 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (as Section 3.2 discusses).

The two towns of Komárom and Rimaszombat have almost perfectly reversed population concentrations of Hungarians and Slovaks. Komárom is comprised of 56% ethnic Hungarians and 33% ethnic Slovaks; Rimaszombat is comprised of 31% and 54% of Hungarians and Slovaks, respectively (Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, 2017). Both newspapers have a version which appear in Hungarian and a version in Slovak for each edition. Table 1 below shows the frequency of publication during the years of analysis and information on missing editions. Whilst I cannot substitute other papers for the missing weeks, I simply acknowledge and take it into consideration in my analyses (Chapter 8 and 9).

Table 1 Newspaper Coverage: Years and Frequency of Data Collection

Newspaper	Year	Frequency	Number of Editions	Format	Missing Data
Gömöri Hírlap	2009	Weekly	51	PDF	8 editions
	2010	Weekly	51	PDF	1 edition
	2011	Weekly	51	PDF	2 editions
	2015	Monthly (from October)	3	PDF	0
	2016	Biweekly	24	PDF	0
	2017	Biweekly	17	PDF	0
Komáromi Lapok	2009	Biweekly	19	PDF	0
	2010	Biweekly	19	PDF	0
	2011	Biweekly	18	PDF	0
	2015	Biweekly	20	PDF	0
	2016	Biweekly	22	PDF	0
	2017	Biweekly	17	PDF	0

To summarise, examination of local level newspaper archive data for the post-EU accession period in Slovakia was split into two three-year time periods: 2009-2011 and 2015-2017. These time periods were chosen based on national-level main events (as summarised in Section 3.2) as well as the availability of data. This does mean that some years are not analysed such as the years 2012-2014 and 2004-2008, leading to gaps in the local archival analysis. Part of this is due to lack of data (i.e. *Gömöri Hírlap* was out of print from 2013-2014) and partly due to too much data to analyse for the other years and the length of time it takes to code and analyse qualitative data. Trade-offs between data availability and data analysis are common in qualitative analyses. The best way to address gaps is to be transparent about the characteristics of data, of its shortcomings, and where possible, to bring

in other sources of data (such as political statements, manifestos, etc) to complement the gaps in the study.

3.4 Data Analysis: Qualitative Content Analysis using NVivo

The method for data analysis used in this thesis bridges the divide between the approaches of discourse analysis and content analysis.[31] Scholars debate whether the two approaches are compatible and complementary or if they must be thought of as two completely separate approaches. Generally speaking, discourse and content analysis differ in their ontologies and epistemologies. Discourse analysis sees reality as intersubjective, rather than as objective as those who follow content analysis. Discourse analysis tends to look at the importance of context, the social construction of meaning and of power relations between actors. Content analysis is more often associated – though not necessarily – with a positivist view of knowledge and with the scientific method (Herrera and Braumoeller, 2004). It traditionally was associated with quantitative analyses and word-counting (Schreier, 2012, pp. 10–17). It captures reality at a fixed point in time, whereas discourse analysis tends to focus on how meaning changes over time. Some argue that the two methods are incomparable (Laffey and Weldes, 2004) while others that they are complementary (Hardy, Harley and Phillips, 2004).

The approach taken in this study is that the two methods are not exclusive but rather have a certain element in common. I take reality as objective which can be studied scientifically – more in line with content analysis (though even this is up for debate (Herrera and Braumoeller, 2004, p. 17). I do not use, however, a quantitative approach but rather a qualitative one which can better take into account the context and how meaning changes over time. Similar to a discourse analytic approach, in this thesis I find that context –

[31] The 2004 "Symposium: Discourse and Content Analysis" in *Qualitative Methods* provides an extensive overview of the debate between different scholars about the comparability of the two approaches.

particularly history which constrains actors and affects how they make their claims – matters and influences claiming. To uncover *how* this happens, I use qualitative content analysis for my interview transcripts and newspaper archives.

NVivo was chosen as the qualitative software programme to organise and analyse the data. Methodologically, the description found in Schreier (2012) on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA)[32] formed the basis of my coding and approach. QCA is a method used to "describe qualitative data in a systematic way by assigning successful parts of your material to the categories of your coding frame" (p. 1). It is useful for material which requires a certain element of interpretation of meaning. As a method, it is *systematic*, *flexible* and focuses on *reducing* data.

In terms of being systematic, it examines all data in the same sequence of steps and focuses on consistency of coding and interpretation. In this sense, it addresses issues of reliability. Regarding flexibility, the coding frame is designed to fit the needs of the data and of the researcher. It focuses on validity by ensuring that the categories capture what they mean to capture. Finally, QCA is used to *reduce* and organise data, rather than to open up the data. It does this by creating a coding frame which allows the researcher to take the information related to the research question and to create categories at a higher level of abstraction to compare across sources (pp. 5–9). Other types of qualitative analysis could have been chosen such as thematic analysis, conversation analysis or narrative analysis. Thematic analysis is quite similar to QCA, conversation analysis focuses more on intonations, word order, etc. which is not the focus of my analysis. Finally, I am not analysing a particular event and different elite's reconstruction of the event, which makes narrative analysis not applicable to my project.

[32] Social scientists are never short of abbreviations. Please note QCA used here is not to be confused with another type of QCA, Qualitative Comparative Analysis.

The most important element of QCA is a well-developed coding frame, which is also one of the most challenging elements to do well. In QCA, there is no "right" way to reduce the data; there can be different ways to reduce and interpret the same data and this can be equally valid. The researcher decides on the categories informed by the research question. What is important is that once the coding of the meanings of categories is defined, another person of a similar socio-economic background should be able to code the same way (Schreier, 2012, pp. 19–21). Arriving at the coding frame can be done through inductive data-driven coding – often used when the goal is to describe the data – or through deductive concept-driven coding when the goal is hypothesis testing. Both approaches can also be used together and indeed most often are (pp. 84–94).

3.4.1 Applying QCA to Elite Interviews and Archives

I adopted a combined inductive-deductive approach, or an iterative approach. From my research question and analysis of the literature, I already had an idea of the different categories to include (such as role of the kin-state, intra-group competition, influence of the European Union, etc). At the same time, given the semi-structured nature of my interviews and the demonstrated importance of flexibility with the interview questions, a data-driven (inductive) approach was also required and beneficial to best capture the richness of my data. For example, themes which emerged included the threat of demographic change as well as the changing usage of the word "autonomy" in autonomy claims and the negative historical references the word "autonomy" conjures up in the case of Slovakia. These were not found in my original literature review. A flexible approach allowed me to capture these new categories.

Once I gathered, cleaned and transcribed the interview and archival data, I piloted my coding frame and adjusted categories accordingly. For example, I adjusted certain categories and added in more evaluative sub-categories such as "positive", "negative", etc.

I also changed the archival coding frame categories to better capture funding from the EU and kin-state as well as visits by kin-state officials.

The final coding frames aim for both validity and reliability. To achieve validity, my coding frame captures the material and meaning that it was intended to capture: claims to autonomy and different explanatory variables (stemming from Chapter 2 Sections 2.3 and 2.4). In terms of reliability, the important question to consider is the presence of internal reliability and consistency through stability of coding across time (if double coding at two different points in time by one coder) or intersubjectivity (if double coding by multiple coders) (Schreier, 2012, pp. 166–190). In my case, I focused on stability in coding across time. I achieved this by coding first manually and then several days later coding in NVivo. This allowed me to check the consistency of my coding decisions.

Regarding the elite interview coding scheme, the first three categories (meaning of autonomy, societal issues and historical references) mainly arose through induction. My interviewees' answers and repeated allusions to these issues brought the significance of these factors to my attention. The confusion surrounding the meaning of autonomy and the different historical connotations it brought up were also surprising (discussed in Chapter 5). The coding frame also includes the "key moments" in the quest for autonomy as mentioned by the interviewees, the sub-content of which is unpacked in other coding categories. After the categories of "autonomy claims" and "policy reform areas" (the latter referring to policy provisions in place or contextual information while the former refers to claims to autonomy across a range of areas), I included categories which look at domestic politics, the kin-state, and the role of international institutions (the EU in particular) following the factors identified in the literature review (Sections 2.2, 2.3, 2.4). The final two categories include the interviewees' perceptions of the challenges facing the Hungarian community's attainment

of autonomy as well as any successful moments identified in this quest. Appendix C has the coding frames for the interviews and Appendix D has a sample of a coded transcript.

For my archives, before applying the coding scheme I had to identify the different articles in the newspapers to code. Articles which were clearly unrelated – such as sports sections – were easy to discard. Articles touching upon local government meetings, political meetings and visits, or events linked to education, culture, language, economic development etc. were identified as relevant. One rule of thumb is to save coding material that one is unsure of and return to it afterward to make a decision. This was the case for articles relating to the environment (which could potentially link up to autonomy claims) but were found not to be relevant. On the other hand, articles linked to cultural and educational building renovations did indeed become the subject of claims. Once the articles were identified I then proceeded to code the content according the coding frame.

For the archival coding scheme, similar to the interviews, an inductive-deductive method was used where, for example, sub-categories such as "visits" (2.2) and "demographic challenges" (3.1) emerged as I looked at the data because I realised claims also emerged in these contexts. Looking at the coding frame (Appendix F), the second main category of "Events" covers a wide-range of occasions of both political (elections, visits, meetings) and cultural nature (national commemorations, funerals). The categories of "Interviews-Statements-Speeches" of domestic, kin-state, and international actors (categories 5-7) incorporate useful information to capture how these actors refer to autonomy and its different policy areas and taps into any controversies of the time. In practice, hardly any material was coded to the kin-state (06) and international actor (07) categories; most material was from domestic actors and fell under category 05. The category "08. References/Evaluations" captures dynamics between actors and their cooperation or

hostility towards each other. In particular, it also helped track the amount of times the EU and kin-state acted as financial enablers.

The crux of the analysis is found in category 5.4 which breaks down claims to autonomy by domestic actors. Following the logic emerging from interviews and policy document analysis, "autonomy" was broken down to look at policy areas in which increased decision-making powers and control over resources might be claimed: such as culture, education, language usage, administration, regional development – including economic development and infrastructure. The exact definitions of each policy area category is provided in Appendix E.

As mentioned in the Chapter 1, I define a *claim* by a minority elite as a need for something (i.e. "we need better control over educational institutions"), a lack of something ("there is not enough funding for cultural institutions), a demand for something ("we want the establishment of the Szeklerland region"), an application for something ("we applied for funding to Hungary for education materials"), or a project goal that is sought to be achieved ("to increase funding for minority-language educational materials"). When coding, I created four sub-category areas for a claim: "claim"; "claim finance/money" (demand or application for money); "claim success" (result); and "claim unsuccessful" (result). For example, if a project for minority education wins approval, then it would go under "claim successful". The main use of the sub-divisions was to trace the importance of funding. Otherwise, the top-level "claim" category is the main category referenced in the different analyses in Chapters 8 and 9. Regarding the counting of claims, several "claims" can be related to the same topic. For example, claims for the construction of the Elisabeth bridge in Komárom are made on several occasions and coded separately. In this way, I can trace how often actors claimed linked to a particular topic.

Once the archival coding was completed, I then moved to construct an additional dataset of claims for the local level using the archival data. The unit of analysis is the claim (see Methodological Appendix H). Using the archival data, I gleaned off information linked to the type of actor, their level (local, national, etc), political party affiliation, ethnicity, and the level claimed to (local, national, European, etc). Regarding the latter, claims can target a particular actor – such as the national government or a Ministry, but also the kin-state or European Union. I also created a "general" category which was when the actor was making a claim but not explicitly targeting anyone (or at least this is how the newspaper article represented it). I decided, methodologically, to not attribute a claiming level and classify the claim as to the "general" level rather than make an assumption of the claiming level and have false positives.[33] In total, there were 271 claims from Rimaszombat over the years studied and 203 claims in Komárom.

3.5 Reflections on Methodological Choices

To answer my research questions on autonomy claim-making, a comparative case-study with data collected through elite interviews, policy documents and newspaper archives provides the in-depth detailed information needed to be able to answer the research question. Moreover, my Hungarian language skills allow me to better trace and analyse how autonomy claiming occurs and changes over time and make the best use of the data. Qualitative content analysis enables me to code the different claims for autonomy to unpack *how* claims happened, whilst fitting into a broader discourse analytic framework accounting for changes of meaning over time and how context – such as intra-group competition or certain historical constraints – influences claiming. Importantly, this research design focuses on the view of Hungarian minority elites and seeks to unpack this in great depth. It does not focus on the

[33] For example, an article can mention that MKP argues that Hungarians need more investment to keep young people in the region. This statement does not specify who MKP is targeting but it is still placing a demand.

titular majorities explicitly (i.e. ethnic Slovaks or ethnic Romanians) and their views on autonomy. My Hungarian focus is a necessary element in explaining the changing nature of claims and others can elaborate the titular views to further complement this research.

Linked to my Hungarian language skills, my personal background – being American-Hungarian and pursuing a doctorate in Oxford – impacted exchanges positively. Elites wanted the opportunity to explain their cause to someone from the "West". The fact that I was an "outsider" who knew the language helped their willingness to be open and explain things – although as my Slovak snowball assured me, regardless of the language of the interview I will be viewed as a Westerner. If there was technical terminology or historical references I was unfamiliar with, as an "outsider" interviewees went into more detail and explained basic political relationships which proved useful in my analysis. Importantly, interviews in the native language allowed me to pick up nuances and particularly the word-play strategy (discussed in Chapter 5).

That said, there are challenges and limitations to my data collection and data analysis. One significant limitation in selecting time periods to study with local newspaper archives is that pre-selection of the years to analyse is informed by background reading of the major *national* events. However, I am choosing to collect data at the local level. While major national events will be covered, there is no way of knowing the significant local events happening before actually going to collect the data. Therefore, I may admittedly be overlooking significant events at the local level, but there is no way of knowing this without analysing all the years of the newspaper archives in a fine-grained analysis. This, however, is not practical given time and financial constraints. The approach I took was to focus in on two three-year time spans – as explained in Section 3.3.3 – which I expect will show interesting events. There is still a considerable amount of data to analyse with just these time periods. Missing data across the chosen years is not too frequent, as Table 1 shows above.

One practical hurdle in data collection was that unfortunately most PDFs for *Gömöri Hírlap* were captured as images. With images (even in PDF format), NVivo cannot do text highlights but only image highlights. For the purpose of quick analysis this slows things down considerably, but at least the relevant region on the page can nevertheless be captured. Unfortunately OCR (Optical Character Recognition) technology did not recognise Hungarian well enough for me to shift to using it for my captured images.

Developing a coding frame for such a large quantity of data is bound to have shortcomings. Other researchers may have come up with different categories, which is not unusual in qualitative research. However, for each stage I have provided justifications for the creation of categories and definitions of inclusion and exclusion which would enable other research to replicate my own coding decisions. One challenge encountered in coding was that some categories do overlap – such as educational and linguistic autonomy. In this case, I created a clear rule in terms of where such data would be coded. For example, if there was a claim linked to education in the mother tongue, which overlaps with both education and linguistic autonomy, I created the rule to code education in the mother tongue under education. These rules help to provide for a consistency in coding and ensure reliability. The table in Appendix E provides definitions next to the categories.

This chapter outlined the steps taken in case selection and data selection, collection and analysis. The next chapter lays the groundwork for a better understanding of the historical and political context of the Hungarian minorities in Romania and Slovakia in their claiming of autonomy before then moving on to empirical analysis of autonomy claims by elites.

4 Contextualising the Autonomy Claims of the Hungarians in Romania and Slovakia

> *"…it (autonomy) provides an acceptable alternative answer to the question of 'what are we doing in this country'?"* (Interview I. Székely, 2017)

The questions surrounding the treatment and integration of the Hungarian minorities in Central and Eastern Europe originate from the border revisions following World War I in the 1920 Treaty of Trianon. The Treaty reduced the territory of Hungary – or the Kingdom of Hungary as it was known then – by two-thirds and resulted in 3.5 million ethnic Hungarians finding themselves in a new state. Importantly, for the titular majority – the Romanians and Slovaks – WWI was also significant in their own history of state-building. Romania was unified by the joining of Transylvania and the Slovaks joined Czechoslovakia (only to later declare their independence from it in 1939 and regain it again in 1993).

This chapter examines autonomy claim-making from the early post-communist era until 2006 in Slovakia and 2007 in Romania. These cut-off years are chosen because in 2006, Slovakia holds its first national election post EU-accession and 2007 is also the year Romania joins the European Union. The post-communist discussion has warranted much debate amongst different scholars of the region and ethnic politics (Eplényi, 2006; Csergő, 2007; Jenne, 2007; Stroschein, 2012; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b; Székely, 2014) The purpose of this chapter is to provide the context for the discussion of post-accession claims analysed in Chapters 5-9.

In addition to demographic, historical and political background on the Hungarian population, this chapter highlights the historical embeddedness of the notion of autonomy in each country. In Slovakia, history constrains Hungarian elites in their claiming because of the Slovaks' own experiment with autonomy in the interwar years whilst in Romania the

experience of autonomy for the Hungarians is rooted in their own past and enables claims. These historical moments of autonomy are still referred to by the Hungarian minority elites in my interviews and are also referenced in autonomy documents.

What emerges in the discussion of autonomy claims in Romania is that, unlike Slovakia, the explicit claiming of autonomy is alive and well in the pre-EU accession period. There are a plethora of autonomy plans developed, with a handful claimed in Parliament. This is strikingly different to the absence of claiming of autonomy plans in Parliament in Slovakia. At the same time, Hungarian political parties in both countries are constrained by coalition belonging which limits the explicit claiming of autonomy. Both MKP and RMDSZ respond by a creative policy game to achieve *de facto* autonomy, relying on policy area reforms and a word-play tactic. At the same time, there is a clearer and narrower word-play tactic in Slovakia which claims "self-governance" instead of "autonomy" mainly due to the negative historical connotation of the term "autonomy" to Slovak ears. With no strong claims whilst in coalition, Hungarian detractors emerge in Romania making clear claims to territorial autonomy while disaffection amongst elites in Slovakia will appear later in 2009 (Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3). In terms of alternative arenas and actors, neither the kin-state nor the EU are used frequently as arenas to claim to; however the EU does exert some pressure on domestic governments to push forward some favourable reforms, such as the Komárom University in Slovakia.

4.1 The Hungarians of Romania

4.1.1 Demographic Characteristics and Socio-Economic Challenges

The ethnic Hungarian population, as of the 2011 census, numbers more than 1.23 million or approximately 6.1 per cent of the total population (Government of Romania, 2016,

p. 16).[34] Their size has been on the decline, estimated at 1.43 million or 8.6% of the total population in the census of 1930 (Pearson, 1983, p. 163), and diminishing in terms of both the total percentage of the Romanian population and in absolute numbers. Table 2 provides figures of the population figures. Reasons for the decline include migration, a lower birth rate and assimilation (Gyurgyík, 2011, pp. 468–477).

Table 2 Diminishing Population Size of the Hungarians in Romania 1930-2012

Year	Size of Hungarian Minority	% of Total Population
1930	1,426,000	8.6
1956	1,588,000	9.0
1966	1,620,000	8.5
1977	1,714,000	7.9
1992	1,625,000	7.1
2002	1,434,000	6.6
2012	1,228,000	6.1

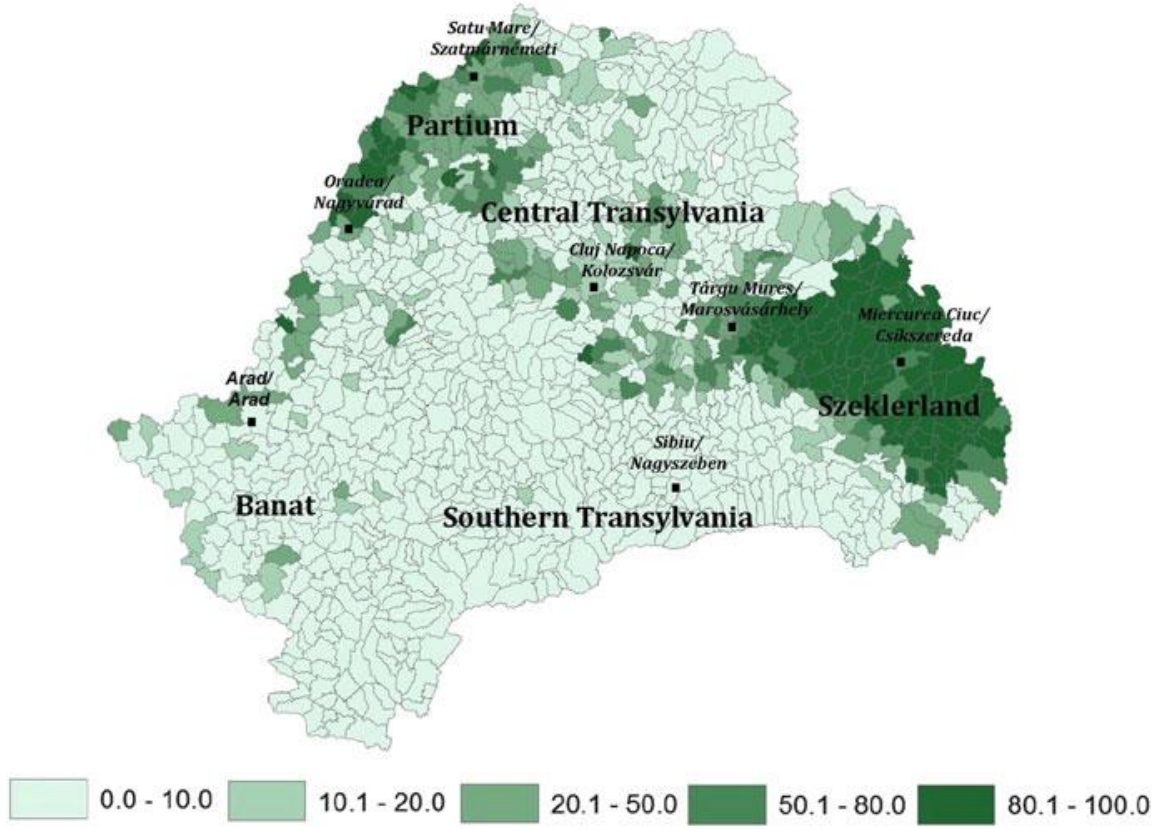
Source: (Pearson, 1983, p. 163; Constantin, 2010, p. 2; Government of Romania, 2016, p. 16)

The map in Figure 4 below illustrates the different territorial concentration of Hungarians in Romania from the 2011 (most recent) census. The Szeklerland – comprising Covasna, Harghita and parts of Mureș county – is comprised of approximately 609,000 Hungarians (about half of all the ethnic Hungarians). In terms of territorial concentration of Hungarians in these counties, they account for 85.2% in Harghita, 73.7% in Covasna and 38.1% in Mureș (Institutual National de Statistica, 2011, p. 5). In total they make up 56.8% of the total population in these three counties – an absolute majority (Csata and Marácz, 2018, p. 397). There is a smaller regional concentration of Hungarians in Partium, in the northwest. Other Hungarians live in more inter-ethnic environments, such as

[34] In the 2011 census, the difference between those who declared Hungarian as their mother tongue and Hungarian as their ethnicity is marginal. The former was slightly higher (1,259,914) than the latter (1,227,623). Reference here is made to Hungarian ethnicity (Csata and Marácz, 2018, p. 395). For a detailed table of ethnic Hungarians by the usage of the mother tongue see Horváth & Toró, 2018, p. 170.

Marosvásárhely (which was roughly 50-50 in 1990), or as sizeable (population-wise) minorities in bigger cities like Cluj-Napoca, living in mixed communities. Yet another type of situation is municipalities or districts having a Hungarian majority but surrounded by Romanian populations (Schöpflin, 2002, p. 412).

Figure 4 Map of Territorial Concentrations of Hungarians in Transylvanian Municipalities According to 2011 Census



Source: Csata & Marácz, 2018, p. 396

An important social cleavage in the Romanian context is that of religion. Ethnic Romanians are generally Orthodox Christians, whilst Hungarians are either Catholic or Protestant (Stroschein, 2012, p. 93). Religious institutions play an important role in organising the Hungarian minority and are seen as legitimate institutions even by non-religious Hungarians. In this sense, there is greater social distance between Hungarians and Romanians given that the religious cleavage reinforces the ethnic one (D. Kiss, 2018, pp. 293–99, 314).

Economically speaking, ethnic Hungarians also tend to fare worse than their Romanian counterparts in Transylvania. Hungarians in Transylvania earn 15% less than Romanians in Transylvania and also 8% less than the Romanian average, according to the 2011 census (Csata and Marácz, 2018, p. 412). Moreover, over the years between 2008-2013 fewer Hungarians found themselves in the upper income quintile in Romania, while they increased their percentage in the lower quintile to 31.9% in 2012 from 27.4% in 2008 (Csata and Marácz, 2018, p. 412). The EU Development Regions have not greatly benefited the Szekler counties either. Within their development region (Centre), Covasna and Harghita have had the lowest GDP increase from 2000-2017 (CNP.ro, 2019).[35]

4.1.2 Hungarian Autonomy in Romania

The autonomy claims of the Hungarians in Transylvania are grounded in a particular historical context. The history of Transylvania itself is one of multiculturalism where Saxons (Germans), Romanians and Hungarians lived together over centuries. Throughout the Middle Ages until the Great Compromise in 1867, Transylvania kept a separate identity and administrative status either as a voivodship, principality or grand principality. It then lost its autonomous status when it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Hungary in 1867 (Pearson, 1983, p. 58; Botoran, Dutu and Retegan, 1993, pp. 1–6). Throughout the time, the Szeklers – a sub-group of the Hungarian population territorially concentrated in the today's counties of Mureș, Covasna and Harghita – were known as being strong military men in charge of protecting the eastern territory from the Ottomans (Interview Novák, 2018; Stroschein, 2012, p. 77). Within the history of Transylvania, the Szeklerland had special status and importance, with its different administrative divisions and Székely "seats" alongside the special status given to Transylvania.

[35] Many thanks for Dr. István Gergő Székely's assistance with the data for this.

The 20th century brought three important moments which relate to provisions for autonomy. First was the 1918 *Alba Iulia Declaration* (Gyulafehérvári Nyilatkozat) which joined Transylvania to the Kingdom of Romania. The *Declaration* is contested in terms of its content and promises to the Hungarian minority. At issue is the content of Section III(1) and III(2) which read, respectively:

> *Section III(1) "Full national freedom for all the co-inhabiting peoples. Each people will study, manage and judge in its own language by individual of its own stock and each people will get the right to be represented in the law bodies and to govern the country in accordance with the number of its people;*[36]
>
> *Section III(2) Equal rights and full autonomous religious freedom for all the religions of the state."*(National Assembly, 1918).

In interviews with political elites and experts, the *Declaration* is mentioned by some as one which is still in effect. The *Declaration* granted autonomy and implementation was lacking (Interviews Bakk, 2017; I. Székely, 2017; Antal, 2018).

A second key moment regarding minority rights and setting the stage for provisions for autonomy was the *1945 Law on the Status of Minority Nationalities* or *Nationalities Statute*. The *Statute*'s purpose was primarily to demonstrate internationally at the Paris Peace conference that Romania was protecting its minorities and to ward off criticism from Hungary that Romania was mistreating its Hungarian minorities (Nagy, 2002, p. 297; Ionescu, 2012, pp. 44–45). The significance of the *Statute* is in its warmer embrace of collective rights for the ethnic minorities – seen in the nationality declaration list and provisions for education and language. Importantly, the *Statute* is technically still in effect, or at least has not been put out of effect (Ionescu, 2012, p. 47).

Third, the implementation of the Stalinist Hungarian Autonomous Region (HAR) from 1952-68 was linked to the Soviet model of autonomy – ethnic-based territorial

[36] Note, this is a poor translation of the fields of autonomy compared to the Hungarian translation. It refers to education ("study"; *oktatás*), administration ("manage"; *közigazgatás*) and judicial institutions ("judge"; *igazságszolgáltatás*) in one's own language (see Hungarian translation in Gyula, 2018, p. 170).

autonomy (Bottoni, 2003). Comprised of the Szekler inhabited counties of Covasna, Harghita and Mureș, provisions of the HAR included autonomy in the fields of education, culture, finances and public security (Prunel, 2011, pp. 284–285). Although it encompassed just one-third of the total ethnic Hungarian population in Romania, the territorial composition of the region was 77% Hungarian (Gyula, 2018, p. 187). Rather than managing the ethnic question, however, the HAR brought to the surface deeper tensions between the Hungarians and Romanians. As historian Bottoni (2003, p. 72) writes,

> *"In the context of Transylvania, an area extremely receptive to nationalism, the mere appearance in the official public discourse of the term "autonomy" brought about an unexpected wave of ethnic tension".*

A key issue was that the HAR never had the support of the Romanian titular population and was seen as a foreign imposition. It was linked to Soviet pressures and Bolshevik ideas of territorial autonomy; it was not organic and an outcome of domestic political processes. Generally, the Hungarian population was more supportive of the HAR's establishment as it was a way to focus on socio-economic development and guarantee cultural rights. Through universities and cultural institutions such as theatres and folk-dance groups, Hungarian identity was able to reproduce (Bottoni, 2003, pp. 83, 93). The HAR was short-lived and with the 1968 administrative reforms was split into three counties: Harghita, Covasna and Mureș (Gyula, 2018, p. 188). The subsequent policies pursued by Ceausescu were ones of centralisation and homogenisation of the population, including population transfers to Transylvania (Csergő, 2007, p. 129; Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016, p. 273).

These three key moments – particularly the first two – are later used by the Hungarian minority in their claims to autonomy to illustrate that such provisions were already given by the titular state. They also provide rhetorical and historical capital to draw upon. Moreover, they illustrate how the provision of any form of minority rights and autonomy in the 20th century was done through international pressure. Autonomy is not seen as an organic

solution to the problem of ethnic diversity but rather as an arrangement imposed through Soviet rule or needed to appease international powers.

4.1.3 Institutional and Political Landscape[37]

In Romania's constitution of 1991, later revised in 2003, Article 1 and 2 affirm the unitary and indivisible sovereignty of the state and that "no group nor individual may exercise sovereignty on its own behalf". Minorities are not recognised as a collective but as "persons belonging to a national minority" (Government of Romania, 1991, Art. 6.1). The Constitution does not name the national minorities in its territory, but does affirm their right to "preserve, develop and express" their identity. At the same time, measures taken by the state in this regard must be in line with the "equality and non-discrimination in relation to other Romanian citizens" (1991, Art. 6). Although the official language is Romanian, Article 128 does guarantee national minorities the right to speak their language in court. Article 32 contains the right to study in the vernacular and Article 120 the right to use the mother tongue in administration where their proportion is "significant". In addition to these provisions, Article 62 allows organisations of national minorities to be guaranteed a seat in parliament if they do not reach the necessary number of votes, in accordance with the electoral law.

In terms of European conventions, Romania signed and ratified the Council of Europe's *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)* in 1995 and it entered into force in 1998. It also signed the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML*) in 1995; however, its ratification was only in 2007 and entered into force in 2008. Generally speaking, the European conventions have provided positive incentives for the Romanians to provide minority rights provisions for the ethnic

[37] This is only a simplified background of the institutional provisions in Romania. More detail can be found in Constantin, 2010; Council of Europe, 2018; Gyula, 2018.

Hungarian minorities especially as they were tagged to accession to the European Union (Csata and Marácz, 2018, pp. 401–402).

Minorities in Romania do not organise themselves into minority parties, but as organisations of national minorities, and as such can participate in elections. Those minorities which are not able to elect a representative to Parliament by meeting the electoral threshold have the right to a Deputy seat as long as they receive a number of votes of at least 5% of the average number of valid votes needed for a Deputy seat (Government of Romania, 1999, p. 55, 2011b, p. 84). Regarding party (and minority organisation) registration and formation, an amendment was passed in 2004 making it more difficult for minority organisations to register, including a stricter geographical condition requiring three years of continuous activity (Székely, 2014, pp. 120–121).

The *Electoral Law* no. 208/2015, reverted the country back to proportional representation (after a stint of Mixed-Member Proportional system from 2008-2015 with a 10% electoral threshold), making it stricter for new minority organisations to run in elections – both nationally and locally. Alongside 'public utility' introduced in 2008, the minority organisation had to have a list of members from that minority numbering 15% of the total population of that minority, and if the 15% was greater than 20,000 then the organisation needed 20,000 members across 15 counties along with Bucharest, with at least 300 members per county. Such restrictions make it difficult for new organisations to form and compete (Council of Europe, 2018, p. 38). At the same time, the *Electoral Law* (2015) made it easier for parties to enter parliament: parties could receive a seat even if the 5% threshold was not met if it received 20% of votes in at least four counties (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 82).

Politically the ethnic Hungarians have been primarily represented by the *Romániai Magyar Demokrata Szövetség*, RMDSZ – the Democratic Alliance of Magyars in Romania

– which is the only main player on the Hungarian minority scene from 1990-2003. Its main platform is to support the minority rights of ethnic Hungarians, including provisions for cultural and territorial autonomy. RMDSZ is formed in January 1990 and holds a dual function which has since led to some understandable tensions. Since its inception, RMDSZ acted as a community organiser, promoting and affirming Hungarian identity through civil society initiatives. It is also a *de facto* political party recognised by Bucharest as the legitimate representative of the Hungarian minority. This dual function as both a social movement as well as a political party leads to different approaches to dealing with challenges: local grassroots organising with Hungarian intellectuals compared to political bargaining with Romanian counterparts. Moreover, as an umbrella structure, there is an acceptance of pluralism and different points of view which by the early 2000s becomes difficult to hold together (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 104–108).

RMDSZ enters coalition government in 1996 with the centre-right alliance of the Romanian Democratic Convention, in 2004 with the Justice and Truth Alliance, from 2009-2012 as a junior partner in a coalition with PDL and for a short period in 2014 with PSD. The 2008 electoral reform mentioned above did not have a negative effect on its success (Council of Europe, 2012, pp. 31–32). RMDSZ has consistently been represented in different ministries and cabinet posts, such as Deputy-Prime Minister in charge of Education, Culture and European Integration as well as Secretary of State for the Department for Inter-Ethnic Relations. The party has regularly won seats not only in the national parliament but also locally, as mayors, local counsellors and county counsellors (Government of Romania, 2016, p. 49). At the European level, RMDSZ has been the main contender for seats, belonging to the European Peoples Party Group. Table 3 below provides more information on election results.

Table 3 Electoral success of Hungarian minority parties in Romania 1990 - 2018

Election	Party	% Vote	Seats in Parliament (Deputy Chamber)	In Government (national level)
May 1990	RMDSZ	7.2	29	No
Sept 1992	RMDSZ	7.5	27	No
Nov 1996	RMDSZ	6.4	25	Yes – CDR and PD[1]
Nov 2000	RMDSZ	6.8	27	No– but supporting PSD minority government[2]
Nov 2004	RMDSZ	6.2	22	Yes – PNL-PD[3]
Nov 2007 *European*	RMDSZ – Group of the European People's Party László Tőkés - Independent	5.5 3.4	2 1	
Nov 2008	RMDSZ	6.2	22	Yes from 2009-2012 – PDL[4]
June 2009 *European*	RMDSZ – Group of the European People's Party, with Tőkés on their list	8.9	3	
Dec 2012	RMDSZ Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt	5.1 0.7	18 0	Yes from March – Dec 2014; PSD-PC-UNPR[5]
May 2014 *European*	RMDSZ – Group of the European People's Party	6.3	2	
Dec 2016	RMDSZ-MPP	6.2	21	No, but with support in Parliament for PSD governments until April 2019

1. Democratic Convention of Romania and Democratic Party; centre-right government.
2. Social Democrats; centre-left coalition
3. National-Liberation Party and Democratic Party, as Justice and Truth Alliance; centre-right coalition
4. Democratic Liberal Party-Social Democrats
5. Social Democrats-Conservative Party-National Union for the Progress of Romania; centre-left coalition

Source : (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a; IPU, 2016a; European Parliament, 2017; International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2017; Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 94–95; Székely, 2020).

There have been other political contenders since 2003 (to be discussed in Section 4.1.4.3). As of 2020, these alternative political parties have not stood the test of time as serious national competitors with RMDSZ. This includes the *Magyar Polgári Párt* (MPP) – Hungarian Civic Party – which ran on RMDSZ's electoral list in the 2016 elections and the

Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt (EMNP) – Hungarian People's Party of Translvania. Nationally, RMDSZ still holds its ground, with occasional successes of MPP and EMNP locally. There are also significant civil society organisations which push forward claims for increased linguistic rights such as CEMO – Civic Engagement Movement – and AGFI – Advocacy Group for Freedom of Identity – and for autonomy such as *the Székely Nemzeti Tanács* (SZNT) – Szekler National Council and the *Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács* (EMNT) – Transylvanian Hungarian National Council. Their different claims and strategies will be discussed in Section 4.1.4.3 and Chapter 6.

4.1.4 The Claiming of Autonomy 1990-2007: Plans, Actors and Policy Reforms

The transition from communism and the pre-accession period in Romania was a time of change and excitement. During the early period between 1990-1996, minority elites and intellectuals elaborate a range of plans and conceptions of autonomy.[38] With RMDSZ entering into coalition in 1996, however, it faces constraints on what it can openly claim: territorial autonomy is off the table. Consequently, the claiming of autonomy through a "creative policy game" begins, with a focus on policy reforms in administration especially, as well as education and language usage. However, this leads to disaffection within its own party and splinter organisations form in 2003 resulting in a re-emergence of stronger claims for territorial autonomy. Table 4 summarises the tabling of autonomy plans in Parliament from 1990-2007.

[38] Listed here: 1991, Szõcs Géza, *Nemzetiségi törvénytervezetcsomag*; 1993, Csapó József, *Memorandum a romániai magyar nemzeti közösség belsõ önrendelkezésérõl*; 1993, RMDSZ–SZKT, *Törvény a nemzeti kisebbségekrõl és autonóm közösségekrõl*; 1994, Szilágyi N. Sándor, *Törvény a nemzeti identitással kapcsolatos jogokról és a nemzeti közösségek méltányos és harmonikus együttélésérõl*; 1994, Csapó József, *Belsõ önrendelkezést kiteljesítõ autonómiák. (A sajátos státusú helyi önkormányzat statútuma; A romániai magyar nemzeti közösség személyi autonómiájának statútuma és A sajátos státusú helyi önkormányzatok regio- nális társulásának autonómia-statútuma.)*; 1995, Az RMDSZ ÜE Politikai Fõosztálya (Bodó Barna–Szász Alpár Zoltán–Bakk Miklós), *A romániai magyar nemzeti közösség személyi elvû autonómiájának statútuma*; 1995, Bakk Miklós, *Törvénytervezet a személyi elvû önkormányzatokról*; 1995, Csapó József, *Székelyföld autonómia-statútuma.* (Bakk, 2004, p. 59).

Table 4 Claims to Autonomy Submitted to Romanian Parliament by Hungarian Minority Actors 1990-2007

Year	Actor's Plan	Claim
1993	RMDSZ	*Draft law on National Minorities and Autonomous Communities*
2001	Provincia Group	*Memorandum on Regions*
2004	SZNT	*The Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland*
2004	EMNT	*Autonomy Package: Draft Law on Personal Cultural Autonomy; Statute of Personal Autonomy for the Hungarian Minority in Romania*
2005	RMDSZ/Romanian Government	*Draft Law on National Minorities (with Cultural Autonomy Chapter)*
2005	SZNT	*The Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland*

(Salat, 2014, pp. 137–138)

4.1.4.1 Foundational Concepts: 1990-1996

Two important early moments in RMDSZ are the 1992 *Kolozsvár Declaration* (Kolozsvári Nyilatkozat) and the 1993 Brassó Party Congress where autonomy claims become progressively stronger. The 25 October 1992 *Kolozsvár Declaration* references the 1918 *Alba Iulia Declaration* to show that autonomy is part of Romanian history and that the Hungarian community asks for internal self-determination (*belső önrendelkezés*) which would provide stability in the process of democratisation of Romania (RMDSZ Ügyvezető Elnökség, 2000). This is then followed by the Brassó 1993 Party Congress which adopts autonomy and the pursuit of collective rights as central needs for the Hungarian minority. This Brassó statement – claiming for the importance of collective rights and the need for personal and cultural autonomy to provide local and regional self-government – shows a move towards a strong autonomist stance and makes RMDSZ's quest for autonomy clear and official (RMDSZ kongresszus, 2000, p. 97).

During the period between 1990 and 1995, several autonomy plans are developed, but only the RMDSZ's 1993 *Draft Law on National Minorities and Autonomous*

Communities is introduced in Parliament. However, it is not submitted for Parliamentary debate (Bakk, 2004, p. 43). It details the rights of autonomous communities for internal self-determination (*belső önrendelkezés*) through autonomy. The types of autonomy mentioned are personal autonomy (*személyi autonómia)* in the areas of education, culture, common life, social policy and media; local self-government (*helyi önigazgatás);* and regional autonomy (*regionális autonómia)* through the association of local governments with Hungarian majorities (RMDSZ, 2000c, p. 126). In 1995, RMDSZ adopts in its Fourth Party Congress the "three levels of autonomy" model similar to the 1993 bill: personal autonomy covering the institutions of education, arts and media; local governments with special status (for those Hungarian "islands" where Hungarians form a majority in their municipality but are surrounded by Romanian-majority municipalities); and territorial autonomy through the unification of local governments (aimed at the Szeklerland) (RMDSZ, 2000a). To this day, when RMDSZ officials are asked what they mean when they speak of autonomy for Hungarians, this three level layout is provided (Interviews with Kelemen, 2018; Kovács, 2017; Á. Márton, 2018; I. Székely, 2017).[39]

In addition, during this period there was a general sense of interest and importance in the development of the different plans and different approaches, with no less than eight different autonomy plans developed. For example, József Csapó's approach embodied the natural right to autonomy, whilst other technical specialists (Miklós Bakk, Attila Varga and Barna Bodó) focused on making sure any autonomy plan would fit the legal framework of Romania (Bakk, 2004, pp. 46–47). Of the many plans, there are two to draw attention to because of their later importance. First is József Csapó's plan, the *Autonomy Statute of the*

[39] It is interesting to note that in some of my elite interviews, elites did not use the term personal autonomy to discuss the first type, but rather cultural autonomy (Interviews with Biró, 2018; Kelemen, 2018; I. Székely, 2017). This different discourse is accounted in more detail in Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3. The second type of autonomy of local governments with special status has become impossible due to the way the adminstrative system has been codified and is essentially off the agenda of RMDSZ (Interview I. Székely, 2017).

Szeklerland (1995), which will be recycled on several occasions in the 2003+ period. The second is Miklós Bakk's *Plan on Personal Self-Governments* (1995), for which a related version is introduced by EMNT in 2004. Both will be addressed in detail in Section 4.1.4.3.

4.1.4.2 Creative Policy Game: 1996-2003

A key moment occurs when RMDSZ enters into a centre-right coalition in 1996. Different RMDSZ politicians interviewed argued that being in coalition meant having to follow a different form of politics (Interviews with Kelemen, 2018; Kovács, 2017; I. Székely, 2017). RMDSZ does not table autonomy plans in Parliament. Following the 2000 elections and RMDSZ's support for the minority government, it continues to avoid openly claiming autonomy which further alienates certain factions in its organisation (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b, pp. 423–424).

At the same time, RMDSZ also takes advantage of its strategic position as an supporter of the minority coalition with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) to push for more minority-friendly reforms. Consequently, two significant reforms are made regarding language use in public administration and also in regionalisation (Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016, p. 278). Whilst these are not outright claims to autonomy, as Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3 demonstrates, claims to regionalisation are also seen as claims to autonomy, thus fitting under the "creative policy game" strategy of claiming. In other areas, unfortunately, RMDSZ has to wait until 2011 to make significant reforms to the *Law on Education* (1995) which restricted education in the minority tongue (Csergő, 2007, pp. 57–60). Overall, trends during this time show that RMDSZ's claims to "autonomy" are linked to policy reforms rather than through explicit claiming.

Starting with regionalisation, despite Romania being a highly centralised and nationalising state, the Government passes the *Law on Regional Development* (1998) which divides Romania into eight development regions. The development regions are without legal

identity and governing capacity but rather serve as a basis to receive EU funds and gather statistics using the NUTS framework (Nomenclature des Unités Territoriales Statistiques). These NUTS II regions are therefore statistical in purpose only and do not have actual administrative competencies, nor do they have financial and legislative competencies (Benedek and Bajtalan, 2015, p. 26). Given the centralisation tendencies of the Romanian state, the adoption of the 1998 *Law* was seen as the "first regionalisation step".

With the above reforms and the general context of EU accession – which Romania formalises in 1999 – there was an opening to think differently about regions. The joint Hungarian-Romanian working group called the Provincia Group elaborates a *Memorandum* (2001) for regional reform. It focuses on "civic regionalism" and the embrace of the different historical, economic and socio-cultural characteristics of Romania's regions. The *Memorandum* is submitted to the Parliament's Permanent Bureau in December 2001, proposing regional parliaments with law-making powers. It is not well received by the Prime Minister (Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016, pp. 278–279). The significance of the *Memorandum* is that it places the question of autonomy within a broader debate on regionalisation and also brought in Romanian experts to the debate to break the taboo around regionalisation (Bakk, 2004, pp. 50–51). Despite the opposition, these were moves in the right direction and further reform would be later taken up in 2011 by RMDSZ (covered in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.1.1).

Another area of reform while RMDSZ is in coalition is the *Law on Public Administration* (2001) which sets the threshold for minority language provision in public administration at 20%. This means that if the ethnic minority comprises at least 20% of the population in an administrative unit, it has the right to use its mother tongue in oral and written communication. Linked to this threshold rule, secondly, is the provision of bilingual signs for those municipalities with at least 20% of a minority population (Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016, pp. 277–278). Moreover, Article 131 guarantees to respect the linguistic

rights of the minorities even if it falls under 20% in any subsequent census. The 2001 *Law* is a huge victory considering the 1991 *Law on Public Administration* which stated that Romanian was the official language at all levels of government and did not allow for the usage of the minority language. A few years later, the *Decentralisation Act* (2006) is passed, giving more power to the local level over finances, education and public health (Marius, Tudorel and Alina, 2006, p. 6).

4.1.4.3 Splinter Groups: 2003-2007

The year 2003 marks a new phase of autonomy claiming. Two new splinter organisations emerge from rival factions within RMDSZ and put autonomy – both in its cultural and territorial forms back on the bargaining table (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, p. 769). The first splinter organisation is the *Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács (EMNT)* – Hungarian National Council of Transylvania – and the second the *Székely Nemzeti* Tanács (SZNT) – Szekler National Council. Both are formed to promote the cause of autonomy, with the SZNT focusing specifically on its Szekler region, territorial autonomy, organising civil society, protests and referenda (Székely, 2014, p. 116). EMNT focuses on Transylvania as a whole and the needs of Hungarians for cultural autonomy in particular with charismatic leader László Tőkés (Interviews with Miklós Bakk, 2017; Salat, 2017). In 2003, a small organisation is also created called the *Magyar Polgári Szövetség* – Hungarian Civic Alliance – from supporters in the Szeklerland. However, they could not register in time for the 2004 elections and in the end were able to register in time for the 2008 local elections under a new name, *Magyar Polgári Part* – Hungarian Civic Party (Székely, 2014, pp. 116–117).

The splinter organisations are making explicit, strong claims to autonomy, each supporting one autonomy plan. SZNT supports the Csapó *Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland* (1995) – submitted to Parliament twice in 2004 and 2005 and rejected twice – and the EMNT backs the Bakk-led *Autonomy Package* (2003), elaborated by a circle of

experts and not submitted to Parliament. The SZNT-supported Csapó *Autonomy Statute* is based on Csapó's earlier 1995 *Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland*, with some modifications. It calls for territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland which would be comprised of Covasna and Harghita counties, in addition to the historical Marosszék area of Mureș county. It details the administrative structure and financial arrangements, with the Szeklerland having fiscal autonomy. The *Plan* also provides the Szeklerland with a veto over Romanian laws impacting the region, as long as 2/3 of its decision-making body – the Self-Government Council – decides. Such a veto is seen by the Romanian majority as too strong. Overall, this plan stems from the viewpoints within RMDSZ which were popular in the early 1990s with references to collective rights and the idea of self-determination. It does not try to situate itself within the Romanian legal and administrative system, in the way the EMNT-backed plan does. The Romanian government rejects the bill as against the constitution (Eplényi, 2006, pp. 67–71, 75).

The EMNT-backed Bakk-*Autonomy Package* has a different conception. It consists of three documents: a framework for regions, a Szekler region's establishment and the an autonomy statute for the Szekler region. It places Szeklerland's territorial autonomy within a broader framework of regionalisation, linking autonomy and regionalisation together (Bakk, 2004, p. 56). It develops a framework of regions within the Romanian state and then develops an asymmetrical regionalism concept to provide the Szeklerland with territorial autonomy. The territorial composition is slightly different than the Csapó Plan insofar as it includes different parts of Mureș county. A further section details the administrative, judicial and legislative structure as well as usage of language and education of the Romanian minority and gives equal language status to Hungarian and Romanian. It is not introduced to Parliament as there was more political will behind the SZNT plan (Eplényi, 2006, pp. 68–72).

The creative policy game tactic of RMDSZ shifts after 2003 to also encompassing explicit autonomy claims. RMDSZ reacts by claiming a weaker form of autonomy through its cultural autonomy chapter in the *Draft Law on Minorities* (2005), in which the chapter on cultural autonomy is shaped by the *Nationalities Statute* (Interview Novák, 2018). The *Draft Law* aims to bring together the different minority regulations into one framework – including a definition of national minority and rights to be accorded, the structure of national minority organisations and councils – and to create a framework for cultural autonomy. Importantly, the *Draft Law* is accepted by the Popescu-Tăriceanu Government as part of its programme – it is not RMDSZ who submits it on its own. The *Draft Law* and its Cultural Autonomy chapter has remained in play since 2005, but has not been passed nor completely rejected.

RMDSZ also (unsuccessfully) puts forward the idea of a Szeklerland Development Region as an alternative to territorial autonomy and tied to the EU's of development regions and structural funds (Eplényi, 2006, pp. 65–69). By taking advantage of the EU development regions and creating a Szeklerland Development Region with more administrative competencies, RMDSZ hoped this "less is more approach" would be more realistic to implement. The plan, however, is quickly rejected by the Romanian government (Eplényi 2006, pp.67–73; Bakk 2004, pp.52–53).

Besides these different conceptions of territorial autonomy or promotion of development regions, in 2004 the EMNT proposes a bill in Parliament to provide a framework for personal cultural autonomy, leaning on Bakk's 1995 *Plan on Personal Self-Governments*. This would establish autonomous cultural institutions for 15 of Romanians' national minorities, including the Hungarians. It is rejected because of constitutional objections and as such did not pass through the standing bureau of the Chamber of Deputies (Bakk and Szász, 2010, p. 28; Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 141).

By the end of 2006, therefore, small splinter organisations are making strong explicit claims to territorial autonomy for the Szeklerland. RMDSZ, on the other hand, is not claiming territorial autonomy and rather pursuing more of a "strategic policy game" through policy area reforms in regionalisation and administration and weaker claims to cultural autonomy. The different autonomy plans, moreover, show the tension between focusing on claiming territorial autonomy as such due to historic precedent and natural rights – the logic of SZNT – and trying to embed autonomy within reforms of regionalisation – the logic of the Bakk-Plan and RMDSZ (Eplényi, 2006; Bakk and Szász, 2010).

4.1.5 Analysis of Actors and Arenas 1990-2007

One distinguishing characteristic of this time period is the plethora of ideas linked to autonomy. Autonomy is claimed as "local autonomy", "regional autonomy", "territorial autonomy", "internal self-determination", as a "collective right", through "local self-government", etc. Elites are thinking creatively and strategically about how best to achieve autonomy. Moreover, the *Nationalities Statute* informs the 2005 *Draft Law on the Status of National Minorities* and the 1918 *Alba Iulia Declaration* is also activated to show the need to address autonomy in the 1992 *Kolozsvár Declaration*. The many plans elaborated in the early 1990s establish a certain path dependence into the 2000s and the post-accession era, particularly the SZNT-Csapó- plan and Bakk's EMNT plan.

The period shows two different ideas of autonomy claiming – linked to inner self-determination and the natural right to autonomy (SZNT) and another logic which tries to make usage of opportunity structures such as EU accession and regionalisation debates (Bakk and RMDSZ). It is not surprising that disagreements over the best way forward arise. When RMDSZ enters coalition in 1996 with the centre-right, one of the requirements for coalition belonging is to drop the claim to territorial autonomy and focus on more moderate issues (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, p. 768). During the years in coalition before the split

in 2003, RMDSZ pursues a more moderate programme, using the politics of "small steps", and autonomy does not feature in its 2000 election programme (Interviews with Kelemen, 2018; Kiss, 2017). RMDSZ politicians, including President Hunor Kelemen, emphasise that autonomy was never off the agenda:

> *"That's fiction to say that RMDSZ renounced from autonomy in 1997, and then split in 2003. There were debates within RMDSZ about what to do strategically, but there was never any question that RMDSZ would not continue taking this goal further"* (Interview Kelemen, 2018).

Coalition belonging offers new opportunities for RMDSZ to push through policy changes – such as in public administration and support for decentralisation – which offer small steps to achieving autonomy and micro-steps for regional reform. This alternative tactic of small steps of policy reform to claim autonomy further demonstrates how the "creative policy game" is pursued. As Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3 also confirms, to elites "decentralisation", "regionalisation" and "autonomy" are the same thing.

The above analysis highlights the primary importance of intra-group dynamics. The loose and inclusive structure of RMDSZ from its inception inherently meant that there would be tensions about the direction to take when it comes to pursuing autonomy. An inner circle forms in 1993 called Reform Tömörülés (RT or Reform Group), comprising those wishing to pursue a more radical autonomist stance. The formation of splinter groups in 2003 means those supporting a more radical stance left RMDSZ. There is a battle between clear, explicit, strong claims to autonomy – as was the case in the early 1990s and then with SZNT and EMNT – and the pursuance of a "creative policy game" approach through RDMSZ's policy reforms. The politics of "small steps" and moderation embraced by RMDSZ is compared to bigger claims for territorial autonomy by the SZNT and EMNT.

During this period the primary arena for claims was the domestic national arena which is also impacted by the general accession process to the European Union, Council of Europe and NATO. Accession makes Romania particularly receptive to international pressure to

incorporate minority reforms and to show itself as Western and "minority friendly". The integration and accession process mean that certain minority provisions had to be incorporated into domestic reforms (Interview Horváth, 2017). Inclusion of RMDSZ in coalition in 1996 was done to show a pro-minority commitment to the West (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, p. 768) as is the 2001 *Law on Public Administration*. At the same time, the way to make best use of this accession period is seen differently by Hungarian elites in their spectrum of claims. Different plans show tensions surrounding how best to negotiate for autonomy: should a regionalist approach be taken (Bakk's plan and RMDSZ's focus on regionalisation reforms) which tie into the process of EU reforms during accession or make territorial autonomy be a requirement for accession (SZNT).

Whilst the general movement of pressure was from the international organisations to the domestic level, there is one early instance where the arrow of movement is directed outward. Hungarian minority elites use the Council of Europe as a bargaining arena with the 1993 *Memorandum*, in which RMDSZ lists several objections to Romania's provisions for minorities (RMDSZ, 2000b). The Council of Europe steps in with recommendations for Romania. It is this response which is seen by RMDSZ leader Béla Markó as one of the key results RMDSZ was able to achieve from the international community (Székely, 2014, p. 111).

The role of Hungary during the pre-accession period is one that supports autonomy of the Hungarian minorities generally speaking but equally one that is sensitive to its own domestic and foreign policy interests. The way the 1996 *Hungary-Romania Treaty on Understanding, Cooperation and Good Neighbourliness* is negotiated highlights the case in point, where the Socialist government in Hungary did not oppose the Romanian government's weakening of the Treaty's reference to the Council of Europe's Recommendation 1201 recognising autonomous structures. RMDSZ was not impressed,

especially when Hungary had agreed to support autonomy and self-government of the Hungarian minorities (Csergő, 2007, pp. 107–108; Jenne, 2007, pp. 115–116).

The kin-state's support, with the Fidesz government, did encourage radicalisation and affected elite strategies. Originally, the autonomist faction wanted to overthrow the gradualist leadership of Béla Markó in the 2003 RMDSZ conference. However, with Fidesz out of power in 2002, external support weakened and instead László Tőkés created his own organisation (EMNT). The radical voice's strength depended on the backing of the kin-state which provides diplomatic and campaigning support (Székely, 2014, p. 126) and depends less on popular support and the voter base, at least during this time period. This relationship will change rather dramatically in the post-EU accession period, particularly after 2014, with Fidesz shifting its support to RMDSZ and Fidesz's policy of dual citizenship.

The pre-accession period in Romania, therefore, shows a blossoming of autonomy plans which highlight different ideas of how to best claim autonomy. With its own history of autonomy and different historical capital to draw on, this is not surprising. Moreover, with RMDSZ in Parliament and coalition, it focuses rather on the "creative policy game" of claiming through word-play and policy reforms, which eventually lead to splinter organisations forming. The different minority actors have their own conceptions of autonomy – as well as preferences for how to use kin-state and European institutions' support – which provide a certain path dependence into the post-accession period.

4.2 The Hungarians of Slovakia

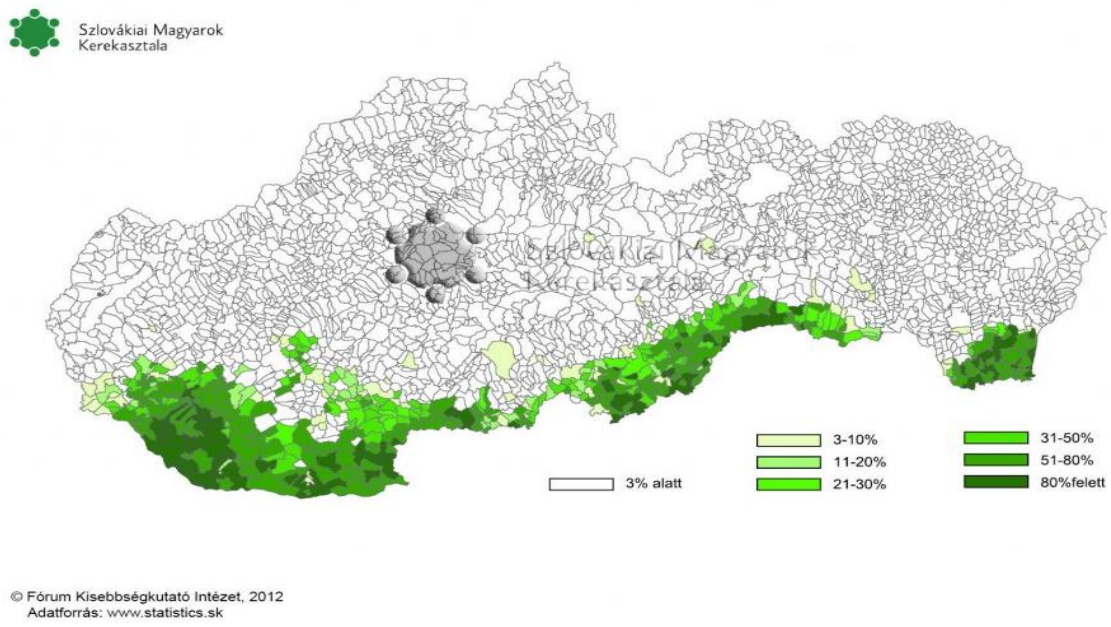
4.2.1 Demographic Characteristics and Socio-Economic Challenges

The Hungarians in Slovakia live in an area traditionally called Felvidék (Upper Hungary) referring to its location in the Kingdom of Hungary. Whilst still called Felvidék

by the Hungarian population, the region is also referred to as “Dél-Szlovákia” (Southern Slovakia) by the Slovak titular majority and Hungarian politicians alike.

In terms of territorial concentration, the Hungarian population is located along the southern section of Slovakia along the Hungarian border: 98.86% of the Hungarian population is in the 16 districts in the south of Slovakia and the two cities of Bratislava and Kassa (Horbulák, 2015, p. 47). Figure 5 below illustrates this and also shows how the population forms three slightly separated subregions along the border. In the West, from Csallóköz (Žitný ostrov) to Ipolyság (Šahy), then along central southern Slovakia including Losonc (Lučenec), Tornalja (Tornaľa) and Szepsi (Moldava nad Bodvou), and then an island on the East including Királyhelmec (Kráľovský Chlmec) and Nagykapos (Veľké Kapušany).

Figure 5 Population of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia’s municipalities (%, 2011)



(Forum Kisebbség Kutató Intézet, 2012)

Demographically speaking, the Hungarian minority in Slovakia is on the decline. According to the 2011 census, there were approximately 458,000 Hungarians living in Slovakia (8.5% per cent of the population) – demonstrating a 110,000 decline compared to

the 1991 census (Government of Slovak Republic, 2014). Table 5 below highlights the extent of the decline. Causes of decline include migration, a declining birth rate and assimilation. Migration to Hungary is less significant than in other countries with Hungarian minorities because Hungarians in Slovakia are more likely to commute to Hungary or Austria rather than resettle. Migration and a declining birth rate are overshadowed by the prevalence of assimilation (Gyurgyík, 2011, pp. 472–475). There is also less social distance between Hungarians and Slovaks – compared to the Hungarians and Romanians for example – partly due to the overlapping religious belonging. According to the 2011 census, 69 per cent of Hungarians were Roman Catholic and the overall population in Slovakia is 62 per cent Catholic (Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, 2011; Government of Slovak Republic, 2014).

Table 5 Population Decline of the Hungarian National Minority in Slovakia 1991-2011

Date	Hungarian Population	% of Total
1961	517,582	12.4
1980	559,011	11.2
1991	567,296	10.8
2001	520,528	9.7
2011	458,467	8.5

(Government of Slovak Republic, 2014, p. 29; MKP, 2014, p. 1).[40]

In addition to the various dynamics of population decline, another challenge facing the Hungarian community is unemployment and poverty. In general, Slovakia struggles with inequality between its north and south and its east and west. The least well-developed region is the middle section of southern Slovakia, encompassing the districts of Nagyrőce (Revúca), Rimaszombat (Rimavská Sobota) and Rozsnyó (Rožňava) (Horbulák, 2017, p. 73). Of the ten districts (*okres* in Slovak/*járás* in Hungarian) with the highest levels of

[40] Note that this statistic uses nationality as the criterion; if one goes by language there are slightly higher statistics for Hungarian language usage with 572,929 (10.7%) in 2001 and 508,714 (9.4%) in 2011, according to the census. The question on language was only brought in with the 2001 census (Government of Slovak Republic, 2014, p. 29). Moreover, it is worth noting the study by Ravasz (2012, p. 15) which argues the number of Hungarians is actually 511,323, by taking into account the 60, 431 Roma who identify also as Hungarian.

unemployment, seven of them have concentrations of Hungarians and are generally located in the south and southeast of the country (MKP, 2014, p. 10). Analysis done by Horbulák (2015, 2017, 2019) shows that in terms of education, employment and indicators like earnings and industrial production, Hungarians in the south of Slovakia generally lag behind their Slovak counterparts. For example, between 1997 and 2014, the Hungarians in the 16 districts have consistently had higher rates of unemployment than the national average (Horbulák, 2015).

4.2.2 Autonomy in Slovakia

Slovak hostility to granting Hungarians autonomy cannot be understood without understanding the Slovak nation's own quest for autonomy. In comparison to Romania where the Hungarian minority had its own experience of autonomy, in Slovakia the historical memory of autonomy was experienced by the Slovak majority. The political connotation behind the word "autonomy" is historically loaded and is linked to Slovak national agitation. Already beginning in 1848 and 1861, the Slovak national movement put forward demands for autonomy in *The Demands of the Slovak Nation* and *Memorandum of the Slovak Nation,* respectively, to the Magyars. Both plans were rejected (Kováč, 2011, pp. 126–29).

The key moment occurs after World War I when Slovakia becomes part of Czechoslovakia, while being promised autonomy in a federal state in the 1918 Pittsburgh Agreement (Kirschbaum, 1964, pp. 6–7). Implementation was lacking, however, and over the span of almost 20 years the Slovak People's Party agitation for increased autonomy during the 1920s (Krajčovičová, 2011, pp. 144–147). In 1938 three major autonomy plans are put on the table. Slovak nationalist leader Andrej Hlinka's proposal of a federal union which recognises the Slovaks as a separate nation is accepted, leading to the Constitutional Act on the Autonomy of Slovakia in 22 November 1938. This recognises the definitive

nature of the autonomy of Slovakia in the newly re-written "Czecho-Slovak Republic". The Pittsburgh Agreement was, therefore, finally implemented (Bystrický, 2011, pp. 159–60).

With autonomy provided, however, as Slovak minister Ferdinand Ďurčanský (1954, p. 5) puts it, the Slovaks could "but wait for the first favourable occasion to carry out their right to self-determination." This indeed occurs with their declaration of independence on 14 March 1939. Although this independence (which also included present-day Transcarpathia (Ferenc and Toth, 2014)) is short-lived until 1945 when Czechoslovakia is reunited, the link between autonomy and the desire for eventual secession is drawn quite strongly in the Slovak mind (Tokár, 2014, pp. 141–142).

4.2.3 Institutional and Political Landscape[41]

In terms of the basic legal framework in place in the Slovak Republic and how it relates to the Hungarian national minority, the 1993 Slovak constitution (revised in 2014) addresses itself as "We, the Slovak People" in the Preamble and does not list its national minorities by name, nor include a definition of a national minority. It was the hope of the Hungarian minority to include itself as a "partner-nation" in the Constitution (Együttélés, 1999). The Constitution (1993) includes a section on the Rights of National Minorities and Ethnic Groups, which includes Article 34, providing for the right to promote the minority culture, use the minority language, and set up educational and cultural institutions. At the same time, the same Article's paragraph 3 says that this right "must not be conducive to jeopardising the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Slovak Republic or to discrimination against other citizens."

Exact regulations on minorities are set out in separate legislation, and have also been the focus of heated debate because of their restrictive nature. Outside of the Constitution,

[41] This is only a simplified background of the institutional provisions in Slovakia. More detail can be found in (Council of Europe, 2014; Government of Slovak Republic, 2014, 2019).

Slovakia does not have a comprehensive law on national minorities, although such a law has been prepared in draft form since 2006 and would remedy the disparate nature of minority rights provisions across different pieces of legislation (Council of Europe, 2010, pp. 19–20). The minority groups recognised by Slovakia are the Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, German, Hungarian, Jewish, Moravian, Polish, Roma, Russian, Ruthenian, Serbian and Ukrainian minorities (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 7). In terms of European guidelines, the *Framework Convention for National Minorities* was ratified in 1995 and the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in 2001.

The Slovak electoral system is based on proportional representation and there is one national electoral constituency. There is no guaranteed representation for minority parties in the Slovak National Council (parliament). Individual political parties which have passed the 5% electoral threshold are those which can receive a seat in parliament (Álvarez-Rivera, 2014). At the local level, on the other hand, municipal councils are elected through a semi-proportional system and the mayor is elected directly. The municipal level also shows a growing number of independents winning office (Bardovic, 2017).

The political party landscape for the ethnic Hungarians in Slovakia has included several actors since the fall of communism. At the moment of transition, there were three main ethnic Hungarian parties: *Független Magyar Kezdeményezés* (FMK) – the Independent Hungarian Initiative, *Együttélés* – *the* Coexistence movement, and the *Magyar Kereszténydemokrata* Szövetség (MKDSZ) – the Hungarian Christian-Democratic Movement. The most radical of the three was Coexistence, which was most vocal about calling for territorial autonomy (Együttélés, 2005b, 2005a; Székely, 2014, p. 154).

The FMK ran on the electoral list of the Slovak anti-communist Public Against Violence (VPN) ticket, as it had close links to the party, and made it into government during the 1990 election. Coexistence and MKDSZ did not. FMK renamed itself as the *Magyar*

Polgári Párt (MPP) - Hungarian Civic Party, for the 1992 elections, running on its own and did not make it into Parliament. On the other hand, MKDSZ and Coexistence ran together and made it into the opposition. In 1994, the parties joined together as an electoral coalition, and with a later electoral law implementing a higher threshold for coalitions than parties to get into parliament, they merged into one party for the 1998 elections as the *Magyar Koalíció* Pártja (MKP) – or Party of the Hungarian Coalition.

With Slovakia's nationalist leader Vladimír Mečiar ousted from power in 1998, MKP enters into coalition with the Slovak Democratic Coalition and Prime Minister Mikuláš Dzurinda. MKP serves again in coalition in 2002, thus having 8 years in government from 1998-2006. Hungarian minority party members have held important positions in government such as Chairman of the Foreign Committee, Chairman of the Committee for Human Rights and National Minorities, and others (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, pp. 770–74; Székely, 2014, pp. 134–37; Government of Romania, 2016, p. 87). Details of the electoral outcomes are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Electoral success of Hungarian minority parties in Slovakia 1990 - 2016

Election	Party	% Vote	Seats in Parliament	In Government (national level)
1990 (Czechoslovakia)	ESWMK[1] FMK	8.66 29.4 (VPN)	14 5 out of 48 VPN seats	No Yes, with VPN
June 1992 (Czechoslovakia)	ESWMK MPP	7.4 2.3	14 0	No
Sept/Oct 1994	*Magyar Koalíció*[2]	10.2	17	No
Sept 1998	MKP	9.2	15	In coalition with SDK with other partners of SDL and SOP[3]
Sept 2002	MKP	11.2	20	In coalition with SDKU, along with KDH and ANO[4]
June 2004 *European*	MKP (Group of the European People's Party)	13.2	2	
June 2006	MKP	11.7	20	No
June 2009 *European*	MKP (Group of the European People's Party)	11.3	2	
June 2010	Most- Híd MKP	8.1 4.3	14 0	In coalition SDKU-DS, and SaS and KDH[5] -
March 2012	Most- Híd MKP	6.9 4.3	13 0	No
May 2014 *European*	Most- Híd MKP (both run with the Group of the European People's Party)	5.8 6.5	1 1	
March 2016	Most- Híd MKP	6.5 4.4	11 0	In coalition Smer-SD-SNS-SIET[6]
May 2019 *European*	Most- Híd MKP	2.6 4.96	0 0	

1. ESWMK was a coalition between Coexistence and the MKDSZ.

2. *Magyar Koalíció* was an electoral coalition between the three parties of Coexistence, MKDSZ and the MPP.

3-4. SDK is Slovak Democratic Coalition, later re-established as Slovak Democratic and Christian Union (SDKU); generally a centre-right coalition. In 1998 also with members of SDL – Party of Democratic Left – and SOP Party of Civic Understanding. In 2002 with Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) and Alliance for New Citizens (ANO).

5. Slovak Democratic and Christian Union – Democratic Party; centre-right coalition. Other members include Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) and Christian Democratic Movement (KDH).

6. Smer-Social Democracy – Slovak National Party (SNS) – Network (SIET); nationalist-left coalition.

Source: Norwegian Centre for Research Data 2016; European Parliament 2017; Malova & Ucen 2013; Henderson 2004; Bochsler & Szöcsik 2013a; IPU 2016; Statistical Office of Slovak Republic 2016.

As a result of inner-party disputes, in 2009, the Most–Híd (Bridge) Party emerges out of some factions of MKP. Its platform is to work together with both Hungarians and

Slovaks and to be a multi-ethnic party. While MKP had consistently won between 14 and 20 seats in Parliament, in the 2010 elections it fails to make it over the 5% threshold with just 4.33% of valid votes. Most-Híd wins 14 seats, leading to an "earthquake" in Hungarian minority politics (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a, pp. 773–74; Székely, 2014, pp. 139–153).

Similar results privileging Most–Híd occur in 2012, with 13 seats won and none for the MKP. While for the 2014 European Parliamentary elections both parties field candidates and win one seat each under the European Peoples Party, on the domestic level the 2016 elections again see Most-Híd gain seats and the MKP not able to cross the threshold. Most-Híd entered the coalition government (Germanova, 2016).[42] Despite the national success of Most-Híd, on the regional and local levels, MKP is still a force to be reckoned with. Outside of political parties, an important civil society umbrella organisation is the *Szlovákiai Magyarok Kerekasztala* or Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia, which is active in encouraging dialogue and promoting the rights of Hungarians in Slovakia.

4.2.4 The Claiming of Autonomy: 1990-2006

Key issues on the agenda for the Hungarian minority revolve around cultural and territorial autonomy, administrative reform, revocation of the Beneš decrees[43], increased language usage and the establishment of a Hungarian-language university (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b; Government of Slovak Republic, 2014). In the early 1990s there are stronger calls for autonomy which then die out in the landmark 1994 Komárom meeting. This is when the beginning of the "word-play" tactic begins, setting off a path-dependence for using the term "self-governance". Whilst serving in coalition from 1998-2006, MKP

[42] Although outside the timeframe of this study, the March 2020 elections saw both Most-Híd and MKP without any seats in Parliament as both failed to pass the threshold.

[43] As part of the *Beneš* decrees, approximately 90,000 Hungarians living in Czechoslovakia were forcibly resettled in Hungary and about 72,000 Slovaks in Hungary relocated to Czechoslovakia. The decrees also involved the loss of property rights, citizenship and the prohibition of the use of the Hungarian language in public places (Csergő, 2007, paras 29–30; Šutaj, 2011, pp. 276–77).

cannot claim territorial autonomy and starts to pursue a creative policy game to push forward reforms (relatively unsuccessfully) in the areas of administration, education and language.

4.2.4.1 Starting on the Wrong Foot: 1994 Komárom Meeting

Between 1991-1994, the different parties – Együttélés, MPP and MKDSZ – each elaborate an autonomy concept, with MKDSZ more in response to Együttélés and MPP. Együttélés's 1991 *Memorandum* calls for cultural and territorial autonomy for the Hungarian minority (2005b), whilst MPP's 1992 *Minority Programme* (2005) speaks rather in terms of minority self-governance and MKDSZ's 1994 *Programme* of cultural and educational autonomy (2005). The most important event in the post-communist years – and some would say until today – for Hungarian autonomy claims is the the landmark Komárom Meeting in 1994, spearheaded by Együttélés. It is frequently mentioned in elite interviews as one of the key moments in the Hungarian autonomy struggle (Interviews with Bukovszky, 2017; Duray, 2017; Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017; Őry, 2017; Simon, 2017; Tokár, 2017), and also as a missed opportunity (Duray, 2014; Interview Farkas, 2017).

In the context of proposed administrative reforms by the Slovak government and a concern over the future of the Hungarian community in a newly independent Slovakia, Hungarian leaders in the southwestern Slovakian region of Csallóköz (Žitný Ostrov) made a declaration in 6 December 1993 and planned a meeting in Komárom on the 8th January 1994 to ratify their plan. The December plan called for an assembly made up of 100 members which would represent the Hungarian community. It also included the formation of a Hungarian province with its own legal status and administration (Csallóközi Városok es Községek Társulása (1993), 1999).

Days before the conference, what emerges is a play on words: Miklós Duray, the leader of *Együttélés*, states that Hungarian parties are not talking about autonomy (*autonómia*) but rather self-government (*önkormányzatiság*). A later report defends this

change of vocabulary by stating that the two words are identical but that self-government is more politically palatable (Stroschein, 2012, p. 218). The event itself is attended by over 3000 Hungarian leaders and over 250 international journalists, but the finalised document is watered-down compared to the December proposal. Rather than a parliament with Hungarian representatives, the document calls for one of two options. Either an administrative unit encompassing about 60% of Hungarians along the southern sliver of Slovakia or the subdivision of the southern strip of Slovakia into three counties each with a Hungarian majority and a small island of Hungarian inhabitants near Nyitra. Territorial autonomy is not claimed (Komáromi Nagygyűlés, 1999, p. 227).

In the end, nothing becomes of the statement and some consider the Komárom meeting a missed opportunity for a strong claim to territorial autonomy and indeed a "breaking point" within the history of the Hungarian autonomy movement (Interview Farkas, 2017). There has not been such a strong call to territorial autonomy as the 1993 December plan. Moreover, there is the beginning of the movement away from calls for "autonomy" to a play on words exchanging "autonomy" for "self-governance" as well as a focus on administrative reform. The legacy of the meeting, therefore, is both as a lost opportunity to claim autonomy for the Hungarian minority and as the starting point of this "word-play".

4.2.4.2 "Self-Governance" in Election Manifestos

With the unification of the four Hungarian parties for the 1998 election, MKP is the political party representing ethnic Hungarians in the next three national elections of 1998, 2002 and 2006 and serves in coalition between 1998-2006. In terms of content and following the logic of the coalition agreement, the word *autonómia* is hardly found in the election manifestos of 1998, 2002 and 2006. When it is mentioned, it is in the context of educational institutions, teachers, and culture (strengthening "teachers' autonomy" (MKP, 2006, p. 36)

and supporting an autonomous high-quality culture (MKP, 2002, p. 40). Given the significance of the issue in 1993-4 and the prevalence of the term in claims by different earlier political parties, the drop in the usage of the term is noteworthy albeit not surprising given the historical connotation of the term (Section 4.2.2).

What is also noticeable is the prevalence of the term *önkormányzat* (self-government) in the manifestos. It is mentioned associated with *helyi* (local), *kerületi* (district), *kisebbségi* (minority), *regionális* (regional), *települési* (municipal), and *területi* (territorial) self-government. Providing increased powers to the different levels of government, especially through financing, brings decisions closer to citizens, preserving the identity of the locality or region (MKP, 2006, p. 39). Such policies consequently benefit the ethnic minority since it has more control over its own affairs. The manifestos show an emphasis placed on decentralised public administration, self-government based on subsidiarity, and a focus on regional development.

It is especially in the sections on regional development where a semblance of territorial autonomy can be seen, albeit carefully constructed. For example, the 1998 manifesto mentions the creation of relatively independent self-governing regions created according to historical and cultural traditions and ethnic composition as well as economic characteristics of the regions. The focus on such "natural" regions re-emerges in 2002 and leans heavily on the Council of Europe's *European Charter of Local Self-Government.* Here again there are calls for reform of the administrative system, increased powers to the local level, and the claim for the creation of natural regions including 3 new regions of Kis-Alföld, Gömör-Nógrád, and Szepes (which would respect the Hungarian population concentrations). The document also calls for the establishment of a Hungarian-language university and more financial support for minority culture. Finally, the 2006 manifesto continues the call for natural regions and administrative reform, but also more openly spells

out the aim of instituting cultural and educational self-government (again, note it is not "autonomy" but "self-government") and for a general minority self-government institutional system. Therefore, these years show the shift to calls for self-governance across different policy areas of culture, education and administration and shy away from openly claiming autonomy.

4.2.4.3 Claiming in Coalition 1998-2006: Policy Area Reforms

Conditions for entering into coalition in 1998 include significant points of compromise: MKP would not make claims to territorial autonomy on an ethnic basis, would not demand a Hungarian language university and would also not bring up the question of the *Beneš* decrees (MKP, 2002, p. 31). With a limited field for claiming, MKP focuses on policy reforms in administration, education and language – often reactive in nature than proactive.

After the failure at Komárom, the quest for territorial autonomy plays itself out through a series of administrative reforms and redistricting, first under Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar in the 1996 *Act on Territorial and Administrative Divisions.* The subdivisions are done so that, according to Mečiar, "this would prevent any kind of Hungarian aspiration to autonomy once and for all" (Szarka, 2002, p. 123). The Dzurinda government then pushes through additional administrative reforms with the *Act on Self-Governing Regions* (2001), establishing the authorities and competencies of regional self-governments, which essentially is the final blow to the idea of a Hungarian region (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b, p. 436).

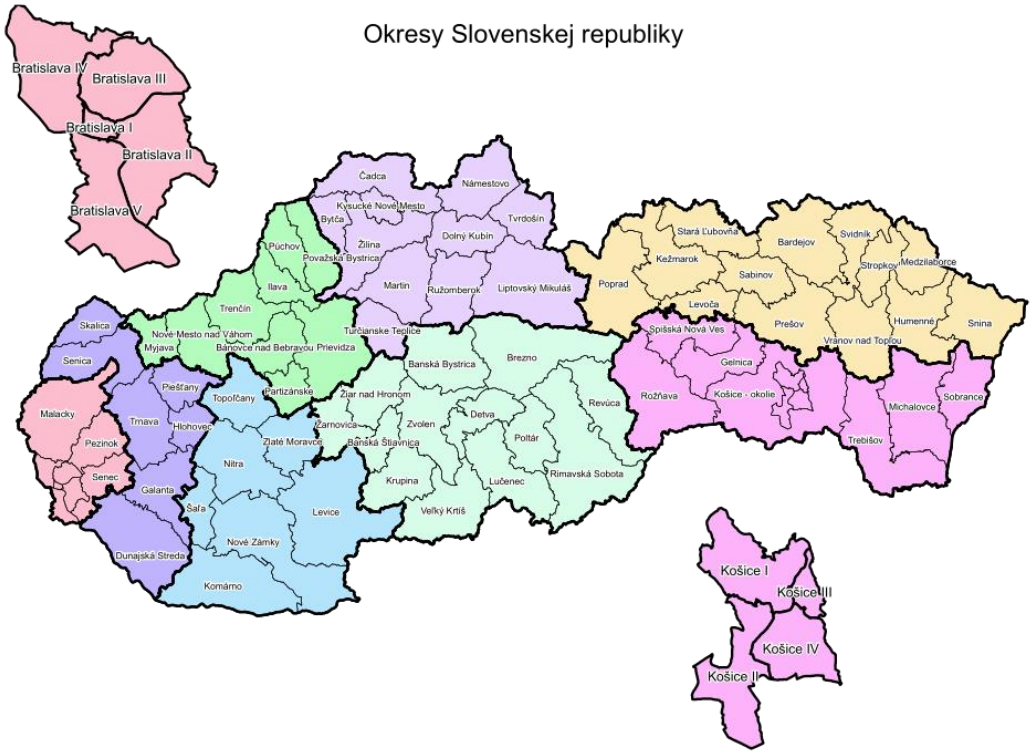
Initially, however, the Dzurinda government accepted a plan to create 12 counties along natural regional borders, although it did not include MKP's desire for a 13th county of Komárom (Szarka, 2002). However, when the plan enters Parliament for approval, Dzurinda's party allies with the opposition of Mečiar's party and the Slovak National Party

to instead pass the Mečiar regional model of 8 regions. In other words, the parties of the coalition ally with the opposition to push through a regional reform system which keeps the same regional administrative divisions the Mečiar government put in place in 1996.

In response, some MKP members wanted to protest and step out of the coalition, leading to the collapse of the government. However, following a meeting of the party's National Council, MKP decides – by one vote – not to step out of coalition (Interview Farkas, 2017). According to senior MKP member Iván Farkas (Interview, 2017), this decision leads to the second "breaking point" (the first being the Komárom meeting) amongst the Hungarian political elite in the quest for autonomy. Although as Tokár (Interview, 2017) notes in my interview with him, some believed leaving coalition could also bring in the return of Mečiar. In any case, it is obvious at this point that MKP does not have the power to implement administrative reforms.

The above reforms have meant that the current administrative system in Slovakia is comprised of 8 administrative regions and 79 districts (*okres* in Slovak and *járás* in Hungarian) with Hungarians constituting an absolute majority in two districts (Dunaszerdahely and Komárom) and a significant minority in fourteen districts (Szarka, 2002, p. 123). The 8 administrative regions do not take into account the historical regions of Slovakia and also are not favourable to the Hungarian population concentrations. In 2011, of the 8 regions, ethnic Hungarians constituted over 20% of inhabitants in Nagyszombat (Trnava) and Nyitra (Nitra) regions while in Besztercebánya *(Banská* Bystrica) and Kassa (*Košice)* regions they constituted between 9-10 per cent (Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, 2017). Figure 6 below shows the geographic breakdown of the administrative system by region and district, demonstrating how the borders do not align with population concentrations of the Hungarian minority as compared to Figure 5.

Figure 6 Administrative Regions and Districts in the Slovak Republic



(Tóth, 1997)

Another major area of concern for the Hungarian minority during this period is language usage, whether in the form of language signs, media or language usage in public administration. MKP's years in coalition do have small successes regarding language rights, such as having a bilingual report card in school, as well as the ratification of the *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* in 2001, and a weakened effect of the controversial 1995 *State Language Law* (MKP, 2002, p. 31). The *Law* (1995) required measures such as the translation of "occasional publications" to the state language and also the possible imposition of sanctions. European pressure through the OSCE, Council of Europe and EU force the Slovak moderates into dialogue for the establishment of the 1999 *Law on the Use of National Minority Languages* (*MNL*) (1999). However, MKP votes against it due to disagreements over the narrow scope of the law (Csergő, 2007, pp. 99–100). The *MNL Law* regulates the usage of the minority language in official communications, allowing for the minority to use their language in public administration when they represent

at least 20% of the population. The inter-relation between the *MNL* and the *State Language Law*, however, is not addressed (Council of Europe, 2000, pp. 9–16).

The party is able to attain the establishment of a Hungarian-language university in Komárom which opens its doors in 2004. The reason behind the success is not agreed upon. It is cited as either a condition for coalition belonging in the Dzurinda coalition (Interview Farkas, 2017), a result of the EU accession negotiations to increase European pressure on Slovakia to make it an "unwritten requirement" of Slovakia's accession to support the university (Interview Duray, 2017) or as a compensation for the unfavourable administrative divisions passed in 2001. In any case, as a result, education in the Hungarian language can continue to university.

4.2.5 Analysis of Actors and Arenas 1990-2006

The main bargaining arena in this period is the national where the constraints on coalition belonging on autonomy claiming is very clear. A condition for MKP's inclusion is to renege on territorial autonomy claims, as well as on other issues including a Hungarian university (which, however, it was able to gain in Komárom in 2004) and its call for the abolition of the *Beneš* decrees. The linguistic manoeuvre from the failed 1994 Komárom meeting to claiming "self-governance" becomes engrained in the claiming strategies of Hungarian elites. Moreover, there is the switch to policy area reforms as a way of pursuing *de facto* autonomy. Both of these aspects – the word-play and policy reforms – become the modus operandi of autonomy claim-making in the post EU-accession period.

With accession to the European institutions and NATO, there is a certain amount of leverage these actors place on Slovak domestic politics in favour of the Hungarian minority. However, during the eight years in government – which overlap with Slovakia's accession to the European Union and NATO – MKP does not manage to fundamentally capitalise on these international windows of opportunity mainly due to internal party politics. With the

failed administrative reform in 2001, the party is divided over whether it should leave coalition. In addition, during the 2001 constitutional amendment debate when the votes of MKP were absolutely necessary to push forward the reform to join the European Union and NATO, MKP fails to act to claim autonomy when it could have. According to one senior MKP official, it was the "only bargaining position in 27 years" when the political leadership could have claimed and achieved something on behalf of the Hungarian community but chose not to make a demand for any type of autonomy (Interview Farkas, 2017). Some advances were made in areas such as a Hungarian-speaking university, but reforms were far from the desired outcome.

Regarding kin-state pressure, with the signing of the 1995 *Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation* Friendship Treaty between Slovakia and Hungary, the inviolability of borders is established. At this point, a consensus emerges in the Hungarian government that autonomy will not be accepted by the titular majorities. Therefore, although it is an early-on vocal supporter of autonomy (Csergő, 2007, pp. 105–107)), during the Orbán years in 1998-2002 the Hungarian government is non-interventionist in promoting policy changes at the Slovak national level (Jenne, 2007, pp. 106–109). The subsequent left-wing socialist government acts in similar vein. Regardless of being on the right or left side of the political spectrum, the Hungarian government's policy is to establish good relations with the neighbouring countries and to encourage the Hungarian minority to work for its own solutions (Bárdi, 2011, pp. 461–465).

By the 2006 elections – the first to take place after EU accession – there is inner party discontent and friction. MKP is criticised for not being able to exact a Hungarian-majority region during the administrative reforms and some party members blame President Béla Bugár for not taking advantage of the EU opportunity window during accession (Székely, 2014, pp. 141–142). MKP does not join the coalition following the 2006 elections, and the

terrain is ripe for the party split in 2009. However, by this point, there are certain dynamics of autonomy-claiming in place: the word-play tactic as well as the claiming of autonomy through policy area reforms.

The events and actors introduced in this chapter provide the foundation for which the autonomy claims in the post-EU accession era can be understood. There are already configurations of elite actors and internal divisions in place as well as conceptions of autonomy which have been (unsuccessfully) claimed. Moreover, the autonomy plans and the vocabulary used set in motion a path dependence of autonomy claims which will be further discussed in the national-level Chapters 6 and 7 of Romania and Slovakia, respectively. The next chapter illustrates the context-dependent nature of the claiming of autonomy by unpacking the meaning of autonomy for elites and unpacking the dynamic of word-play in claiming autonomy.

5 The Many Faces of "Autonomy": One Meaning or Many?

> *"We would get as many answers to the question as the number of people we would ask. There is not a unified formulation…there is no short answer to what is autonomy"* (Interview Kovács, 2017*).*

Autonomy claims appear in different contexts such as election campaigns, autonomy plans, public statements and elite-led mass rallies. In the midst of this is also the understanding different political elites themselves have of what "autonomy" is, the purpose it serves and whether or not it is necessary for the Hungarian community. Part of the challenge of claiming "autonomy" is that it raises historical connotations of national self-determination and independence, which is what the titular majority (ethnic Slovaks and ethnic Romanians) are wary of.

To best examine how autonomy claims have evolved over time (Research Question A), it is important to first take into account how elites themselves define autonomy and the discourse surrounding claims. The benefit of examining this in the Hungarian language is to pick up on the local nuances and connotations of the term. I draw on the results of fieldwork undertaken in 2017-2018 in Romania and Slovakia in 33 semi-structured elite interviews.[44] Interview transcripts were coded using an inductive-deductive method of qualitative content analysis, as detailed in Methodology Chapter Section 3.4.1. Incorporating the views of ethnic Hungarian elites from across the political spectrum in Romania and Slovakia, interviews started with the question of how to define autonomy. Three unexpected findings emerged quickly from the analyses (1) the different ways elites think about "autonomy" compared to how the scholarly literature conceptualises the term; (2) the almost lack of differentiation by elites between "autonomy" and other institutional arrangements to deal with ethnic diversity – also in contrast to the distinctions made in the scholarly literature;

[44] See Appendix B for list of interviewees.

and (3) the concept of "autonomy" resonates and is familiar across elites but definitions of the sub-types of autonomy are not always consistent.

In both Romania and Slovakia, "autonomy" is very much a historically-rooted concept, and the historical connotations of the term provide constraints as well as opportunities for Hungarian minority elites (tying into Research Question B). As my research shows through its elite interviews and traced out in particular through different policy platforms covered in Chapters 6 and 7, in response to the constraints of Slovak and Romanian reticence and at times hostility to the term "autonomy", Hungarian elites engage in a creative word-play. This word-play substitutes claims to "autonomy" with claims for "self-governance" or "decentralisation" or "self-determination" or "regionalisation". Yet, and importantly, elites assert that the terms mean the same thing – in direct contrast to the scholarly literature (Chapter 2 Section 2.1). There are, however, differences between the two countries in word-play tactics. These are influenced by structural factors such as historical constraints and demographic realities as well as by elite or partisan preferences for certain terms over others (further explored in Chapter 10).

For each country, I first analyse elite understandings of autonomy and then move to describe the constraints Hungarian elites face by the titular majority's own experience of nation-building and autonomy-claiming. This is followed by the subsequent tactics of Hungarian elites of word-play to advance the cause of autonomy, with the word-play operating on a narrower playing field in Slovakia than Romania. After discussing both countries, I then compare the two country cases. The analysis highlights how understanding the ebbs and flows of claims to autonomy needs to incorporate a wider discursive framework of claims which takes into account the context-specific understandings of autonomy and its relationship to other concepts.

5.1 "Autonomy" in Romania

Hungarian elites in Romania have more room to manoeuvre in their autonomy-claiming compared to those in Slovakia. This may be partly due to the fact that "autonomy" already appears in the Romanian Constitution (1991) in three places of particular importance. The first guarantees the autonomy of religious institutions which are "autonomous from the state" (Article 29(5)). The state recognises 18 religious cults through its *Law no.489/2006 on Churches* (2007). Second is the granting of autonomy to universities in Article 32(6), usually done through their Senate which makes decisions linked to the running of the institutions. The third instance is "local autonomy", where Article 120(1) states that "public administration in territorial-administrative units shall be based on the principles of decentralisation, local autonomy and deconcentration of public services." Thus, some forms of autonomy are recognised and the term itself is used; however, it is arguably "autonomy" understood in ethnic terms which leads to the perception of a Hungarian threat.

5.1.1 Hungarian Elite Understandings of Autonomy

5.1.1.1 General Definition and Purpose of Autonomy

While there are different understandings and conceptualisations of autonomy – as there are different autonomy plans (see Chapter 6 Section 6.1) – asking elites about their understanding of autonomy showed certain shared elements. Broadly speaking, autonomy provides a guarantee that the community can look after itself and have power over different policy areas linked to the well-being of the community. In this sense, there is broad agreement across political actors (EMNP, RMDSZ, MPP). Moreover, autonomy is seen as a collective right, mentioned by different RMDSZ politicians, NGO activists and experts. The collective element is understood as recognition of the community by the state and granting to the community the ability to decide certain matters on its own (Interviews Horváth, 2017; Vincze, 2017). It is not, however, the reality in Romania at the moment since

minority rights are recognised not as collective rights but as individual rights in line with European norms, similar to Slovakia (Chapter 4 Sections 4.1.3 and 4.2.3).

Linked to the collective rights element is the agreement across actors that autonomy is fundamentally about the ability to make decisions for the community: a given community decides on its own affairs (Interview Biró, 2018). This aspect of decision-making is necessary in order for autonomy to be in place. This is equally tied to the notion mentioned by many across the political spectrum of "*önrendelkezés*" or "self-determination", understood not as independence nor secession but as the ability to make one's own decisions linked to the life of those in a given community or territory (Interview Novák, 2018). Bringing decisions closer to the people and to the local level, allowing the community to decide its own affairs, resonates as an idea across the political spectrum (Interviews Benkő, 2018; Fancsali, 2017; Márton, 2018; Tőke, 2018).

Granting autonomy would also serve an integration function vis-à-vis the Romanian state, an aspect not mentioned as explicitly in the Slovak interviews. Several politicians of different political persuasions argued autonomy for the minority community "would close a century's long debate" (Interview Izsák, 2018) and stabilise Hungarian-Romanian relations. Autonomy would provide a contract between the Hungarian community and the Romanian state which would integrate the Hungarian community and increase their loyalty (Interview Novák, 2018). It provides symbolic recognition to the community and "an acceptable solution to the question of what are we doing in this country?" (Interview I. Székely, 2017). Indeed, there is an awareness of the need for the arrangement to be agreed upon with the central government – Bucharest – and powers given officially, legally, to other bodies. Whilst in other rhetoric SZNT speaks about the right to self-determination and the right of

the community to autonomy as a natural "basic right"[45], in my interview with SZNT leader Balázs Izsák (Interview, 2018), he mentioned that autonomy comes about legally with administrative powers granted to the regional level.

5.1.1.2 Types of Autonomy

Elites in Romania, therefore, agree on a broad definition of autonomy and the purpose it is meant to serve. When asked about the different sub-types of autonomy, there was general consensus on its two main types – cultural and territorial – and that these were linked to the different needs of the minority population. For example, the appropriate form of autonomy for the densely concentrated Szeklerland would be territorial autonomy whilst for the Hungarians living in interethnic or minority environments, cultural autonomy would be most appropriate. Some elites – primarily those from RMDSZ, but also a minority expert and MPP leader – also mentioned local administrative autonomy as a form of autonomy. Such a three-fold distinction was the cornerstone of RMDSZ's autonomy conceptions as best outlined in its 1995 programme (see Section 4.1.4.1) (RMDSZ, 2000a).

Table 7 summarises elites' definitions below. I first present the dimensions of a broad definition of autonomy (which actors generally agree upon), and then list the multiple types of autonomy mentioned (if it naturally occurred in the conversation). The table then provides a selection of definitions which best represent the meaning (or divergences in meaning) of the different autonomy sub-types.

[45] This is characterised by RMDSZ MP Benkő (Interview, 2018) and also found in an SZNT publication by Jenő Szász (2011) with the title "God made the Szeklerland for autonomy".

Table 7 Understandings of Autonomy in Sampled Hungarian Elite Interviews in Romania (2017-2018)

Aspect of Autonomy	Definition	Interviewee/Affiliation
General Definition	"It is the embodiment of collective rights, its institutionalisation and creation."	Horváth, Researcher
	"When the community has the right, the means, to decide for themselves on matters regarding education, culture, language use and so on, and in this collective right you can include also territorial autonomy.	Vincze, RMDSZ-FUEN
	"Ability to make one's own laws."	Izsák, SZNT
	"The ability to make decisions, that someone decides on behalf of the community, this is what defines autonomy."	Bethlendi, AGFI
	"…when a clearly defined community makes a contract with the state, and this contract defines which competencies will be enacted by the autonomous territory. So in practice, the central government transfers these tasks, these competencies to the autonomous territory. Many people call this decentralisation."	Antal, RMDSZ
	"…to receive more competencies at the local level."	Kovács, ex-RMDSZ
Multiple Types	"…cultural autonomy and the second the Szeklerland's territorial autonomy…these are disguised competing projects."	Bakk, Expert
	"…many confuse the question of territorial autonomy with the question of cultural autonomy."	Antal, RMDSZ
	"…Territorial autonomy…cultural autonomy…and the third type is local authorities with a special legal status."	Biró, MPP
Territorial Autonomy	"…ethnic self-determination on a specified territory. This means that there is an inner parliament…where laws are made in accordance with national law, making decisions from taxes to cultural questions."	Portik, ex-EMNP
	"…decision-making should be more closer to the people, that it should be a regional body, not necessarily a regional government, but a council or something which should legally make decisions for the benefit of the people, that's how almost every autonomy actually works, that the most important problems in the region are decided by the leaders of the region."	Benkő, RMDSZ
	"Territorial autonomy is not ethnic autonomy…I accept it would solve the problems of one ethnic group…but it does not make it ethnic."	Antal, RMDSZ
Personal Autonomy	"A personal-based collective right, practised by all Hungarians not based on one territory but all Hungarians in Romania…Competencies are not linked to territory…"	Márton, RMDSZ
	"…when there is a certain register, and there is a type of self-determination right that applies to those people on the register."	Bethlendi, AGFI
Cultural Autonomy	"…in those institutions which play a role in the formation and conservation of identity – education institutions and cultural institutions – the community decides about the operations of these institutions. The state institutions do not make decisions without asking the community."	Kelemen, RMDSZ

Aspect of Autonomy	Definition	Interviewee/Affiliation
	"…education and culture – arts, media etc."	Márton, RMDSZ
	Education, museums, questions about language usage.	Bethlendi, AGFI
	"…we decide in questions about education, about religion, about culture and the media."	Kovács, ex-RMDSZ
Local Autonomy	"The third type of autonomy for those districts where a minority comprises a majority."	Székely, RMDSZ
	"We say that in fact this is decentralisation, based on the principle of subsidiarity, it extends to every community and that it is necessary for the local community to make decisions linked to most facets of everyday life."	Kelemen, RMDSZ
Economic Autonomy	"that money, taxes, are spent locally and that cultural and in some administrative questions we decide locally…	Fancsali, EMNP
	"If we compare territorial autonomy with cultural autonomy, cultural autonomy is complemented with economic rights…in the Szeklerland which economically is a left-behind region, it is obvious that economic autonomy is needed so that we can move ahead."	Székely, RMDSZ

When asking about "cultural autonomy" the competency areas ranged from education and cultural institutions at the minimum (Interviews with Kelemen, 2018; Márton, 2018; I. Székely, 2017), but could also cover language, although that was already addressed in public administration (Interview I. Székely, 2017). The *Draft Law on National Minorities* (2005) covered usage of the mother tongue, mass media, religion and culture. The Cultural Chapter of the *Draft Law* is not "cultural autonomy" in its true sense – admits RMDSZ Deputy President István Székely – because there is a mechanism for making decisions jointly between the minority and the government rather than independently (Interview I. Székely, 2017). There were some inconsistencies between the usage of "cultural autonomy" and "personal autonomy" – similar to the interchange also found in the literature. RMDSZ MP and autonomy expert Márton (Interview, 2018) prefers using the term "personal autonomy" rather than "cultural autonomy" – the latter to him refers only to cultural (theatre, the arts) and educational issues whilst the former also addresses social issues such as health care.

None of the politicians brought up the issue of needing a minority electoral list for cultural (or personal) autonomy to be put in place, except for political scientist Levente Salat and NGO activist András Bethlendi (Interviews Bethlendi, 2017; Salat, 2017). Salat argued that without minority lists, personal autonomy cannot work. Bethlendi, on the other hand, thinks that with such a large Hungarian minority population in Romania, there are unlikely concerns of "ethno-business" (an issue in the mother country, Hungary, with implementation of minority self-governments based on collective rights (Dobos, 2007)), whereas it could be an issue for smaller minority communities.

5.1.1.3 The Role of Ethnicity

Politicians across the spectrum did not view the territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland as an "ethnic" form of autonomy. In comparison to cultural autonomy which all agree is on an ethnic basis, EMNP, MPP and RMDSZ politicians insisted that the territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland was not on an ethnic principle, although one politician admitted it would solve the challenges of one main ethnic group (Interview Antal, 2018). Given that the Szeklerland is not a territory where everyone is Hungarian – there is a Romanian minority – it would bring decision-making closer to every citizen living in that territory, regardless of ethnicity, with additional elements of linguistic rights for the Romanian minority as well as usage of Hungarian for the majority (Interview Biró, 2018). EMNP politician Tőke (Interview, 2018) also argues that they are not advocating autonomy just for the Szeklers but territorial autonomy for everyone.

This might be abstractly accurate, but when looking at the reality of how claims to autonomy unfold and different movements of the SZNT and claims to territorial autonomy (to be highlighted in Chapter 6), it seems difficult to untie the ethnic element from territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland. One ex-EMNP politician thinks of territorial autonomy as ethnic self-determination in a territory, with a parliament making decisions linked to a range

of issues such as tax to cultural questions (Interview Portik, 2018). Equally, whilst separating out the ethnic element from regional autonomy later in the interview, RMDSZ President Kelemen also mentions that when speaking of ethnic autonomy it refers to an ethnically homogenous concentrated population which wants to decide its own affairs (Interview Kelemen, 2018). This points to a tension surrounding the exact nature of territorial autonomy as based on an ethnic or non-ethnic principle, of which the former is rejected completely by the government of Romania.

5.1.1.4 Strategy: Autonomy in Policy Areas

Other variations and types of autonomy were mentioned in relation to certain policy areas. These include forestry as well as property restitution. "Personal autonomy" provisions already exist legally in Romania in the realms of religious autonomy and university autonomy. In addition, Benkő (Interview, 2018) mentions fiscal autonomy and others mention economic autonomy (Interviews with Bethlendi, 2017; Fancsali, 2017; I. Székely, 2017) where, for example, corporate taxes would stay in the region or at least a smaller proportion of tax from large companies would go to Bucharest than the current provisions allow (Interview Benkő, 2018). Romanian legislation holds that large corporations and multinationals have to register their headquarters in Bucharest even if they are operating elsewhere; Bucharest receives their tax. Consequently, Transylvania and the Szeklerland do not receive as much money as they could from the operation of these companies (Demeter, 2017). This is in the broader context of the Szeklerland performing worse economically than it did before EU accession (as discussed in Chapter 4 Section 4.1.1). Without settling the recognition and autonomy questions of the Hungarians, RMDSZ mayor Árpád Antal argues that investment is detracted since investors view the region as unstable (Interview, 2018).

The idea of autonomy as also involving legislative competencies was not as well-developed in discussions with different politicians (whilst it was by experts such as Horváth

and I.G. Székely (Interviews in 2017; 2017)). There was a discussion of decision-making and of decentralisation of different policy areas; however, the importance and elaboration of a regional parliament or representative body to represent and make decisions on behalf of the population in the case of territorial autonomy was mentioned by Izsák (Interview, 2018) as a locally elected body, Benkő (Interview, 2018) as a regional body, not necessarily a regional government, and István Székely (Interview, 2017) as an "elected body". The link this has to decentralisation compared to legislative competencies and the difference in decision-making capabilities was not elaborated. At the same time, the idea of giving different powers to a lower administrative level was seen as similar to decentralisation (Interviews Antal, 2018; Benkő, 2018; Izsák, 2018; Kelemen, 2018; Kovács, 2017).

The above discussion has shown how Hungarian minority elites in Romania generally agree on autonomy's broad definition as being able to decide on affairs related to the life of the minority. The cultural-territorial distinction of autonomy is considered by most as sub-types of autonomy, with other sub-types of autonomy also mentioned occasionally across the different parties. The differences in the understandings of autonomy emerge more in the technical plans and the strategies for achieving autonomy in the context of Romania (and will be discussed in Chapter 6 Section 6.1), as well as in some elements of word-play as elucidated further in Section 5.1.3.

5.1.2 Romanian Constraints on Hungarian Autonomy Claiming

The claiming of "autonomy" means different things from the Romanian standpoint than from the Hungarian (Interviews with T. Kiss, 2017; I. G. Székely, 2017).[46] Consistently across the interviews, Hungarian elites mentioned the Romanian negative reaction to "autonomy" aligning with Eplényi (2006)'s earlier findings. (Mis)understood as equivalent

[46] While the scope of this thesis included interviews and data from Hungarian elites only, the Romanian viewpoint here is deduced from political actions and survey data to substantiate the claims of the Hungarian elites.

to secession, independence, border revision and irredentism, the term "autonomy" is a red flag for the Romanians (Interviews with Antal, 2018; Biró, 2018; Fancsali, 2017; Kelemen, 2018; T. Kiss, 2017; Kovács, 2017; Márton, 2018; I. Székely, 2017; I. G. Székely, 2017). As Miklós Bakk (Interview, 2017) puts it,

> *"The territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland looks as if we want to make a big hole in the middle of the Romanian flag with a big revolution."*

Part of this is understandably due to history. Political scientist Levente Salat (Interview, 2017) further explains that autonomy could be a good way to organise a complex system, if only "the word would not be so loaded by historical disagreements and irreconcilable interests among nations." Hungary's 1940 annexation of Translyvania through the Second Vienna Award is still remembered by a segment of Romanian voters and was lived as a trauma. In addition, while the Szeklers can point to long-standing autonomy historically, for the Romanians the imposition of the Stalinist Hungarian Autonomous Region from 1952-68 was seen as a foreign imposition (as discussed in Section 4.1.2). Moreover, as Yugoslavia was falling apart in the 1990s as well as the previous collapse of the Soviet Union, border revision could not be argued to be completely unrealistic until the 1996 *Romania-Hungary Friendship Treaty* (Interview I. Székely, 2017).

Such reported Romanian hostility is corroborated in different ways. The first is in the June 2017 rejection of the Cultural Autonomy chapter of RMDSZ by the government after it was initially planned to be introduced in exchange for RMDSZ's votes to support the vote of no-confidence. However, when the news came out that the government was going to support the bill, it withdrew its support overnight, being accused of "selling Transylvania" (Pataky, 2017). As previous RMDSZ managing director Kovács (Interview, 2017) said, "The type of "minority-friendly" Romanian politician does not exist. The type that exists is one which knows that it needs RMDSZ's votes." The lack of support from the Romanians is also mentioned by Erika Benkő (Interview, 2018),

> *"Everyone is hostile to Hungarians in Romanian parliament…politically speaking… politically everyone is ready to play the Hungarian card and people who were your friends and allies in the Parliament yesterday, if the situation changes, if they go into opposition, they will start using the Hungarian card immediately."*

Other instances of hostility include the lack of debate surrounding the SZNT-written plan for territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland which was submitted three times and dismissed without serious discussion and consideration. Finally, Romanian President Klaus Iohannis – member of the ethnic German minority – won almost 80% of the Presidential votes in the Szeklerland's Harghita and Covasna counties; yet it took three years for his first visit. During his visit he spoke against ethnic-based autonomy which he argued would put a break on the country's development. He argued that Europe has come to the view that regions should not be based on ethnic borders (Nagy, 2017). Moreover, elsewhere he argued that *voluntarily* providing minority language rights when the minority falls under the 20% threshold is unconstitutional (Rostás, 2018b). Iohannis' Presidency has indeed been a disappointment for ethnic Hungarians (Interview Antal, 2018), although Kelemen resigned himself to voting for him in the 2019 President elections (Rostás, 2019).

The second way to corroborate hostility is survey evidence. In 2016, 14% of ethnic Romanians accepted granting territorial autonomy to Hungarians, only slightly higher than the 12% who answered affirmatively in 2014. Only 29% supported separate schools for Hungarians and 27% supported the official use of Hungarian. Moreover, just over half supported the eligibility of Hungarians to run for public office in 2016 (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 89). With such public hostility, the "Hungarian card" is a workable electoral campaign winner (Interview Kovács, 2017) and unless society changes and sees it differently, politicians themselves can continue using the Hungarian card (Interview Portik,

2018).[47] Tied to this element is also the increased social distance between Romanians and Hungarians which is greater than in Slovakia. Due to religion, the Romanian Orthodox world is much more separate than the Hungarian Catholic/Protestant one, with less chance for interaction compared to the overlapping religious affiliation in Slovakia (Interview Bakk, 2017; D. Kiss, 2018, p. 314).

5.1.3 Hungarian Tactics: Word-Play

Hungarian politicians have responded to the constraints of Romanian reticence for supporting autonomy by using different terms when claiming "autonomy" in order to make it more palatable to their ethnic Romanian counterparts. This was also a recommendation of the 1993 and 2014 Neptun negotiations where American advisors suggested changing the wording of the Hungarian minority's claims away from "autonomy" (detailed in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.1.2). Hungarian elites use a fuller range of concepts and have further complications linked to translation and historical connotation of the alternative terms. Terms such as "self-determination" (*önrendelkezés*), "self-government" (*önkormányzatiság*), decentralisation (*decentralizáció*) and regions and regionalism *(regionalizmus*) make their way into the different vocabulary used for claiming "autonomy". In addition, while alternatives are used, there is not a complete taboo on using the term autonomy as there is in Slovakia. Consequently, there is more room to manoeuvre and be creative.

5.1.3.1 Önrendelkezés

The term *önrendelkezés,* or *belső-önrendelkezés* (inner self-determination) is used often by actors – mainly SZNT – when asking for autonomy. This term is linked to the early years of RMDSZ when it claimed "belső-önrendelkezés" in 1993 *Draft Law on National Minorities and Autonomous Communities* and 1993 Brassó Congress statement (RMDSZ,

[47] There was an effort to achieve an inter-ethnic pact following the "Neptun 2" negotiations in 2014 which would see the Romanian parties not using the Hungarian question in campaigns and vote-winning tactics (Kertész, 2014).

2000c; RMDSZ kongresszus, 2000). RMDSZ leader Hunor Kelemen mentioned that he prefers not to use this terminology in discussions with Romanians because of the connotation it has linked to President Wilson and the end of World War I which is when Romanian unification occurred based on the rationale of self-determination (although "belső önrendelkezés" features in the 2016 Election Manifesto p. 4). As such, to him, the term evokes the desire for independent statehood which is the opposite of what the Hungarians actually want to claim (Interview Kelemen, 2018). SZNT and earlier documents qualify the term to "inner" self-determination; however, "self-determination" as a term is still present and arguably does not quell Romanian doubts for the desire of a "state within a state".

5.1.3.2 Önkormányzatiság

Another term used occasionally in the discourse is *önkormányzatiság*, or self-government. Önkormányzatiság allows the community to decide for itself, which is basically what autonomy means (Interview Biró, 2018). The issue with this term is the translation into Romanian. Local self-government (*helyi önkormányzatiság*) refers to the powers of the local body in charge of administering to the local settlement or area. Following from the French administrative system, the terminology in Romanian is "local council" (*consiliul local*) or Mayor's office. However, when a Hungarian uses "önkormányzatiság", the Romanian translation becomes "autoguvernare" or self-government, which has a significantly different connotation evoking ideas of secession (Interview Novák, 2018). The term is therefore problematic. At the same time, focusing on autonomy at the local level – regardless of terminology – works to the Hungarian advantage because it is essentially an administrative question which becomes de facto ethnic due to demography and is a way to attain autonomy (Interview Horváth, 2017).

5.1.3.3 Decentralizáció and Regionalizmus

There are efforts to focus on decentralisation and subsidiarity, as well as on regions and regionalisation. These terms impact all of Romania and in that sense do not just speak about the Szekerland (but would benefit the Hungarians there as well). The idea is to give more powers – such as fiscal – to the local level which would allow the Hungarians more control over their own affairs. This has been the tactic of RMDSZ (Interviews T. Kiss, 2017; Kovács, 2017), and RMDSZ President Hunor Kelemen (Interview, 2018) prefers using this term,

> *"I instead use the term decentralisation and subsidiarity because no one has a problem with subsidiarity if they think that all decision-making should not be made in a far-off central office but that rather people should be left to make decisions linked to their own affairs."*

Kelemen thinks more effort should be put into pushing for more decentralisation while acknowledging that such changes only happen slowly and through small steps as it takes time for the public to recognise that it benefits them as well. Others, such as political scientist István Gergő Székely and journalist Zoltán Sipos argue that there is less symbolic potential around the term decentralisation than autonomy (Interviews Sipos, 2017; I. G. Székely, 2017).

In terms of regionalism, all Hungarian political actors use the idea of regions in their party platforms, albeit slightly differently. SZNT as well as EMNP and MPP focus on the particular needs of asymmetrical regionalism and make references to the Hungarian community and the past (especially SZNT). RMDSZ has its own plan for regions for all of Romania (as does EMNP). The party prefers not to make references to the past but rather to push forward policy reforms for Romania as a whole. RMDSZ MP Erika Benkő (Interview, 2018) illustrates how speaking in terms of "modern regionalism" is a better way to approach the topic of autonomy,

> *"…if you say the autonomy of the Szeklerland, no one knows what it is… You can say 'modern regionalism' means this. And then you say what it means, and you leave out all the nationalistic discourse from it."*

5.1.3.4 The Same Ship?

The word play is significant because according to the elites, the different terminology essentially mean the same thing, unlike the differentiations in the literature (Chapter 2 Section 2.1.5). This is a view taken across the different political actors, from EMNP to MPP to RMDSZ. To illustrate, Portik (Interview, 2018) describes them as the "same ship". RDMSZ politician and FUEN President Loránt Vincze (Interview, 2017) says something similar,

> *"The whole public speech they (Romanians) reject even the term autonomy so sometimes we try to explain with different words and have the same meaning.*

MPP President Zsolt Biró (Interview, 2018) confirms,

> *"If Romanians hear the word "autonomy" then everything collapses and they say no, never. Then we said that maybe we shouldn't even speak about autonomy so let's talk about self-government, let's talk about decentralisation and let's talk about self-determination."*

RMDSZ President Hunor Kelemen (Interview, 2018) takes the same point of view,

> *"It's likely that the word 'autonomy autonomy' should be said less often…I willingly accept that we should give it another name: let's name the child something else if the word autonomy bothers our partners…."*

As such, Portik (Interview, 2018) would advocate forgetting the word autonomy in general,

> *"A future direction for change that I see – of practical, reachable change – would be if we would forget the term autonomy and find another legal phrase which isn't as negatively seen by Romanian society."*

That said, documents still have "autonomy" written on them and curbing the language is not a tactic of all political actors. RMDSZ politicians such as Árpád Antal – mayor of Hungarian majority town Sepsiszentgyörgy in Covasna county – says he would prefer honest dialogue and to not pretend that they are asking for something other than autonomy. Naming it "Mickey Mouse" could work in the short term, but it would make a long-term relationship that is built on trust difficult to maintain once the Romanians realise

that “Mickey Mouse” was really autonomy (Interview Antal, 2018). Therefore, what emerges on the national level – and further discussed in Chapter 6 – is a difference of opinion in terms of language as well as in the strategy for claiming autonomy.

5.2 “Autonomy” in Slovakia

5.2.1 Hungarian Elite Understandings of Autonomy

5.2.1.1 General Definition and Purpose of Autonomy

When asking political elites about the meaning of the term “autonomy”, one element of the definition which held central importance was that members of the Hungarian minority have the ability to make decisions in matters related to the life of the minority. This decision-making characteristic of autonomy was found amongst different actors across the political spectrum, from MKP to Most-Híd to NGO activists and experts. Some also mentioned that it is linked to collective rights (Interviews with Horony, 2017; Öllös, 2017; Őry, 2017), although the Slovak constitution does not recognise collective rights. In addition to this, decision-making by the community was connected to having control over the institutions making decisions, best summed up by Most-Híd MP Ábel Ravasz, “There is no autonomy without institutions” (Interview, 2017). In essence, having one’s own institutions means being independent of interference from the Slovak government to govern one’s own affairs.

Linked to having institutions, the pressing need to establish autonomy for the Hungarian minority was put into the broader context of the threat of the community’s disappearance and the “overarching fear of dying out as the dinosaurs” (Interview Ravasz, 2017). Autonomy is seen as a way to encourage the self-sustainability of the Hungarian minority and to fight against the trends of assimilation and emigration. While different sides mentioned the declining numbers, it was bemoaned more by MKP representatives (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Kőrösi, 2017). The high concentration of Hungarians in districts

with high unemployment also makes the Hungarians more vulnerable to emigration, particularly to Hungary.[48] These difficulties, coupled with weak institutional provisions, renders ensuring the reproduction and survival of the minority identity at the forefront of the minds of many Hungarian political elites. Plenipotentiary for Minorities and Most-Híd politician, Laszló Bukovszky (Interview, 2017) also admits that while Hungarians currently have some control over local councils and institutions – they are better represented and organised at the local level in government councils than their size would assume – sooner or later this will change as more Slovaks move and settle in the Hungarian-dominated localities and autonomy conceptions will need to be discussed. In general, for the Hungarian minority elites in Slovakia, autonomy is seen as a solution for survival: "The quest for autonomy is basically a quest for survival…it should have the primary goal of sustaining the community" (Interview Ravasz, 2017).

5.2.1.2 Types of Autonomy and the Role of Ethnicity

Similar to Romania, elites can agree on the broad purpose and general definition of autonomy. However, unlike Romania, there is more variance on the exact types of autonomy mentioned and some divergences in definitions of these sub-types. Regarding different sub-types of autonomy, either unprompted or when asked about the types of autonomy, elites mentioned personal autonomy, territorial autonomy, educational autonomy, and cultural autonomy. In addition to this, language usage was often referred to as "linguistic rights". Moreover, the different types of autonomy could overlap: language rights were linked to cultural autonomy as well as educational autonomy, for example. Some actors also mentioned the economic dimension to autonomy arrangements, as well as the link to

[48] This aspect was brought up in different interviews (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017; Kőrösi, 2017). At the same time, cross-country comparisons show that emigration to Hungary is less likely in Slovakia than in other countries like Romania (Gyurgyík, 2011, pp. 472–475). The Gyurgyík (2011) study shows that assimilation is a larger factor behind declining population numbers.

administrative reform. “Administrative autonomy” would see the creation of administrative units linked to the language contours of the region (Interview Öllös, 2017). Only one elite – Miklós Duray – mentioned the symmetric and asymmetric character of autonomy. To him, cultural autonomy was symmetric whilst territorial autonomy was asymmetric and given on an ethnic basis (Interview, 2017). The ethnic basis of autonomy was otherwise only mentioned in reference to early territorial autonomy plays in the 1990s (Interview Horony, 2017). Minority researcher Attila Simon argued, on the other hand, that autonomy is not just about ethnicity but that decisions are brought closer to bottom level (Interview, 2017).

In general the discussion of autonomy in Slovakia can be broken down into “territorial autonomy” (which often overlaps with questions of administrative divisions), “cultural autonomy” (embodying institutions such as museums, media, theatre, publishing houses), “educational autonomy” (Hungarian-language schools), and “language rights” (railway/street signs, use of Hungarian in public administration, etc.) (Interview Fiala-Butora, 2017). Table 8 provides an overview of how different elites understood the meaning of autonomy. It first showcases the dimensions of a broad definition of autonomy (which actors generally agree upon), lists the multiple types of autonomy mentioned (if it naturally occurred in the conversation) and then provides a selection of definitions which best represent the meaning (or divergences in meaning) of the different autonomy sub-types. It was not realistic to give every elite definition of autonomy and its subtypes, but this table tries to summarise the range of views across the actors.

Table 8 Understandings of Autonomy in Sampled Hungarian Interviews in Slovakia (2017-2018)

Aspect of Autonomy	Definition	Interviewee/Affiliation
General Definition	"We decide on the how to manage our own affairs within the country"	Péter Őry, MKP
	"When we speak of autonomy, we speak of institutions. There's no autonomy without institutions."	Ábel Ravasz, Most-Híd
	"Autonomy is not just about ethnicity…it is one level of democracy, so that decisions are brought closer to the bottom level." "That the making of decisions are closer to us… that the community makes decisions on questions that affect it."	Attila Simon, Researcher
	"Self-governance… in various decisions, in making various decisions, for a community as a whole."	Géza Tokár, Roundtable
Multiple Types	"It's territorial, cultural and educational autonomy"	Ábel Ravasz, Most-Híd
	"Individual autonomy, personal autonomy, cultural autonomy, territorial autonomy, etc"	László Bukovszky, Most-Híd
	"There are many types of autonomy, of self-governance.	Miklós Duray, MKP
Personal Autonomy	Includes elections, based on an electoral list where you declare your nationality. Is based on symmetrical principles.	Miklós Duray, MKP
Cultural Autonomy	"Unlike personal autonomy, you do not need an election mechanism."	Miklós Duray, MKP
	Covers cultural activities like media, TV, theatres, publishing houses.	János Fiala, Roundtable
	"In all important cultural questions, the minority decides through its own legitimate institutions."	László Öllös, Researcher
Territorial Autonomy	"That can mean a lot of things, and that can describe a lot of relationships between the autonomy forms"	Ábel Ravasz, Most-Híd
	Asymmetrical ethnic territorial autonomy	Miklós Duray, MKP
	"Usually under this word (autonomy), everyone understands territorial autonomy".	László Bukovszky, Most-Híd
	Competency in linguistic matters and economic matters	János Fiala, Roundtable
Educational Autonomy	"Cultural and educational autonomy, those are parallel systems that do not need to coexist but can easily coexist."	Ábel Ravasz, Most-Híd
	"When we say cultural autonomy, usually educational autonomy belongs in it."	Miklós Duray, MKP
	Linked to Hungarian language schools	János Fiala, Roundtable
Economic Autonomy	"Autonomy is not just about collective rights, but also about economic questions"	Péter Őry, MKP
	"Creating some sort of economically self-governed units which are connected to the traditional regions"	Géza Tokár, Roundtable
Language Rights	"Language usage ties you to a territory"	Miklós Duray, MKP
	Public signs, public administration, public services, TV/regional broadcasting needing subtitles	János Fiala, Roundtable
Administrative Autonomy	"it tries to bring the territorial administration in line with the linguistic borders"	László Öllös, Researcher

When digging into the details about different types of autonomy, there was less consistency across elites in their understanding of the term, and they were occasionally vague or contradictory. For example, only Bukovszky and Duray (Interviews 2017; 2017) mention "személyi" (individual) and "perzonális" (personal) autonomy. However, Bukovszky seems to make a distinction between the two in his listing, whereas Duray mentions them as if they were interchangeable ("The symmetrical type is...not the territorial type of autonomy but we say it is individual, personal autonomy").

In addition, in the wake of the passage of the 2017 *Cultural Fund Law*, two Most-Híd representatives interviewed gave different interpretations of whether or not the Cultural Fund was a form of cultural autonomy (and notice the interchange between "self-government" and "autonomy" by Plenipotentiary for National Minorities Mr. Bukovszky):

> *"It is not minority autonomy, it is still not minority autonomy…it has certain autonomy characteristics, but it is still not minority cultural self-government"* (Interview Bukovszky, 2017).

> *"I understand it as a model of autonomy…I was in the process from the beginning and one of the things we've always tried to push for, to achieve, was to create something that is a manifestation of cultural autonomy"* (Interview Ravasz, 2017).

Another example concerns the relationship between cultural autonomy and educational autonomy. Here, Most-Híd representative Ábel Ravasz and previous MKP politician and autonomist Miklós Duray disagree.

> *"Cultural and educational autonomy, those are parallel systems that do not need to coexist but can easily coexist"* (Interview Ravasz, 2017).

> *"When we say cultural autonomy, usually educational autonomy belongs to it"* (Interview Duray, 2017).

The divergence in views is explained by some elites as due to a deficiency of conversation and dialogue amongst different political actors and also a lack communication to society. The absence of consensus within the Hungarian political community means that

the political elite cannot then bargain for a tangible manifestation of autonomy (Interview Simon, 2017). The main concrete plan openly claiming autonomy is János Bósza's plan (Gulyás, 2008), as will be discussed in Chapter 7, which has been written off as controversial and naïve (Interview Tokár, 2017). The fact that there is no agreed upon definition of autonomy is mentioned by experts, members of the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia and Most-Híd interviewees but not MKP interviewees (Interviews Bukovszky, 2017; Horony, 2017; Ravasz, 2017; Simon, 2017; Tokár, 2017). This is perhaps because those interviewed stood by MKP's 2014 Plan on Economic Development[49] as what it thinks of autonomy (although the 2014 Plan is phrased in terms of self-government and administrative reforms rather than as autonomy). The dilemma is best summarised by Plenipotentiary Bukovszky (Interview, 2017) who argues that dialogue between elites is wanting,

> *"So now we're talking about something for which we have many ideas, and could have many ideas, but no one has stepped forward with a concrete plan arguing that they think this is the solution for making sure the Hungarian minority will remain here."*

5.2.1.3 Strategy: Autonomy in Policy Areas

During the interviews, the link that autonomy had to reforms in different policy areas came through strongly especially in the fields of administrative reform and economic development. For example, the tactic of promoting greater decentralisation within a currently highly-centralised Slovakia was suggested as one solution. The decisions made within the 8 regions could be taken down to a lower level, where Hungarians would have more control over decision-making and are present in the local councils. Focusing on local administrative divisions would provide a sort of autonomy for those settlements where Hungarians constitute a majority in the decision-making body (Interview Bukovszky, 2017).

[49] The full title is *The Institutional Requirements for the Slovak-Hungarian Community's Preservation, Growth and South-Slovakia's Economic Development* (*A Szlovákiai Magyar Közösség Megmaradásának és Gyarapodásának, valamint Dél-Szlovakia Gazdasági Felzárkoztatásának Intézményi Feltételei* (2014)). It is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7 Section 7.1.4.

The focus on administrative reform is also found in policy documents, covered in Chapter 7.

The economic dimension to autonomy covered control over decision-making linked to industry and investment. This would allow the minority to be better able to have a say over the economic development of the region, rather than Bratislava making all the decisions (Interview Simon, 2017).[50] Another creative option mentioned was the increase of institutional control in combination with sufficient financial support to allow autonomy to materialise (Interview Tokár, 2017). These tactics of policy area reform are the main element behind the strategy of a "creative policy game" elucidated in Chapter 7 and local level analyses (Chapter 8 and 9) to attain *de facto* autonomy.

Across the spectrum of elites interviewed, "autonomy" as a whole was seen as necessary; however, broken down into its components, not all types of autonomy were seen as attainable and politically palatable. Cultural and educational autonomy were seen as possible, and indeed steps were being made in that regard under the *Cultural Fund Act* of 2017. However, territorial autonomy – due to its negative connotations – were seen as out of the question.

5.2.2 Slovak Constraints on Hungarian Autonomy Claiming

When asked about the possibility of territorial autonomy, one prominent Most-Híd politician said, "let's not even talk about the political connotations of forming something like that" (Interview Ravasz, 2017). Indeed, the political connotation behind the word "autonomy" is historically loaded and is linked to Slovak national agitation, as discussed in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.2. From the 1848 *The Demands of the Slovak Nation* to the interwar period where Slovakia used autonomy as a stepping stone to independence, the historical

[50] This ties well into the focus of Chapter 9 on local autonomy claims in the policy area of regional and economic development in Slovakia.

connotation of the word "autonomy" is strongly linked to independence in the Slovak mindset.[51] Acknowledgement of the role of history in the Slovak independence movement came across political parties and actors, generally unprompted, suggesting a heightened awareness of the issue (Interviews with Bukovszky, 2017; Duray, 2017; Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017; Őry, 2017; Simon, 2017).

Given this historical constraint, it is not surprising that any Hungarian minority interviewee who talked about the historical connotation of the word autonomy mentioned it as a negative (not positive) connotation. This was found across political affiliation and activity. While providing a constraint on discourse in one sense, it has also led to creativity. Soon after starting the discussion on autonomy and types of autonomy, usually unprompted, interviewees mentioned the play on words and deliberate decision on the part of Hungarian minority elites to use other words than autonomy to claim the same thing. Both political parties and civil society organisations have used other words instead of autonomy, the most popular of which is "önkormányzatiság", or self-government. As Roundtable leader Géza Tokár (Interview, 2017) explains,

> *"Autonomy is impolite, it shouldn't be discussed. It means dissolution of the state in general. That's the reason why MKP is talking about self-governance and why parties are not talking directly about autonomy."*

5.2.3 Hungarian Tactics: Word-Play

Compared to the broader range of terms used in Romania, in Slovakia the word-play operates in a narrower playing field. In the Slovak-Hungarian context the autonomy debate is in essence couched in a language that uses "önkormányzatiság"(self-government) instead

[51] This is then manifested in different ways in hostility to Hungarian claims to autonomy. For example, when MKP was out of power and without coalition constraints, its leader Pál Csáky began using the term "autonomy" more openly in his speeches, which created stirs in the press. In 2008, his meeting with Hungarian-Romanian leader and MEP László Tőkés erupted in controversy that he was scheming for the autonomy of southern Slovakia (Új Szó, 2008). Going back to the Komárom Meeting in January 1994, Miklós Duray recounted that if they would have claimed territorial autonomy the riot squads would have raided the sports stadium (Interview, 2017).

of "autonómia" (autonomy), and the usage of the latter instead of the former is for purposes of effect and confrontation rather than difference in meaning. Interviewees across political parties and civil society made the same point: *the two words are synonyms and mean the same thing*. This is significant because the conceptual distinction made by scholars like Lapidoth (1997, pp. 53–4) and discussed in Section 2.1.5 between self-government and autonomy is not used by the Hungarian ethnic minority. As one lead politician explained, between themselves they use the term autonomy but to the Slovak audience they say "self-government" (Interview Duray, 2017).

The starting point for this creative word-play in the Hungarians' minority autonomy claims in the Slovak Republic is the landmark Komárom Meeting in January 1994, as recounted in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.1. From that point onwards, there is a movement away from calls for "autonomy" to the play on words to "self-governance". This move has continued to this day, with both MKP and its rival Most-Híd as well as the Roundtable, using the term "önkormányzatiság" to denote autonomy in its various forms (territorial, cultural, administrative etc.). This is found – as discussed in the Chapter 7 Section 7.1 – in MKP's Autonomy Concept (2014), the joint 2012 MKP-Most-Híd-Roundtable "*Minimum"* Statement (Felvidék.ma, 2012), Most-Híd's *Civic Vision* (2016b) and other statements by political leaders. The fact that János Bósza is considered an eccentric for his autonomy plan further adds to the sense of "autonomy" being inappropriate to claim.

When discussing other words which could be used to claim autonomy, the general consensus was on the usage of "önkormányzatiság" or self-government (Interviews with Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017; Őry, 2017; Ravasz, 2017; Simon, 2017; Tokár, 2017). Other words such as self-determination – *önrendelkezés* – were suggested less. Most-Híd MP Ravasz saw the different autonomy forms as types of self-determination, but autonomy activist Miklós Duray emphasised that they use the term *önkormányzatiság* and not

önrendelkezés. Different elites also mentioned that the Hungarian minority society was bothered by the term *autonomy* because it was seen as too confrontational (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017). In any case, the use of a dual discourse was clear with the substitution of self-government for autonomy whilst keeping the meaning the same behind the terms.

5.3 "Autonomy" in Slovakia and Romania Compared

There are similarities and differences in the two cases of Slovakia and Romania in the understanding of the word "autonomy" and the strategy of "word-play". Hungarian elites in Romania have more space to manoeuvre in their claiming and show, generally, greater consistency in the meaning of autonomy and its sub-types than the Hungarian elites in Slovakia. Possible reasons behind the differences in understanding and word-play strategy are due to structural constraints – best described as historic and demographic – which affect the preferences of actors and their discursive options used. This chapter's findings demonstrate that there is a broader range of labels used to claim "autonomy" than is found in legal definitions and in the scholarly literature (as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.1). I begin to unpack these elements here and further elaborate in the subsequent Chapters 6 and 7 which analyse the national level.

5.3.1 Similarities

Elites in both countries agree that the definition of autonomy boils down to decision-making and being in charge of making decisions linked to the life of the minority. Many understand autonomy as a collective right that also provides recognition of the community. The idea of representation is not dwelt upon in depth on either side, at least not in the interviews (the different Hungarian autonomy plans in Romania spell this aspect more in detail). Moreover, Hungarian elites in both countries look to Western Europe to provide examples – such as South Tyrol – of successful regional autonomies for ethnic minorities.

Elites also engage in a tactical word-play when claiming autonomy, substituting other words rather than use the term "autonomy" itself.

"Autonomy" has an aura: it is often seen and used as a 'wondertool' which will make the condition of the ethnic minority magically better. Hungarian elites in Romania describe the term's (problematic) understanding as a "universal medicine" (Interview Sipos, 2017), a "magic word" (Interview Márton, 2018), "the end of history" (Interview T. Kiss, 2017) and a "medicine for all our problems" (Interview I. Székely, 2017). In Slovakia, one human rights lawyer, argued that autonomy is often waved about as a solution to the many dilemmas facing the Hungarian community (such as population decline, discrimination and unemployment) without adequately filling it with content (Fiala-Butora, 2012; Interview, 2017a). Indeed, another civil society leader argued it is sometimes thought of as a "wondertool" which will solve people's problems (Tokár, 2014, p. 149; Interview, 2017). FUEN President Loránt Vincze argues that in both countries autonomy should be the "tool" rather than the "wonder solution" to the preservation of the community (Interview Vincze, 2017).

5.3.2 Differences

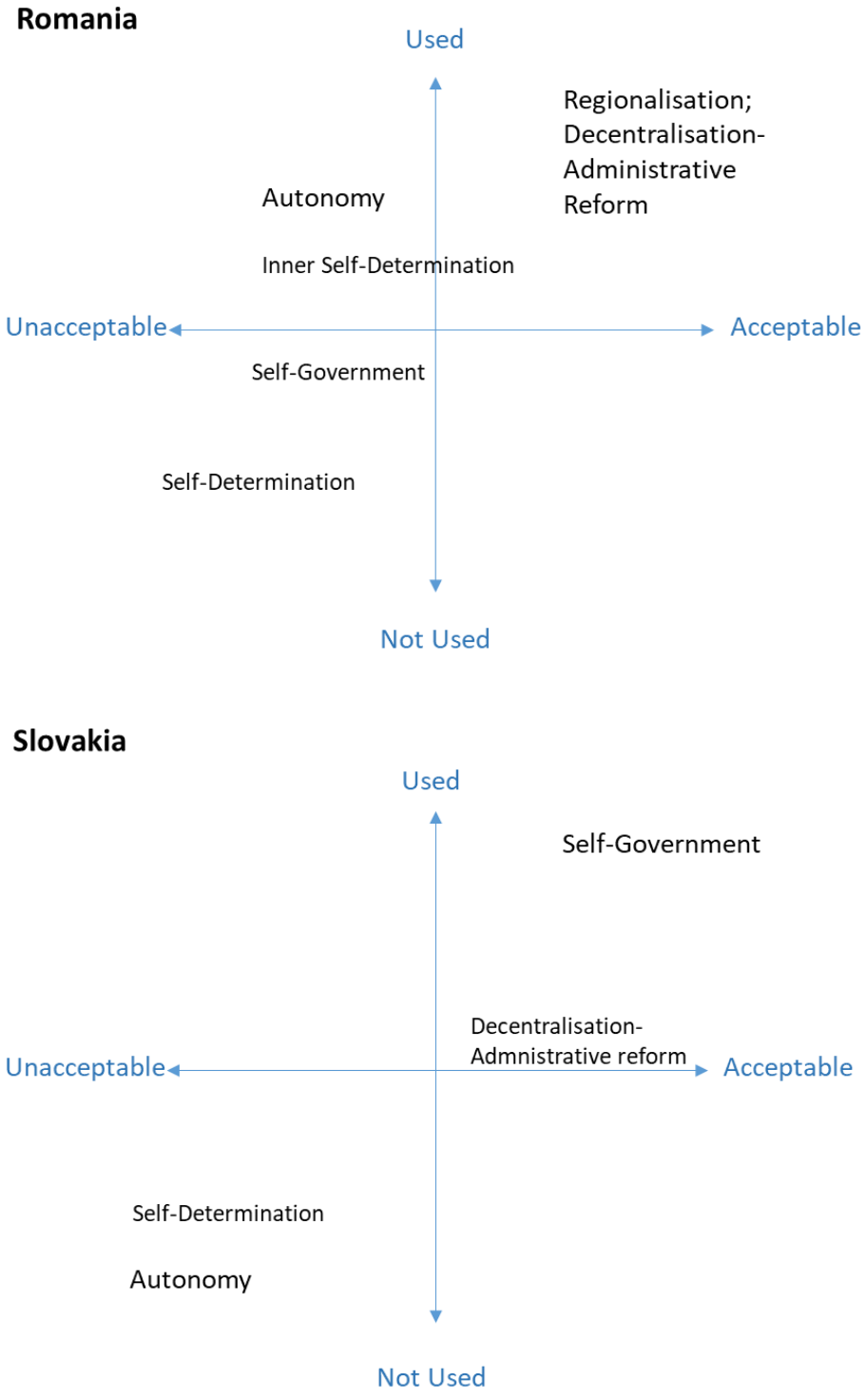
More telling, however, are the differences. These arise in elites' conceptualisation of the sub-types of autonomy as well as differences in the decision of which words to use in their word-play strategy. Why this happens can be partly attributed to structural constraints such as those of historical legacies and demographic realities as well as the different preferences of actors for their strategies of word-play.

As highlighted, in Romania the general two sub-types are cultural and territorial autonomy, whereas in Slovakia the concept is unpacked as educational, cultural and territorial autonomy and linguistic rights. "Educational autonomy" is not discussed as such by the elites in Romania, except in reference to autonomy of the universities. Elites in

Romania also emphasised in interviews the integrative and legal nature of autonomy provisions. Moreover, territorial autonomy was argued not to be along ethnic lines whereas in Slovakia it is seen more in ethnic terms (when discussed linked to how territorial autonomy can be gained through administrative reforms and revisions of administrative boundaries). Finally, there are other sub-types such as economic autonomy and administrative autonomy present in both cases, but the idea of local administrative autonomy mentioned more frequently in Romania.

Another difference is in the substitution strategy of word-play. Figure 7 below provides an overview of the different terminologies used by the Hungarian elites in each country and where they are roughly positioned along an axis of political/societal acceptability. In the case of Romania, there is more manoeuvrability in terms of different words to be substituted for "autonomy" than there is in Slovakia. In the latter, across all actors of the political spectrum, "self-governance" is the key substitute term. In Romania, different words are used – in addition to still claiming "autonomy". Actors have their preferences – such as "inner self-determination" by SZNT and "decentralisation" by RMDSZ (further elaborated in Chapter 6).

Figure 7 Elite Word-Play Tactics to Advance the Cause of Autonomy



*These graphs are shown to give an overall impression of the ways that terms are used in the Slovak and Romanian context by Hungarian elites, gathered through my elite interviews and documents claiming autonomy. This is not a scientifically measured or calculated representation.

The different discursive strategies can partly be accounted for by structural constraints – understood here as historical legacies and demographic realities. Regarding

history, while "autonomy" is seen as a "dirty word" in the Romanian context, it is not "historical dynamite" as in Slovakia. In the Slovak case, the word "autonomy" has a strong historical connotation on the part of the Slovak majority because of their own independence struggle. Consequently, the Hungarian minority has taken to a definite word-play using one main alternative concept, *önkormányzatiság* or "self-governance." Moreover, there is an element of path dependence behind the difficulty of using other terms than "self-governance" due to the 1994 Komárom meeting which was a key moment in the minority's autonomy struggle.

By contrast, "autonomy" in Romania is a mixed bag of meaning. For ethnic Romanians, it is not linked to their own struggle but rather to the imposition of an institutional arrangement by a foreign Stalinist power. It is not inherent to their own national story. It is also present in the Constitution under different forms, such as providing local autonomy, autonomy of universities and religious autonomy. For the Hungarians in Romania, moreover, "autonomy" has had precedent, both in terms of the HAR but also with previous recognition of Transylvania and the Szeklerland as geographical units (as detailed in Chapter 4 Section 4.1.2). Elites can draw on this history, as is also evidenced in the different autonomy plans. Consequently, Hungarians in Romania use alternative terminology for their claiming tactics but can still use "autonomy" if they wish. For Slovakia, the Hungarians did not constitute a separate region or entity in itself in the way that Transylvania or the Szeklerland can point to a unique identity. The Hungarian "Felvidék" was instead more akin to the borderlands.

Another difference relates to demography in two ways: population numbers as well as population concentrations. The issue of demographic decline – whilst also part of the reality of Hungarians in Transylvania – was emphasised much more across different Slovak-Hungarian elites. Given the smaller population numbers of the Hungarians in Slovakia

(approximately 460,000) and the decline of their population by over 100,000 since 1990, the consequences are arguably more sharply felt. In this sense, autonomy is urgent and needed to sustain the community. Regarding population concentrations, in Slovakia, the Hungarians are territorially concentrated all along the southern border.

In Transylvania, demography plays itself out differently: approximately half live territorially concentrated in the Szeklerland whilst the other half are either in inter-ethnic environments or constitute an ethnic island within a Romanian inhabited area. Consequently, the needs are different: territorial autonomy would not solve the problems of the latter two categories just as cultural autonomy provisions would not add anything new for the Szeklers. The different needs of the population as well as having more historical precedents to draw on could be one reason why Hungarians in Romania were quick to acknowledge cultural and territorial autonomy as types of autonomy whilst in Slovakia there was greater inconsistencies in sub-types and meanings of autonomy.

5.4 Conclusion: Conceptual Mapping and Empirical Reality

Addressing Research Question A of how autonomy claiming has evolved over time in Romania and Slovakia needs to begin with an examination of how elites understand the term. Moreover, examining the dynamics of "autonomy" claiming does not just entail a direct analysis of the term's usage throughout the time period of examination. Rather, the chapter demonstrated how elites have adapted their discourse. "Autonomy" is a fluid and dynamic concept, changing in meaning across space and across actors, and even changing in choice of words within a language. Therefore, the analysis of how autonomy claims change over time must incorporate this dynamic of word-play and discursive constraints.

Autonomy claim-making is a phenomenon largely shaped by factors such as structural constraints at the national level – historic as well as demographic – which make autonomy claiming a more creative phenomenon than previously understood. This chapter has,

therefore, shown how different elites conceptualise autonomy and its subtypes, and has demonstrated one element of the "creative policy game" strategy of autonomy claiming, namely the "word-play" tactic. The next two chapters build on this "word-play" and further elaborate the dynamics of claim-making at the national level in the Romanian and Slovak contexts.

The above discussion raises questions about the academic literature's empirical study of autonomy (Chapter 2 Section 2.1) and highlights different components or subtypes of autonomy. The typical "territorial autonomy-cultural autonomy" distinction is found more often in Romania than Slovakia (with the occasional addition of local autonomy in Romania). However, generally one cannot say that Hungarian minority elites think of autonomy in the same way as the traditional "territorial autonomy" and "non-territorial autonomy" distinction. Moreover, the idea of "educational autonomy" in Slovakia does not find such a strong resonance in the academic debate, nor does "economic autonomy" or "fiscal autonomy" when speaking in terms of ethnic minorities. Elites mention "administrative autonomy" and "local autonomy" as well as other types of autonomy such as religious autonomy. In Romania elites emphasised that territorial autonomy does not have to be on ethnic principles, whilst in the literature it generally (with the exception, for example, of Palermo (2012)) is approached on an ethnic basis.

The second aspect is that elites themselves are inconsistent in their definitions of autonomy which questions how we study autonomy claims. Can we assume that when one actor claims cultural autonomy, they mean the same thing as another actor claiming cultural autonomy (possibly in a different country), and can we assume this also means the same thing that the scholarly literature means when it speaks about cultural autonomy? At least from these findings, the answer is no. There is also a fair amount of conceptual stretching

(Sartori (1970)) and repackaging occurring by elites in their claims to autonomy which further complicates the study of autonomy claims.

The above point connects to the third issue of word-play which is inadequately accounted for in the scholarly literature and the conceptualisation of autonomy and its conceptual cousins (see Section 2.1.5). Empirically, the Minorities at Risk Index uses English news sources – mainly the BBC and CTK Newswire which is a Czech agency – for the study of the Hungarians in Slovakia. Using English translations for the categorisation of autonomy claims risks false-negatives and also overlooks the nuance at play within the Hungarian language given the word-play between "self-governance" – and other words – with "autonomy." Moreover, other non-English languages may have other word-plays and nuances of the term "autonomy" which may go unaccounted for or coded to the wrong category in large databases. In the Hungarian context, unlike the scholarly literature which has differentiated the concepts of self-governance and autonomy (although scholars disagree how they are different, but they do agree they are different), Hungarian elites view them as the same thing. This casts some doubt on the validity of what we are measuring and actually capturing in large-N database categories.

6 The Normalisation of "Autonomy" Claims in Romania

> *"Our goal is to have autonomy, our goal is not to have an autonomy statute...We do not need an autonomy statute. We need autonomy"* (Interview Biró, 2018).

With the creation of EMNT[52] and SZNT[53] in the early 2000s and the tabling of different autonomy plans in 2003-2005 by SZNT, EMNT and RMDSZ, the explicit claiming of "autonomy" is back on the agenda compared to its hiatus in 1996-2003 whilst RMDSZ is in coalition. The plethora of autonomy plans and conceptions from the pre-accession period (Chapter 4 Section 4.1.4) continue to feed into the autonomy plans in this post-EU accession era as well. In addition to explicit claims to autonomy, as Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3 discusses, Hungarian elites in Romania use a "word-play" tactic substituting other terms such as "regionalisation" and "decentralisation". To further examine the claims to autonomy in the post-EU accession era (2007-2018), this chapter draws on elite interviews and policy document materials (Chapter 3 Section 3.3) to best address the research questions on how autonomy claims changed during this period and how elites made claims in relation to opportunities and constraints in different political arenas (Research Questions A and B, respectively).

The post-EU accession period has several important developments. First, there is an increase of minority actors in the playing field, partly through two new political parties who unsuccessfully challenge RMDSZ. The first is *Magyar Polgari Szövetség* – MPSZ or *Hungarian Civic Alliance* – headed by a former member of the RMDSZ's Reform Group Jenő Szász, later becoming *Magyar Polgári Párt* (MPP) – Hungarian People's Party. It runs unsuccessfully in the 2008 elections. After a fallout between Szász and László Tőkés, the EMNT created a political party in 2011, the *Erdélyi Magyar Néppárt* (EMNP) – *Hungarian*

[52] EMNT: *Erdélyi Magyar Nemzeti Tanács*, Hungarian National Council of Transylvania
[53] SZNT: *Székely Nemzeti Tanács*, Szekler National Council

People's Party of Transylvania – supported by autonomist Tőkés. Each has their own autonomy conception and are supported by the Hungarian Fidesz government.

Nationally, however, RMDSZ continues to be the primary national representative in Parliament, serving in coalition from 2009-2012 and from March-December 2014. In 2014, RMDSZ also formulates its own territorial autonomy plan for the Szeklerland. Arguably since then, intra-group party competition becomes less salient as RMDSZ re-asserts itself as the main Hungarian political party. By 2014, each actor has an autonomy plan, with the dominant conception of autonomy being one of territorial autonomy for the Szeklerland, approached often through the logic of regions and regionalisation. Not all plans are claimed in Parliament, and with the exception of RMDSZ's Szeklerland *Autonomy Statute*, the plans are drawn from the pre-EU accession period. When plans are claimed – as Table 9 highlights – it is either done symbolically as with the SZNT plan and the Alba Iulia codification or strategically as with RMDSZ's cultural autonomy plan. The period culminates in autonomy becoming a valence issue: everyone is an autonomist (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 138–141).

Table 9 Claims to Autonomy Submitted to Romanian Parliament by Hungarian Minority Actors 2007-2018

Year	**Actor**	**Claim**
2017	RMDSZ	*Cultural Autonomy Bill*
2017	MPP	*Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland*
2018	RMDSZ	Codification of *Alba Iulia Declaration*

At the national level, RMDSZ mostly pursues its claiming through the "creative policy game's" focus on policy reforms, as well as using different terminology such as "regionalisation" and "decentralisation" in the technique of "word-play" (Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3). RMDSZ pursues reforms in administration, decentralisation and education policy in particular. Unlike pre-accession, other claims to autonomy also emerge by elites using the

means of mass mobilisation, led by SZNT. In addition, with the national level blocked in its implementation of legislation as well as in its support for regional autonomy of the Szeklerland, smaller civil society actors work to create space to enable claims to autonomy. This facilitation work is done by SZNT in its focus on symbolism and regional branding which increase the Hungarian population's sense of identity. In addition, two new small but active organisations are established: CEMO (Civic Engagement Movement) formed in 2007 in Marosvásárhely and AGFI (Advocacy Group for Freedom of Identity) created in 2017 in Kolozsvár. They focus primarily on linguistic rights, ensuring the implementation of already existing legislation. Their work on advocacy and litigation further facilitates claims to autonomy by showing how the existing legal system falls short of the necessary measures to ensure the community's well-being and sustainability.

With the emergence of these new actors – political and civic – there is also a different usage of arenas in autonomy claiming. While the primary arena of bargaining is the domestic national arena where a range of minority actors make claims to autonomy, it is used differently. Smaller actors make explicit claims to autonomy (for example, with the SZNT plan) whereas RMDSZ – the only Hungarian political party in Parliament – pursues a strategy of small-steps through policy area reforms and only rarely claims "autonomy" explicitly. Moreover, smaller minority actors put more energy into claiming to different arenas – including the European. This is seen through shadow reports to European institutions as well as the Minority SafePack Initiative. RMDSZ hops on board for the Minority SafePack initiative, but is overall less reliant on the European arena to pursue its aims than the domestic arena. Finally, with the narrowing of the domestic and European fields due to the fear of DNA (Romania's anti-corruption agency) and the EU's lack of support for minorities, respectfully, a different relationship with the kin-state emerges in 2014 when Fidesz provides support to RMDSZ rather than solely support RMDSZ's

challengers. Such a relationship – for those Hungarian minority actors involved – arguably constrains and undermines their domestic bargaining position.

All these elements form pieces of the puzzle of trying to understand how autonomy is claimed – explicitly and creatively – in the post-accession period. The chapter first discusses the main autonomy-related plans and their provisions as elaborated by different political parties and movements. It then goes into the creative policy game strategy of policy reforms across areas such as decentralisation, regional reform and education, as well as the tactics of mobilisation and legal action. This is then followed by a discussion of the different arenas of bargaining – domestic, kin-state and international – and the dynamics which occur within each in the pursuit of autonomy. By the end of the period, where everyone is an autonomist, I argue a primary divide crystallises between those who pursue a "modernist" approach to autonomy such as RMDSZ and CEMO and those who are more "historical" autonomists like SZNT.

6.1 Autonomy á la Carte: A Menu of Actors and Plans

As mentioned above, the political landscape undergoes significant change in this period with the emergence of MPP, EMNP, CEMO as well as AGFI. Both parties – EMNP and MPP – have some limited success in local elections but do not significantly challenge RMDSZ nationally (Székely, 2014, pp. 116–126). However, they keep autonomy on the agenda of RMDSZ. Intra-group competition[54] around autonomy is arguably an important reason why RMDSZ formulates its 2014 *The Autonomy Statute for Romania's Szeklerland*. In this period, everyone becomes an autonomist, aligning themselves under valence competition: a situation where the electorate and parties agree that an issue is important. Consequently, the policy space for meaningful differences is limited (Székely, 2014, p. 73).

[54] As a reminder, intra-group competition is competition within the ethnic Hungarian minority, as discussed in Chapter 1 Section 1.2.

Whilst the wiggle room for policy differences is narrow, a more detailed look at what exactly the different actors are claiming demonstrates a path dependence of autonomy conceptions from the pre-EU accession era as well as a difference in the symbolic versus strategic logics of claiming.

6.1.1 MPP

Starting with the MPP, their *Framework Programme* (2008) focuses on placing Transylvania into the "Europe of regions", calling for regional reform in Romania. MPP would divide Romania into 12 historical and cultural regions each with their own parliaments, as well as administration, staff, resources and symbols. A system of asymmetrical regionalism would provide these regions with powers according to their own needs. The regions would also have wide-ranging self-government powers and cultural autonomy would be decided at the regional level. Autonomous schools would be set up and fall under the remit of cultural autonomy at the regional level. A new Romanian constitution would put this in place, and would also provide for the upper chamber of the bicameral Parliament to represent the regions. MPP advocates constitutionally embedding local governmental autonomy with the ability to turn to the Constitutional Court if need be.

The Szeklerland would have its own special self-government regional status. Until the granting of this special status, MPP calls for the strengthening of more collaboration between counties and local settlements in the Szeklerland, making usage of European incentives for economic collaboration across localities. It also supports greater "regional marketing" and efforts for a coherent Szekerland development strategy. Therefore, for MPP, autonomy fits under the realm of the regional restructuring of Romania, tying into EU reforms supporting regions and sub-national cooperation which municipal governments in the Szeklerland can take advantage of to promote intra-regional cooperation until formal regional autonomy is granted. This programme of MPP was never submitted to Parliament.

MPP had the support of Fidesz early on. MPP did not succeed, however, in the long-term in bringing in significant electoral results and only received 15% of the Hungarian vote in 2008 (Székely, 2014, pp. 117, 126). Following unimpressive local election results in 2012, MPP did not run in the later 2012 national elections. RMDSZ and MPP cooperated for the 2014 European elections, openly calling for cultural and territorial autonomy and the recognition of community symbols (RMDSZ and MPP, 2014). For the 2016 national elections, MPP enters into an agreement with RMDSZ and appears on their candidate list. The number of Deputy seats going to MPP mirrors the proportion of seats won in the local mayoral elections (which precede the national elections in the same year). In 2016, MPP won 15 local positions (4 in big cities) and RMDSZ 200 (note, EMNP wins none); consequently, of the 21 Deputy seats 19 went to RMDSZ and 2 to MPP (Interview Biró, 2018).

6.1.2 RMDSZ

RMDSZ has three significant plans, one for territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland, a plan for regionalisation, and the third from their 2005 *Draft Minority Rights Law.* The latter was accepted as part of the governmental programme in 2005 but was not passed into law by Parliament (see Section 4.1.4.3). It is still in Parliament in 2018, stalled at the level of parliamentary committees (Interview Toró, 2017). For June 2017, RMDSZ slightly modifies it, particularly the Chapter 5 provision of "autonomy councils" – Hungarian-representative bodies – with veto rights over questions of education, culture, media and religion are renamed to remove the instinctive negative reaction to the "autonomy" word (Interview Kelemen, 2018). In June 2017, when the votes of RMDSZ are needed in a crunch vote of no confidence (ironically so the present coalition government could vote itself out of government) the coalition government agrees to pass RMDSZ's cultural autonomy chapter in Parliament the next day. However, when the news leaks out to the media that

evening, the reaction by the Romanian press was too strong to pass it (Balogh, 2017; Interview Kovács, 2017; Maszol.ro, 2017; Transindex.ro, 2017).

RMDSZ develops a plan for 16 regions and 5 macro-regions in 2011 when it is in coalition government. The exact details are discussed in Section 6.2.1.1 below. In addition to the this, after a long silence on the matter, RMDSZ emerges with its own territorial autonomy plan for the Szeklerland in 2014, *The Autonomy Statute for Romania's Szeklerland* (RMDSZ, 2014a). Elaborated mainly by MP Árpád Márton, this plan takes the autonomy provisions put in place for South Tyrol as its model. It starts from the current county system in Romania and puts Harghita, Covasna and Mureș county together to form the Szeklerland region. In line with the Romanian legal framework of how to alter municipalities, it gives referenda to the different districts in Mureș county for those Romanian-majority inhabited municipalities to decide whether or not to alter its belonging to Mureș county. With this form, the Szeklerland is created as a region with different powers allocated to the regional level and county level. Hungarian and Romanian as the official languages. There is also a regionally elected body called the Regional Council with 77 seats (Article 23). Its passage would require constitutional amendments. It is a plan which was released for public debate and has not yet been submitted to Parliament since the right opportunity to do so has not yet arisen (Interview Márton, 2018).

The RMDSZ Plan is much critiqued.[55] According to political scientist Levente Salat (Interview, 2017), the plan was just done to win votes. Another autonomy expert similarly argues it was done so that RMDSZ could out-compete the smaller pro-autonomist parties and have a plan of its own to take advantage of the "high mobilisation potential" that the autonomy issue has (Interview Bakk, 2017). The text itself looks like "copy-paste" from the

[55] See the RMDSZ point by point response to different critiques in 'Válasz Salat Leventének: Az RMDSZ-es autonómiatervezet kritikájának kritikája' (RMDSZ, 2014b).

South Tyrol autonomy plan (Interview Toró, 2017). Researcher István Gergő Székely's (Interview, 2017) main critique is that it was not professionally and technically well done. However, by having the *Statute,* RMDSZ no longer has a territorial autonomy plan missing from its repertoire.

At the very end of the time period under examination, in December 2018, RMDSZ tables a bill in Parliament to codify the promises of Section III of the *Alba Iulia Declaration* and its provisions for autonomy (MTI, 2019). In my interviews with elites prior to December 2018, some mentioned the *Declaration* and that Hungarians are not claiming anything novel, but rather are asking for what was already granted to them (Interviews with Antal, 2018; Bakk, 2017; I. Székely, 2017). This indeed is the logic for tabling the bill in parliament after the close of the Romania's Centenary celebrations. As Attila Cseke said, "We are not asking for anything new (Maszol.ro, 2019a)."[56] The bill was rejected by the Parliament's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies in March 2019. The Romanian Academy also issued a statement of interpretation of the *Declaration* arguing that autonomy was just a guiding principle in the document until the Constitution was finalised. The *Declaration's* main point and key purpose was to unify Transylvania and Romania, rather than provide autonomy (Mandiner.hu, 2019).

6.1.3 SZNT

The RMDSZ *Autonomy Statute* is in competition with the SZNT (Csapó) plan from 2003. As mentioned in Section 4.1.4.3, this plan was submitted to Parliament twice, and enters into Parliament for the third time in December 2017 by MPP representative József Kulcsár-Terza, to the consternation of RMDSZ MPs. The plan is rejected in May 2018 by

[56] Interestingly, the comments by my interviewees in July 2017 and September 2018 pre-date the introduction of the bill in December 2018. During 2018 and the Centenary celebrations of unification, as mayor Árpád Antal mentioned, the Hungarians were worried there might be strong anti-Hungarian sentiment. Fortunately that did not come to pass as there was a lot of internal political conflict amongst the Romanians (Interview Antal, 2018). As such, it is not a big surprise that the Hungarians waited until after the celebrations to put in the bill.

the Senate (Maszol.ro, 2018a).[57] The submission of the Plan to Parliament is not formally negotiated with RMDSZ (Interviews with Benkő, 2018; Novák, 2018) and – RMDSZ argue – not well done:

> *"This is the most recent example of how to badly approach the topic. They submitted a plan for which there wasn't even good parliamentary debate, it didn't even have a technical committee debate, the Romanian side acted as if it didn't even notice it as it swept it off the table. It did not move the question (of autonomy) forward in any sense except that now someone can put it on their CV that they submitted it....there was not a technical debate, that this part is good, that part is not good"* (Interview Novák, 2018).

The SZNT plan does not speak about three counties which would form the Szeklerland and receive autonomy, but rather it speaks about the historical Szekler seats and the historical Szeklerland which would receive autonomy as a region (see Chapter 4 Section 4.1.2).[58] The RMDSZ *Statute* joins together the current administrative counties of Harghita, Covasna and Mureș (with referenda for the latter for those settlements (település) where Romanians would have the opportunity to not belong) has the advantage of departing from the existing administrative units in Romania and through the referenda would de facto arrive to a close overlap with the historical Szeklerland (Interview I. Székely, 2017). As István Székely (Interview, 2017) argues, the Constitutional Court was very clear in its decision linked to the creation of EU regions arguing that regions are against the constitution and therefore cannot be given administrative powers. As such, the SZNT idea that a Szeklerland "region" can be created easily is not realistic and it also does not depart from already existing

[57] Although outside the time period under examination, it is important to note that in October 2019, Kulcsár was again considering putting the SZNT plan into Parliament (Maszol.ro, 2019b). He followed through in December 2019, putting it in Parliament alongside MPP President and MP Zsolt Biró. This time, however, they had the support of RMDSZ (Kovács, 2019).

[58] The historicity of the SZNT's idea of Szeklerland and the different Szekler seats is also questioned by Árpád Márton. He argues the SZNT created eight szekler seats out of the historical six. Bardóc-Miklósvár put two „fiú-szék" (sub-unit of a szekler seat, or *szék)* together and created a seat from the „fiú szék" of Gyergyószék (Interview Márton, 2018).

administrative units, but rather from the historical Szekler seats (RMDSZ, 2014b). In addition, both plans would require constitutional reform for its implementation.

6.1.4 EMNT and EMNP

An examination of EMNT and EMNP documents shows the continuation of the RMDSZ conceptualisation of autonomy from the early 1990s. EMNT puts down as its goal autonomy based on Transylvanian "belső önrendelkezés" (inner self-determination) (EMNT, 2013a). The Szatmár Statement (2013b) by EMNT speaks about this "belső önrendelkezés" and different forms of autonomy similar to the RMDSZ three-level autonomy idea of territorial autonomy, cultural autonomy and local government autonomy for those units with significant Hungarian residents (Chapter 4 Section 4.1.4.1). The EMNT document also calls for territorial autonomy not just for the Szeklerland but for Partium, a region in northwest Transylvania. Autonomy is seen as a solution to the dwindling population and emigration. It calls for the Hungarians to choose autonomy: "Let us choose autonomy! Autonomy is a part of life's path. Autonomy – is the solution!"[59]

The EMNP's *Framework Plan* (2012) is similar in many respects to MPP's insofar as it advocates reorganising Romania to be based on regions. The provisions for asymmetrical regionalism, a new constitution with the upper chamber of the bicameral parliament representing the regions and the provision of cultural autonomy to happen at the regional level are all similarities. At the same time, it mentions putting Kolozsvár as Transylvania's capital and promoting it as the centre for culture and innovation. Its vocabulary again of "belső önrendelkezés" (inner self-determination) is found in EMNP's documents, including its statement on historical regions (EMNP, 2013), supporting a reform of Romania's administrative structure to incorporate 15 historic regions. Their 2014

[59] Author's translation. „Válasszuk az autonómiát! Mert az autonómia az élet útjának része. Az autonómia – a megoldás!"

programme for the presidential candidacy of Zsolt Szilágyi includes not just a reform of the regional structure but a clear claim to create a federal Romania. It includes calls for autonomy in several fields, include education and administration and fiscal federalism (EMNP, 2014).

From the increase of political actors during this period, therefore, there is no embarrassment or holding back of claiming "autonomy" in party platforms and every political actor wants to show that it is an autonomist. Previous plans and conceptions of autonomy are still used – such as "inner self-determination", the *Cultural Autonomy* bill as well as the SZNT-favoured plan for Szeklerland autonomy. Moreover, "autonomy" is often embedded in a discussion of regions and regionalism. Where differences emerge is in what is practical to submit to Parliament and the feasibility of implementing the different plans. RMDSZ is more practical minded and claims strategically, as seen with the *Cultural Autonomy* bill. This bill is perhaps the easiest to implement legally as it does not require constitutional changes, but even this less radical type of claim is difficult to pass in Parliament. The versions of territorial autonomy for the Szeklerland would all require constitutional amendments or a complete overhaul of the constitution, with the RMDSZ version at least building on the current administrative units rather than starting from scratch. The SZNT plan, whilst submitted to Parliament, had little chance of succeeding and was arguably done more to prove a point than out of a tactical manoeuvre with a possibility to pass. The EMNP plan for regional and federal Romania is even more unlikely to come to fruition given the administrative and historical barriers to its acceptance.

6.2 Pursuing de facto Autonomy: Policy Reform, Mobilisation and Implementation

In addition to the explicit claiming of autonomy through different plans and tabling them in Parliament as discussed above, the claiming of autonomy in Romania is pursued in

additional ways. Similar to Slovakia, there is a creative policy game used by RMDSZ to push forward policy area reforms to enable the Hungarian minority to have more control over its decisions and its usage of the Hungarian language. Unlike Slovakia, an additional tactic of mass mobilisation is used to claim autonomy, led by SZNT. Moreover, civil society also works to create a more enabling environment to facilitate autonomy claims. This is done by promoting regional identity and symbolism as well as litigation and advocacy.

6.2.1 The Creative Policy Game: Policy Area Reform

6.2.1.1 Administrative Reform and Regionalisation

The question of territorial-administrative reform and regionalisation continues to be highly relevant and political in the post-EU accession period. Hungarian parties and civil organisations have their own suggestions for regionalisation, such as MPP, EMNP and RMDSZ, as discussed in Section 6.1. Moreover, and importantly, "regionalisation" is seen as synonymous as "autonomy" (Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3). The idea of strengthening the regions – and particularly Transylvania – was the theme in the 2016 Parliamentary campaign for RMDSZ. With "Transylvania is the Future" (*Erdély a Jövő*!) slogan, RMDSZ made promises to bring "Respect to Transylvania" (*Tisztelet Erdélynek*!) where the local level makes decisions for itself rather than being dictated to by Bucharest (RMDSZ, 2016a). At the same time, changing the regional structure entails a fair amount of risks and calculations, with reorganisation challenging the idea of a unitary Romanian state and potentially diluting Hungarian ethnic concentrations in administrative units.

After creating the Development Regions in 1998, the issue of territorial-administrative reform arises rather vehemently in 2011 when the centre-right PDL government and President Băsescu want to redesign the territorial-administrative structure of Romania, making the regional development regions into administrative units. This is mainly for political reasons – better PDL local electoral results and other domestic

considerations – rather than reasons such as EU pressure. PDL was unpopular due to its austerity policies and it was hopeful that the reforms would be to its advantage electorally as it faced opposition locally (Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016, pp. 279–280).

The PDL proposal to replace the 41 counties with 8 the development regions put the Hungarian minority in a severely disadvantageous position. Its high population concentrations in Harghita and Covasna counties, as well as sizeable populations in Mureș, Satu-Mare, Bihor, Sălaj and Cluj would become proportionally even smaller. Moreover, RMDSZ would be at a disadvantage in county and local elections. As a coalition partner, RMDSZ did not accept the proposal and rather put forward its own idea of 16 regions with four or five macro-regions. However, one of the macro-regions resembled the area of territory that had been annexed in 1940 to Hungary. This, unsurprisingly, received a strong negative reaction from the Romanian side. PDL then offered RMDSZ special status to 10 counties including Harghita and Covasna, which RMDSZ rejected as it would then create a worse situation for the remaining Hungarians who would be swallowed up in larger territorial units (Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016, pp. 281–285). The PDL proposal was finally rejected by the Constitutional Court who ruled that it violated the constitution and existing provisions for local autonomy (Benedek and Bajtalan, 2015, p. 28). Given that any reform will require constitutional amendments, RMDSZ – according President Hunor Kelemen (Interview, 2018) – stands ready with its plan of 16 regions in case the moment arises when Romania wants to constitutionally allow regions to have administrative status and competencies.

6.2.1.2 Decentralisation and Fiscal Autonomy

Decentralisation, or the handing over of more powers from Bucharest to the county and local level, can cover a range of policy areas. The problem of an overly centralised state, for example, was felt very tangibly in the area of wildlife management and hunting which

had gone lethal. The overpopulation of bears in the Szeklerland had led to several occasions of bears entering people's houses, encounters on the streets, and even deaths. The powers to kill the bears comes from Bucharest; the powers of wildlife control do not rest with the counties. Harghita County President – Csaba Borboly – said at a forum in July 2018 (and notice the interchange between decentralisation and autonomy as mentioned in Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3):

> *"In the interests of decreasing the number of the victims, the county council's authority has to be broadened as well as its financial resources ensured. Until there is not more autonomy – this is yet another example –these problems will not be solved, because we see that if it does not hurt for Bucharest then they do not address it, not in time…Until there is not decentralisation, until then we'll have these events*" (Hargitamegye.ro, 2018).

There is a desire for decentralisation linked to taxes and fiscal autonomy amongst both Hungarians and Romanians. It is mentioned in some elite interviews, unprompted, that the Romanian centralised system is untenable and the dynamic between Bucharest and its peripheries is criticised by Romanian society as well (Interviews with Márton, 2018; Portik, 2018). Moreover, research by Brubaker (2006, pp. 347–350) finds that autonomy in its financial and administrative sense has support amongst Romanians in Cluj-Napoca. Autonomy for Transylvania is seen as desirable because Bucharest is taking away money from Transylvania. However, while there is general Romanian public support for increased decentralisation, the idea of creating regions with an ethnic component – such as the idea of a regional Szeklerland – is seen as threatening to the Romanian majority (Benedek and Bajtalan, 2015, pp. 29–30).

There is some support in Transylvania as a whole under the small Transylvanist movement – a movement of Hungarians, Romanians and Germans – seeking better conditions for the region of Transylvania. It is tied to the idea of economic autonomy.[60] Its

[60] The idea of "Transylvanism" or *transzilvanizmus* dates back to the 19th century and to Imre Mikó and Zsigmond Kemény who saw the movement as cultural and literary. It then became more political after the

current version emphasises the uniqueness of the Transylvanian identity as separate from the Romanian and Hungarian. It criticises the policies of Bucharest and calls for autonomy of the region. One of its most prominent activists, Romanian Sabin Gherman, said at one rally,

> *"Our mother tongue does not divide but ties us together, the region's autonomy would serve the country's development."* (Maszol.ro, 2018b)

The movement is linked to other regional developments such as the civic regionalism embodied in the Provincia Group (discussed in Chapter 4 Section 4.1.4.2), the Transylvanian Democratic League movement (*Erdélyi Transzyvlanista Liga*) with its "Transylvanian Minimum" programme in 2018[61] and the small and marginal political party SZEP (*Szabad Emberek Pártja*, Party of Free People).[62]

The Romanian state seems more amenable to policy reforms in this area as evidenced by the second phase of the Neptun negotiations held in 2014 with American Allen Kassof.[63] Discussions were had over the usage of other terms instead of "autonomy". The Romanian side argued that it was not the autonomy plan that was problematic but rather the constraining political context, particularly before elections. Another suggestion was to implement a "trial period" for fiscal autonomy for the Szeklerland and also to build in some

1867 union between Transylvania and Hungary, and especially after the Trianon Treaty in 1920 (Balogh, 1999, p. 243).

[61] This was specified in 2018 as comprising three key points. First, Transylvania should have its own legal status because of its regional and cultural unity. Second, Transylvania's identity is equally comprised of three languages and three histories: Hungarian, Romanian and German. Third, Transylvania has its own historical and cultural characteristics which any regional reform has to respect (Szekelyek.ro, 2019).

[62] SZEP – or in Romanian, POL (Partidur Oamenilor Liberi) – is a small interethnic party which is present locally in Marosvásárhely. They advocate fiscal reforms and decentralisation along the Swiss model (SZEP, 2019).

[63] The first instance of the Neptun negotiations were in 1993, marked by controversy. Three RMDSZ leaders secretly met with the Romanian Social Democratic Party PDSR in a mediated setting by the American NGO *Project on Ethnic Relations*. The parties negotiated allowances in education and linguistic rights which, according to them, facilitated a later breakthrough in minority rights provisions in Romania. At the same time, the leaders did not have RMDSZ sanction to attend the meeting but were not punished afterwards. The autonomists within the party saw this as a betrayal of the autonomist stance within the party (Székely, 2014, pp. 110–111). The Neptun II negotiations witnessed RMDSZ Mayor Antal proposing "Ten Points" to the Romanians for the future of the Szeklerland. Among the different points are calls for territorial and fiscal autonomy of the Szeklerland, a Szekler Development Region, full decentralisation, acceptance of the Szekler flag as a regional symbol and the acceptance of Hungarian as the second official regional language in the Szeklerland (Kertész, 2014).

aspects of autonomy into decentralisation legislation (Sipos, 2015). Such suggestions are telling indeed of how policy area reforms linked to decentralisation and fiscal reform have the potential to implement autonomy without having to explicitly claim it.

6.2.1.3 Education in the Mother Tongue

Another battleground for policy reform is education in the mother tongue. The passage of the *Law on Education* (2011a) provides the framework for education until university. The basis of setting up Hungarian minority language schools is linked to pupil numbers; a minimum pupil number of twelve is needed to form a Hungarian class for grades 1-8. Where attaining pupil size is difficult due to transport issues or other special reasons, classes can be joined together. These developments in education, compared to the starting point from the collapse of communism, show positive trends (Csata and Marácz, 2018, pp. 405–406). Moreover, decentralisation measures mean that the financing of education is done at the local level and decision-making made through the creation of "iskolaszék" or school committees, composed of teachers, students, parents and the local governments, with Bucharest less involved in education questions (although the county still has a fair amount of power) (Interview Kovács, 2017).

Even with these provisions in place, the minority is not fully in control of decision-making over their educational institutions and there are issues of implementation. A case in point is the 2018 decree, passed 10 days before the start of the school year, amending Article 263 of the 2011 *Law on Education.* The decree said that only Romanians can teach Romanian in Hungarian language schools, effectively nulling the qualifications of the Hungarian teachers in Hungarian language schools who were trained and qualified to teach Romanian (Tasi, 2018). It was only in December 2018 that the Senate passed RMDSZ's alterations to the decree which annul it, with the National Anti-Discrimination Council also stating that the decree put Hungarian students at a disadvantage compared to their Romanian

counterparts. RMDSZ Hunor Kelemen (unsuccessfully) called for the resignation of Education Minister Valentin Popa who refused to alter the decree (Maszol.ro, 2018c).

For higher education, Article 135 of the *Law on Education* affirms the right of three multicultural and multilingual universities to form tracks in minority languages. These three universities are Babeș-Bolyai in Cluj-Napoca, the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Târgu Mureș and the University of Arts in Târgu Mureș. These universities and the provision of tracks in the minority language are quite sensitive and linked to the decision-making of University administration. This, however becomes controversial in the case of University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Marosvásárhely. The Romanians in the University's Senate outvoted the Hungarians and did not allow the implementation of a parallel Hungarian language track, citing institutional autonomy. This is in contrast to the successful Hungarian departments put in place in Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj and the Hungarian faculty at the University of Arts in Marosvásárhely with their own decision-making rights. Although the *Law on Education* is said to trump the institutional autonomy of the university, the Ministry of Education did not enforce it (Csata and Marácz, 2018, pp. 409–410; Papp *et al.*, 2018, pp. 270–272).

Thus, RMDSZ has focused on the "creative policy game's" component of policy area reforms in the areas of administration, decentralisation and education. Although there are some favourable provisions in place (such as the 2001 *Law of Public Administration* and 2011 *Law on Education*), enforcement of the provisions remains questionable. The issue of implementation is taken up more explicitly by civil society actors, as is the cause for more explicit claims to autonomy, to be discussed below.

6.2.2 Mobilisation and Regional Branding

After the formation of SZNT and EMNT and the diverging political views arising in terms of what sort of autonomy arrangement to claim for Hungarians, the need to include

civil society better in autonomy claims was noted by constitutional lawyer Attila Varga (Varga, 2004). As Eplényi (2006, p. 77) writes, civic mobilisation finally began in 2006 with two Szekler rallies: a cycling event "tekerj-rá" around the Szeklerland to spread the cause of autonomy and a call for a referendum for Szekler autonomy.[64] Mobilisation continues in different ways throughout the post-EU accession period, mobilisating the Szekler identity through rallies, the creation of symbols and efforts of regional branding. However, the mobilisation is generally elite-led (Interview Novák, 2018).[65] Nevertheless, these identity-building efforts create a stronger momentum behind claiming autonomy and facilitate claims.

SZNT was organising rallies on the 10th March (Szekler Freedom Day) in support of autonomy, but in 2013 the turnout was more than just a few hundred: it was about 30,000 according to the organisers, or 5,000 according to police (Krónika.ro, 2014). The momentum continued with the "Székelyföld Menetelés" – March for the Szeklerland – in October 2013. Approximately 15,000 (police estimate) to 120,000 people (organiser's estimate) met at 14 different points surrounding the south-eastern Szeklerland and started walking to the next point, creating a human chain (origo.hu, 2013). There was a great sense of momentum and unity arising from these events. Leader Balázs Izsák felt, however, that they could not be repeated on a regular basis similar to how Martin Luther King's march on Washington was only done once (Interview, 2018). Other events followed, such as the annual "Világitsuk ki Székelyföldet" (Let's light up the Szeklerland) begun in 2015, with different campfires being lit around the historical-ethnic border of the Szeklerland (3szek.ro, 2019).

[64] This was not supported by the Romanian local authorities, although in theory local governments can allow local referenda. Although the Romanians did not allow it, SZNT implemented an unofficial referendum by going around with a moving ballot box to ask people's vote (Interview Bakk, 2017; SZNT, 2006).
[65] To confirm the point that it is elite led, in an interview with SZNT leader Balázs Izsák he says in reference to the 2013 Szekler Freedom Day, "we thought that we have to mobilise people, we have to take them to the streets so that they are visible"(Interview Izsák, 2018).

Such mobilisation as in 2013 has not been matched and are arguably losing intensity (Interviews Portik, 2018; Salat, 2017; Toró, 2017). However, the symbols of Szekler identity have become popular, such as the creation and popularisation of the Szekler flag. In a survey carried out in Covasna county, 67.7 per cent of Hungarians said they identified more with the Szekler flag than the Hungarian flag (Kiss, 2019). The flag was originally the symbol of the SZNT and adopted in 2003. In time, the locals start putting the flag out on their houses. During fieldwork it was striking to see the number of houses in the Szeklerland waving the Szekler flag. Similarly, the Szekler national anthem is adopted – only – in 2009. All this is done through the mobilising force of SZNT and general support of EMNP to create a movement and a better sense of regional identity. In 2017, EMNP politician Ervin Tőke accepted to be fined 10,000 lei (approximately 2000 euros) for putting up the Szekler flag in a public square in Csíkszereda (Barabás, 2017). RMDSZ MP Erika Benkő also speaks about the importance of being able to put up the regional flag that her constituents identify with (Interview Benkő, 2018). These elements show a conscious nation-building effort which is clearly happening and is elite-led. Figure 25 and Figure 26 in Appendix I illustrate the above-mentioned mobilisation and usage of the symbols.

Other aspects of regional identity have recently won recognition for the Szekler identity, such as the "real csíki beer" scandal. Heineken had purchased a nearby brewery in 2003 and sued Andreas Lenard who had revitalised another old brewery in 2013 to sell csíki beer – which he called "csíki sör" in link to the Hungarian name of the region, Csík. Heineken sued Mr. Lenard for breach of intellectual property because his name of the beer resembled Heineken's Ciuc Premium, "ciuc" being the Romanian name of the region. This then led to a campaign of "real csíki beer" ("igazi csíki sör") by Mr. Lenard, marketing his as being the one from traditional Szeklers rather than a large multinational company. In the end, and through additional actions by the Hungarian government who threatened to ban

Heineken in their country due to its communist red star symbol – the two parties dropped their charges. The scenario led to a boost of Szekler pride, according to Lenard,

> *"This product has helped buoy national pride…And this struggle with Heineken, whether or not intentionally, here in the Szekler land, has become the symbol of the local struggle to survive"* (Karasz, 2017).

Such marketing strategies are rather well planned. Others, such as the creation of the Szeklerland exclusive Merkúr supermarket in 2007 and the Góbé product line selling products from the Szekler region, focus on social capital and ethnic loyalty, selling local Hungarian-made products in the case of the latter, and employing more than 700 people in the case of the former. These economic ideas end up reinforcing an ethno-regional identity (Csata and Marácz, 2018, pp. 422–423) and have arguably been quite successful. On the other hand, mass mobilisation rallies, as discussed above, have not kept up their momentum.

6.2.3 Implementation: Advocacy and Litigation

Elites interviewed across the political spectrum highlighted the challenge of implementation of existing legislation (Interviews with Antal, 2018; Bethlendi, 2017; Fancsali, 2017; T. Kiss, 2017; P. Kovács, 2017; Sipos, 2017; I.G. Székely, 2017; Szigeti, 2018; Toró, 2017; Vincze, 2017). The international treaties of the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)* and *European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)* as well as domestic legislation such as on administration and education, need to be better implemented. In this sense, primarily through the work of two small civil society organisations – CEMO and AGFI – elites have taken up the fight for better implementation of legal regulations linked to language usage. In addition to lawsuits, they focus on advocacy and shadow reports. These tactics create the space for and facilitate the claiming of autonomy. Tibor Toró (Interview, 2017) summarises it well,

> *"You need to prove that the laws are not implemented. And then you can say that everything can get resolved by autonomy. But you need to prove that it's not working."*

One notable issue is that of multilingual signs. Both CEMO – formed in 2007 – and AGFI – formed in 2017 – see the need to focus on the implementation of existing domestic legislation. This particularly includes the 2001 *Law on Local Public Administration* with its 20% linguistic threshold along with European norms. For example, although the Hungarian population comprises 45% (T. Kiss, 2018, p. 26) in the town of Marosvásárhely, its town square does not have its name written in Hungarian, only in Romanian (see Figure 27 in Appendix I). CEMO openly criticises the lack of bilingual street signs and public signs in Marosvásarhely. In addition to street signs, it takes on the cause of bilingual practices in schools. It complained to the National Council for Combatting Discrimination (NCCD) that schools were discriminating against Hungarian children in their monolingual practices, namely monolingual signs and monolingual communication. CEMO won the case, with the mayor however refusing to put up bilingual signs initially until forced to through the threat of a 8000 RON fine (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 148).

CEMO also works on advocacy and on empowering Hungarians to be willing to fight for their rights. According to founder Enikő Szigeti (Interview, 2018), a mindset change is required where people will feel confident to speak up and to "fight for their own cause"; the mindset currently is described as an "interiorised second-hand citizen status". One example of empowerment is in the renaming of a school to a Hungarian patron. After communism, schools were renamed from their numerical identity (school 1, school 2). However, there was not one school renamed with a Hungarian patron name in a town comprised of almost 50 % ethnic Hungarians. When one school was going to be renamed to Adrian Păunescu – the poet of Nicolai Ceausescu – the Hungarian parents resisted. Over the course of three years, CEMO helped to support the renaming of a primary school after "Bernády György", an important mayor during the interwar period, which it won in 2013 (CEMO, 2018; Interview Szigeti, 2018).

Another instance where the implementation of bilingual signs was taken on through litigation was in the city of Kolozsvár. The local council in 2002 passed a decision to put up a multilingual city sign, which never happened. The lawsuit first came in from a Dutch businessman in Transylvania – Gábor Landman – saying the language signs should not be monolingual. His case was dropped because he was not a citizen, but it was taken up again by a local organisation, the Minority Rights Egyesület, and won in the courts (Kiss, 2016; FSandor, 2017). In July 2017, the multi-lingual Cluj sign was finally put up after having to wait two months, not just in Romanian and Hungarian languages but also in German (Gyergyai, 2017). Please also see Figure 28 in Appendix I for the coverage.

The issue of bilingual signs in Kolozsvár would be incomplete without mentioning the completely grassroots and rather unstructured "Musai-muszáj" ("must-must") movement. In 2016, it openly mocked the multicultural rhetoric of the mayor in the run-up to the selection of the European Cultural Capital of 2021 (which did not go to Cluj but to Timișoara) (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 151–153). One year after the supportive court decision to put up the bilingual signs, of the sixteen signs only four had been put up. To protest, in February 2018 the movement organised a flashmob in Kolozsvár's main square to highlight the issue to the mayor and also went around the town with a bicycle with the multi-lingual sign attached to it (Krónika.ro, 2018; Rostás, 2018a).

In addition to domestic battles, AGFI and CEMO work on the European level by submitting shadow reports. CEMO has submitted shadow reports for the *ECRML*, the *FCNM,* and the UN Periodical Report. AGFI as well as Musai-Muszáj has also done so (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 149, 153). The main goal of these reportings is to demonstrate that the domestic legal level is not implementing the legislation and is therefore being discriminatory. Without showing the international bodies that legal remedy is sought for problems of implementation and that these legal remedies have not worked, there is not

much for the international bodies to do and little room for organisations to claim for change. The shadow reports have arguably elicited a change in response. The 2018 report of the Council of Europe *FCNM*'s monitoring showed more Hungarian-minority recommendations with more critical discourse than its previous round of monitoring in 2012 (Toró and Bethlendi, 2018, p. 31).

The discussion in this section displayed the range of creative tactics through which Hungarian minority elites have pursued autonomy. While they may vocally claim "autonomy" and table autonomy plans in some instances, it is by no means the only way to claim autonomy. RMDSZ mainly focuses on a creative policy game. The SZNT uses mobilisation to claim autonomy through mass rallies and also promotes regional branding and symbolism to further encourage the sense of the need for autonomy. Other civil society organisations – such as CEMO and AGFI – have chosen the tactic of litigation and shadow reporting to highlight shortcomings in legal implementation of existing provisions in order to facilitate autonomy claims.

6.3 Analysis of Actors, Arenas and Levels 2007-2017

The primary arena of bargaining is the domestic national arena where a range of minority actors make claims to autonomy, with debate around what they should be claiming and how useful the claims are. RMDSZ focuses on the "creative policy game" of policy reform and decentralisation as a way forward for *de facto* autonomy, while smaller actors are more vocal on outright claiming "autonomy" and criticise RMDSZ. Whilst the European Union and other European institutions are not seen as particularly helpful, they are appealed to as an arena by SZNT and smaller organisations, with RMDSZ hopping on board through FUEN (Federal Union of European Nationalities) and the Minority SafePack initiative. With the narrowing of the domestic and European fields due to the fear of DNA (Romania's anti-corruption agency) and the EU's lack of support for minorities, a different relationship with

the kin-state has been in place since 2014 when Fidesz moves to provide support to RMDSZ rather than solely backing RMDSZ's challengers. The kin-state's role, however, is a double-edged sword, arguably taking away legitimacy from Hungarian minority actors not just through its extensive financial support to different organisations but through dual citizenship.

6.3.1 Domestic Political Arena

In an atmosphere where all parties are autonomists (Székely, 2014, p. 122), the most important difference is in the strategy used to attain autonomy. The strategies are constrained by the realities different actors face which are then used as opportunities: (1) electoral logic by all parties determined by intra-group competition, (2) realpolitik at the national level by RMDSZ determined by the constraints of parliamentary bargaining and (3) mobilisation and lawsuits by civil society partly in frustration with RMDSZ .

The Hungarian minority political scene sees a growth of Hungarian ethnic actors during this period, only for it to be essentially reduced back to the domination of RMDSZ. However, while RMDSZ remains the main political party, fault lines remain and new ones are created. EMNP initially has some momentum with the support of autonomist and pastor László Tőkés, but after the very weak outcome of the 2014 Presidential campaign for EMNP candidate Zsolt Szilágyi at 0.56 per cent – compared to RMDSZ's Hunor Kelemen's 3.47 per cent (Webradio.hu, 2019) a rift occurrs between EMNT and EMNP and within EMNP itself. EMNT, being the civic movement side of EMNP distances itself from the party. The EMNP party leadership also refuses to stand down, alienating its other party members and essentially piercing the balloon of EMNP. With MPP joining the electoral list of RMDSZ in the 2016 elections, the arrangement basically succeeds in squeezing out EMNP as a competitor on the political scene (Interview Portik, 2018).

Moreover, the fault-line between Tőkés' supporters and RMDSZ is still present. According to Portik (Interview, 2018), general events for the Hungarian minority are political ones and the parties steer clear of each other. This is most evident in the annual 10 March Szekler National Day rally in Marosvásárhely. It is generally seen as an SZNT and EMNP event, and given the link with Tőkés, neither RMDSZ national leaders nor MPP attend the rally, with some smaller exceptions of RMDSZ occasional appearances by RMDSZ Szekler politicians.[66] There are also questions of the legitimacy of these civil society actors. Named "national councils" (SZNT and EMNT), they put themselves forward as the representatives of the Szekler and Transylvanian Hungarians. Yet, with RMDSZ having more than 80% of Hungarian support electorally and with limited membership within the councils themselves, the extent to which these actors are legitimate is merely one of rhetoric (Interview I. G. Székely, 2017). The momentum gained from the 2013 rally has not continued, partly due to RMDSZ tactically bringing in its 2014 *Autonomy Statute* which arguably took momentum away from the mobilisation of SZNT.

In addition to intra-group competition, the domestic bargaining scene demonstrates the strategies of realpolitik of RMDSZ compared to the more radical claiming strategies of smaller political actors. Actors such as MPP politicians (MP József Kulcsár), autonomist RMDSZ politicians in the 2004 and 2005, as well as the SZNT see strong claims to autonomy as the way to go forward. Putting in the SZNT proposal to the Romanian parliament is seen as a way to remind the Romanians of the issue and force them to look at the autonomy plan and give opinions on it (Interview Izsák, 2018). Moreover, those following the strong claim logic also share the view that autonomy is not "granted" to the

[66] This statement is corrobrated by different articles about the mobilisation for Szekler Freedom Day and other mass events (origo.hu, 2013; Krónika.ro, 2014; 3szek.ro, 2019).

Szekler community but is rather a natural right due to its long history and presence in the area (as discussed in Chapter 4 Sections 4.1.4.1 and 4.1.4.3).

Such strong claims are almost directly opposed to the bargaining strategy of RMDSZ in its "politics of small steps" approach and tactical manoeuvring. Their low numbers in Parliament mean that they become politically salient only when their votes are needed to pass a tight vote. This is well illustrated in the 2017 June introduction of the *Cultural Autonomy Bill* into Parliament, in return for supporting the vote of no confidence against the government (as discussed in Chapter 5 Section 5.1.2). The tactic fails in the end, but the search for such windows of opportunity is a general approach of the party:

> *"If we want to make a communication balloon that RMDSZ is fighting for autonomy, then we can table a plan at any point, and it will be rejected… If we want even a slight chance, then we need to wait and see when it is strategically best to do so, as well as when constitutional amendments are on the table…to try to amend it so that it leaves space for our plan*" (Interview Kovács, 2017).

Similarly, according to RMDSZ MPs, the reason the RMDSZ 2014 *Autonomy Statute* had not been tabled in Parliament was due to lack of strategic opportunity (Interview Márton, 2018). MP Árpád Márton argues there was a missed opportunity in 2016 when RMDSZ stepped out of the governing coalition due to disagreements on minority issues, but when the governing coalition equally needed RMDSZ's inclusion. RMDSZ could have used this need for coalition inclusion to claim support for autonomy. In the end, RMDSZ decided not to table the *Statute* because of the upcoming elections. The *Statute* could have led to an increased turnout of the Romanian electorate and put RMDSZ at risk of making the 5% threshold – which relies upon a relatively small absolute number of Hungarian minority votes (Interview Márton, 2018).

Therefore, the RMDSZ strategy is one of small steps and capitalising on strategic bargaining opportunities. During its time in coalition, RMDSZ generally advances issues of decentralisation and education – less radical claims but ones which over time make for a

giant leap for the Hungarian minority (Interview Kovács, 2017). Moreover, RMDSZ cannot rely on other national minorities because they are not as well organised, do not comprise a significant portion of the population and therefore do not have the same needs. However, from the point of view of the SZNT, MPP and EMNP, stronger and more vocal claims need to be made for autonomy.

A new dynamic emerging during this period is the tension between certain actors within civil society and RMDSZ. As mentioned in Chapter 4 Section 4.1.3, the initial formation of RMDSZ was multi-purpose as both a civil society organisation and one that politically represented the Hungarians. However, as RMDSZ becomes more inserted into the political scene and acquires financial resources, it creates a dependency of Hungarian civil organisations on it. RMDSZ engages in political negotiations and bargaining nationally in return for funding for the activities on the ground (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 117–118). One activist from AGFI argued that such arrangements have demobilised civil society: organisations became "immune" to breaches of minority rights legislation because RMDSZ was supposed to bargain for them politically and informally negotiate solutions (Interview Bethlendi, 2017).

This strategy of informal bargaining, however, does not work effectively anymore. With the formation of organisations like CEMO and AGFI and a changed strategy of lawsuits for lack of implementation, RMDSZ cannot maintain the same level of control over the NGOs, sometimes to its consternation when it would rather pursue bargaining strategies and take the topic off public debate (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 146–147). CEMO, for example, insists on its political impartiality and independence from all political organisations so that it can further its work on minority language usage implementation (Interview Szigeti, 2018). RMDSZ argues that NGOs have a role and can indeed pursue certain activities that it cannot as a political party, but that each organisation has its strengths

to build on. Previous RMDSZ politician Péter Kovács (Interview, 2017) argues that the Cluj multi-lingual sign arrangement would equally not have happened had RMDSZ not bargained with the local mayor.

6.3.2 The Kin-State

As discussed earlier in the Literature Review Chapter 2, the role of the kin-state is understood in two senses: (1) as an arena to which Hungarian minority elites go to get support for their claims for autonomy (Figure 2 p.51) and (2) as an actor influencing the autonomy claims of the Hungarian elites in their domestic arena (the "quadratic nexus" model Section 2.3). For the former, Hungary is applied to through different funding mechanisms, enabling civil society to further its work. A shift in kin-state policy towards its neighbouring kin occurs with the third Orbán government in 2014 and is particularly demonstrated by the increase in funding for Hungarian civil society organisations. These organisations can apply to different programmes and institutions of the Hungarian government for funding. Financial data is difficult to access concretely, but work by Kiss et al (2018) and Sipos (2017a) have highlighted some aspects of the financial provisions. From the third Orbán government in 2014-2018, the data gathered puts the level of funding from the Hungarian government to all Hungarian kin communities (not just in Transylvania) ranging between 225-275 million US dollars per year between 2014 and 2016 (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 134). In the case of Translvania in particular, Sipos' work highlights the funding roles of different Hungarian government offices from 2010-2015. While in 2010, the Ministry for Justice and Administration dominated the field with 13776.5 million forints, over time it is overtaken by the Bethlen Gábor Fund and National Cultural Fund which gave 21659.8 million forints and 11869.5 million forints, respectively, in 2015 (Sipos, 2017a).

Making usage of the kin-state arena for funding opportunities has had repercussions within the Hungarian minority community. The current system of kin-state financial support

is decentralised and at times opaque, challenging RMDSZ's strong connection between itself and civil society organisations. With Hungarian government institutions providing a range of Hungarian minority actors with financial support, it potentially undermines RMDSZ's position at the local and county level where it used to be able to disburse funds given by the Romanian state (Székely, 2014, p. 130; Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 134–135). Moreover, the reception of large amounts of funding from the kin-state questions the legitimacy and loyalty of the Hungarian minority in the eyes of the Romanian majority.

Regarding the second element (the kin-state as an actor influencing the domestic context and Hungarian minority actors), in 2014 the Hungarian government shifts from exclusively supporting the smaller parties of EMNP and MPP to encompass RMDSZ as well. Originally in the early days of both MPP and EMNP, Fidesz provided its support in the hope that the smaller parties could take advantage of the disenchantment with RMDSZ and shift voters away from them (Interview Salat, 2017). Fidesz's backing of these smaller parties did encourage some members to join. With the leadership of Viktor Orbán, EMNP was seen as the Transylvanian side of Fidesz: "Not a lot of people joined the EMNP because of Tőkés László or of Toró T. Tibor, but because of Orbán Viktor" (Interview Portik, 2018). However, with the unsuccessful performance of the two parties in 2012, Fidesz realises that RMDSZ is too strong to be overcome. It subsequently changes its tactic to try and remain important in the region (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 132–134).

The relationship between RMDSZ and the kin-state is not straightforward and RMDSZ has not been primarily aligned with one Hungarian (kin-state) party. Whilst for EMNP the link and reliance to Fidesz is clear – they are "like the air we breathe" (Interview Tőke, 2018)[67] – from RMDSZ's perspective it is a more pragmatic calculation. RMDSZ

[67] The extent of reliance cannot be better captured than by Tőke's full quote: "They are our defender. We can always rely on the mother country. They defend us, they help us. Without the mother country we would not be anywhere. The mother country's effective help is like the air we breathe".

leaders have argued and confronted both sides of the Hungarian government's political spectrum and have been equivocal (Székely, 2014, pp. 126–127). RMDSZ acceptance of Fidesz's support comes amidst the Romanian domestic reforms put in place against corruption with the establishment of the DNA (*Direcţia Naţională Anticorupţie or* National Anti-Corruption Directorate) where the well-established patronage-type system that had been set up and functioning in Romania is fundamentally challenged (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 125).

The Hungarian minority and its cause for autonomy is further complicated by the dual citizenship policy of Hungary, revised in 2011 (as also discussed in the next chapter section 7.3.2). Those with Hungarian citizenship are allowed to vote in Hungarian national elections for the party lists. This generally serves the interests of Fidesz more than other parties since many Hungarians in Romania are conservative leaning. By 2017, almost more than 500,000 ethnic Hungarians in Transylvania had acquired dual citizenship (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 128).

Whilst it is clear that Hungarians do not think of Hungary as their homeland nor do they have revisionist principles (Bárdi and Kiss, 2018, p. 43), from the Romanian perspective it provides even more justification to view Hungarians as a security threat. One only has to look down to Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea to see how an argument of helping Russian-kin can become an argument for annexation (Interview Novák, 2018). At the same time, Romania has similar dual citizenship policies towards its own Romanians living in Moldova. While politicians interviewed disagree on the extent to which the dual citizenship legislation took away from the prospects of autonomy, what can be argued is that it took away from the momentum and feeling of joint accomplishment of acceding to the European Union (Interview Horváth, 2017). Others argue it is the "last nail into the coffin

of autonomy for the Hungarians in Romania" (Interview Salat, 2017) as it questions the ultimate loyalty of the Hungarians living in Transylvania.

Therefore, the kin-state acts as an arena for organisations to access funding, particularly since 2014 when Fidesz started giving more funding to its co-ethnics in the region. At the same time, receiving increased funding undermines the domestic leverage that Hungarian political elites have in their bargaining for autonomy. It has also led to increased intra-group competition and ethnic fractionalisation where RMDSZ has less of a privileged relationship with some civic organisations.

6.3.3 European Level

There is a general sense of disenchantment in the European Union during this period of post-accession, with the sense that the European Union does not care about its minorities and cannot exert power in Romania's domestic politics. European institutions in this period instead become a political arena of bargaining for all types of minority elite actors, from the powerful RMDSZ to the smaller SZNT who push forward their cause for autonomy. This happens in two main ways. The first is through the Minority SafePack Initiative and the second is shadow-reporting.

6.3.3.1 Disaffection with Europe

One surprising finding whilst talking to Hungarian elites is the disenchantment across the political spectrum with the European Union and other European institutions. This is also found in statements such as the EMNP *Szatmári Nyílatkozat* which argues that Brussels has not stood up for its ethnic minorities (EMNT, 2013b). From the point of view of MPP, moreover, the "curvature of a cucumber is more important, or the question of migration is more important than the question of autochthonous minorities" (Biró, 2018). The main issue, fundamentally, is that the EU does not have competencies to deal with minority issues nor does it have secondary legislation on minorities. As such, it cannot

extend pressure in the same way that it did during the accession negotiations in order to join the EU and other institutions like NATO and the Council of Europe.

Since accession, it can also be argued that the situation has regressed (Interviews with Antal, 2018; Horváth, 2017). For example, the issue of schooling in 2018, of restitution controversies and the Mikó Kollégium[68], have not been addressed by the European Union and have been relegated to Romanian "domestic politics". The Romanian refusal to open a Hungarian faculty at the Marosvásárhely Pharmacy and Medical University was brought to the European Parliament by the Hungarian professors and nothing was done as it was considered an internal issue (Interview Portik, 2018).[69] Moreover, the EU has not had an effect through the regionalisation reforms (Dragoman and Bogdan, 2016) and the economic situation of the Szekler Hungarians has become worse in their development region since the development regions were created (CNP.ro, 2019).

There is also a sense that the European Union does not understand the situation of the ethnic Hungarians. For example, previous EMNP politician Vilmos Portik argues that the European mindset draws an equivalence amongst different "minority groups" where the German Turks or French Algerians are seen in the same way as the Hungarian Szeklers, which to him seems unjustified (Interview Portik, 2018). This perceived lack of understanding is also evidenced in the reaction by many Hungarian elites to the EU's Sargentini Report issued against the government of Hungary.[70] The report did not resonate with a spectrum of Hungarian elites – from RMDSZ to MPP and previous EMNP politicians – who saw it as further evidence of a growing gap between East and West as well as Western

[68] The Mikó High School was returned in 2002 to the Reformed Church. However, in 2012, two members of the Restitution Committee were put in prison by the DNA for three years. RMDSZ argued that their imprisonment by the DNA was part of a campaign against the restitution of church properties (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 125).
[69] Although it is outside the timeframe of the study, in 2019, László Tőkés brought the issue to the European Parliament (Krónika.ro, 2019).
[70] The Sargentini Report was a report criticising Hungary for its anti-democratic turn. It called on the European Parliament to initiate its Article 7 (1) on the Treaty of the European Union (Sargentini, 2017).

hypocrisy. RMDSZ President Hunor Kelemen (Interview, 2018) argued that as long as France has not ratified the FCNM, it cannot talk about being progressive. Moreover, he argued that the European Union has not narrowed the gap between its northern and southern countries and was succeeding at creating a strong divide between East and West which only serves to strengthen the Eastern region and create regional solidarity.

6.3.3.2 The Minority SafePack Initiative and Shadow Reporting

Partly in response to the absence of European institutions being able to put pressure on domestic actors to support provisions for national minorities, the Brussels-based FUEN – Federal Union of European Nationalities – spearheads the Minority SafePack Initiative. The Initiative aims to make the rights of minorities an EU competence, including language and cultural measures (Waterbury, 2017). It collects 1 million signatures, which through the EU Commission's citizenship initiative means that it has to be considered by the Commission. This comes amidst the Commission's original refusal in 2013 to register the SafePack Initiative, which was then overturned by the EU General Court and the petition for the collection of signatures began in 2017 (FUEN, 2019).

The Initiative is led primarily by the Hungarian minorities (especially SZNT and RMDSZ), helped by the fact that an RMDSZ member, Loránt Vincze, is President of the organisation in Brussels. FUEN is part of RMDSZ's strategy to increase its claim-making in the international arena and it successfully bids Vincze to become the President in 2016 (Székely, 2020). Whilst "autonomy" as such is not on the agenda of the Initiative, the provisions for language and cultural rights would provide more protections for the Hungarian minority and *de facto* autonomy. This lobbying of the EU to provide more for its minorities comes from an understanding on the part of RMDSZ that the EU has evolved

since its original coal and steel community and that one further element of its evolution should include protections for national minorities (Interview Kelemen, 2018).[71]

While the SafePack Initiative relies on the grassroots and local level to collect the one million signatures, Hungarian minority advocacy organisations have focused on writing shadow reports to submit primarily to the Council of Europe. This strategy and the usage of the European arena have made it possible for civil society organisations to be active (Csata and Marácz, 2018, p. 425). The reports highlight how the domestic level is not implementing the international agreements, and have been submitted by CEMO as well as AGFI. RMDSZ has also written shadow reports but argues that there should be more coordination between the NGOs and RMDSZ since writing contradictory reports confuse the experts (Interview Kelemen, 2018).

Therefore, while the pressure of the EU overall has not been meaningful on the domestic level to promote autonomy, the minority has mobilised itself through the SafePack Initiative and shadow reporting. This arena is not the primary focus of RMDSZ – who has to deal with domestic bargaining – but is a substantial focus of smaller minority organisations, making claims to the European arena in the hope that then the European institutions can then put pressure on the domestic political scene. The European arena has been an equaliser to which both big and small minority actors can claim.

6.4 Conclusion: Modern Autonomists vs Historical Autonomists

This chapter mapped out the different changes in autonomy claim-making during the post-EU accession period (Question A) and how elites claim autonomy linked to different opportunities or constraints at different political arenas (Question B). In this post-EU accession period there is an increase in actors who are all "autonomists". All political actors

[71] Outside of the time period, in 2019 the SZNT launched a Citizen's Initiative to promote natural regions through the EU's cohesion policy and therefore support regions with ethnic, cultural, religious or linguistic characteristics (European Citizens' Initiative, 2020).

have their own autonomy plans – partly influenced by the preceding autonomy plans of the pre-accession period which highlights the path dependence of certain conceptualisations of autonomy. Once RMDSZ comes out with its own *Autonomy Statute,* it reasserts itself as the main actor on the Hungarian political scene.

In addition to explicitly claiming "autonomy" and using a strategy of "word-play" (Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3), a creative policy game is pursued by RMDSZ in the areas of administration, decentralisation and education (Section 6.2.1). SZNT makes claims to autonomy through mass mobilisation – especially 2013 Marosvásárhely's rally – but by the end of the period under examination, mass mobilisation is arguably running out of steam. Other strategies create the space to later facilitate claims to autonomy. These are done mainly by small actors (SZNT, CEMO, AGFI) and involves symbolism and regional branding (SZNT) and litigation and advocacy (CEMO, AGFI).

Unsurprisingly, RMDSZ's primary arena for claiming is the domestic political arena. It also, however, uses the European arena through its support of the Minority SafePack Initiative to create additional claiming opportunities. The kin-state, on the other hand, has provided financial support to minority organisations but its role also ties the hands of the Hungarian minority who need to make claims in Romanian domestic politics. Smaller actors put greater emphasis on claims to the European level – arguably partly because they are not involved in politics in Bucharest – while for RMDSZ it is not the main focus of its claiming tactics.

The different ways to claim autonomy – through plans and policy reforms as well as tactics to enable autonomy claim-making through symbolism or litigation – illustrate a divide between modern autonomists and historical autonomists. The latter – encapsulated mainly by SZNT and EMNP – make historical arguments. They want to return to historical

regions and re-establish the historical Szeklerland – with claims to the natural right of autonomy for the Szeklers.

Tactics here revolve around symbolism and mobilisation to reaffirm a regional identity. In addition, there is a voluntary close relationship with the kin-state – also a historical tie. Claiming autonomy explicitly in Parliament has more symbolic meaning that practical strategic thinking. For example, the tabling of the SZNT Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland in both 2017 and 2019 was done for symbolic reasons. As MPP Kulcsár says:

> *"We know that Szeklerland autonomy will not happen in the near future, but we consider it important to remind the Romanians and Europe of what we would like to have"* (Kovács, 2019).

On the other hand, some RMDSZ politicians will self-label themselves as modern autonomists, such as Erika Benkő and Zoltán Novák (Interviews 2018; 2018). Modern autonomists show a practical logic of action. RMDSZ autonomy plans depart from current administrative units (2014 *Szeklerland Statute*) or have been amended to not include "autonomy councils" so as not to antagonise the Romanian politicians (*Cultural Autonomy Bill*). They also capitalise on windows of opportunity to claim autonomy where there is at least a small chance of it going through rather than symbolic claiming. Modern autonomists want to use current tools, small steps and strategies such as decentralisation and reform to push forward autonomy. Making the conversation linked to technical terms and creating strong regions resonates more with the tools of the 21st century (Interview Benkő, 2018).

Their usage of the kin-state arena is rather hesitantly claimed to. Other actors like CEMO and AGFI (as well as RMDSZ through FUEN) claim to the European arena for reform so that it enhances its provisions to protect minorities. The justification, unlike SZNT, is not historic but uses modern political language. For example, Biró (Interview, 2018) said of the lack of resonance of historical rhetoric,

> *"In Brussels if I speak of NUTS4 regions, then they will know what I am talking about…if I go there in Szekler stockings, it looks good and I look good, I twist my moustache, and I sit down and say 'I've come back from 200 years ago and I want to return to the way things were, can you help me?' I do not think I will get that much support."*

Thus, while the claiming of autonomy is found across all actors, the logic behind claim-making and how different political arenas are used differs. The dynamics of claim-making at play are quite different to the Slovak context, which will be addressed next, where Hungarians have not lodged explicit claims to autonomy and have rather pursued a creative policy game with their claims couched in terms of "self-governance" and policy reforms.

7 Claiming Autonomy – or Self-Governance – in Slovakia

> *"Autonomy is impolite, it shouldn't be discussed. It means dissolution of the state in general. And that's the reason why MKP is talking about self-governance and why parties are not talking directly about autonomy"* (Interview Tokár, 2017).

In 2007, Komárom mayoral candidate János Bósza's plan explicitly claiming territorial autonomy is dismissed as eccentric and irredentist. Skirting the term *autonomy* completely, a few years later in 2014, MKP emerges with its self-professed major autonomy plan, entitled *The Institutional Requirements for the Slovak-Hungarian Community's Preservation, Growth and South-Slovakia's Economic Development* arguing not for "autonomy", but increased self-governance through a reform of the administrative system. Most-Híd's 2016 platform *Civic Vision* promotes increased educational and cultural self-governance, and argues territorial autonomy is not a solution for the Hungarian population. In contrast to the Hungarians in Romania, the Hungarians in Slovakia have not yet tabled an autonomy plan in Parliament.

This chapter will unpack this seemingly paradoxical observation: while claims to "autonomy" in Slovakia are almost non-existent, autonomy remains an aspiration amongst elites while not being claimed as "autonomy". In order to better see the political landscape and the change in autonomy claims across time and actors, the claims and platforms of a wide range of actors are examined in this chapter's analysis, complemented by elite interviews. This includes material not just from MKP and newly formed rival Most-Híd, but also MKDSZ (*Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Szövetség*, or Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance formed in 2013), the Komárom mayoral candidate János Bósza, as well as civil society actors. Therefore, materials include election platforms and policy programmes of MKP (2006-2016), Most-Híd (2009-2016), and other policy statements and of actors such as MKDSZ, the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia, János Bósza, and *KétNyelvű*

DélSzlovákia (Bilingual South-Slovakia) from the post EU-accession period. Most of the materials are in Hungarian. By joining together content analysis with discourse analysis (as explained in the Chapter 3 Section 3.4), the claims found in the different documents are put into the broader context of changing power relations and constraints faced by political actors. Using these materials and analyses, I can see how claims have evolved and how they are made in response to different constraints and opportunities at different political levels (Research Questions A and B) which will ultimately address the leading research question of the dissertation (p.5).

With the divided political scene and split electorate, the claiming of autonomy goes through significant shifts over the course of the 2006-2018 time period. An important development is the consolidation of the "word-play" aspect of the "creative policy game" which substitutes "self-governance" claims for "autonomy" claims. As mentioned in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.1 this word-play began with the 1994 Komárom Meeting. During the post-EU accession period all major political actors are using "self-governance" in their claiming. Moreover, there is an increase of actors joining the scene in claiming self-governance, such as the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia and Most-Híd. Importantly, "self-governance" is not claimed only explicitly, but also strategically with policy reforms as the main targets, tying into the second aspect of the "creative policy game". By the close of the period, Most-Híd and MKP converge in claiming educational and cultural self-governance and agree on the need for administrative reforms. They differ, however, in their strategies and understanding of what such reforms entail.

After briefly recounting the arrival of new actors to the political scene, I go through the platforms of the different actors to illustrate the changes in claims to autonomy (or self-governance). I then focus on areas of policy reform at the national level through which minority elites seek – with limited success – to increase the possibility of achieving *de facto*

autonomy. The final section analyses how elites make usage of opportunities or constraints at different levels of bargaining – the domestic, kin-state and European. In the domestic arena, elites have limited possibilities to claim "territorial autonomy", stemming from the 1994 Komárom meeting and the 2001 administrative reforms. Moreover, intra-group party competition means that the two parties of MKP and Most-Híd are competing for votes. Most-Híd appeals also to ethnic Slovak voters as well as ethnic Hungarians and MKP to only ethnic Hungarians. The two parties also show different strategies for claiming autonomy, with MKP favouring strong claims and Most-Híd a strategy of small steps. Importantly, MKP relies more on the support of the kin-state and appeals to European institutions, although neither have a strong impact domestically on furthering autonomy claims.

7.1 A Range of Voices: Articulations of "Autonomy" by Hungarian Minority Actors

The twelve-year period following the 2006 elections (the first national election since EU accession) until 2018 sees an increase in Hungarian elite actors in the form of political parties as well as civil society organisations. There is, however, a struggle to attain unity of voice and tactics. With no Hungarian political party in coalition from 2006-2010, stronger claims to "autonomy" and territorial autonomy initially emerge but are dismissed. The era following the party split in 2009 shows changes in the debate surrounding autonomy in several ways. First, MKP and Most-Híd diverge in 2010 in their approaches to the minority question and its institutional solutions. Most-Híd focuses on the plight of all minorities and MKP only on the Hungarians. However, following the activity of a newly formed civil society umbrella organisation – the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia – and the acceptance by the two parties of the 2012 *Minimum* document, there is a convergence towards advocating cultural and educational self-governance as well as increased regional

economic development. This is followed by a new autonomist political party – MKDSZ – forming in early 2013 challenging MKP's weak autonomy approach. MKP, still out of Parliament and in order to show its commitment to the cause, issues its own autonomy plan in 2014 calling for a revamp of the administrative system and develops the 2014 *Baross Gábor Plan* on regional development. In 2016 Most-Híd publishes its own platform in *Civic Vision* which crystallises its approach towards the minority question. By the end of 2017, both parties agree on the necessity of educational and cultural self-governance and independent institutional arrangements. Administrative reform is more openly championed by MKP although both parties acknowledge the desire for a revised regional system and are in favour of regional and economic development. The creative claiming of autonomy, therefore, continues to vouch for "self-governance" broken down over several different policy areas.

7.1.1 "Autonomy" Revisited and Discarded: MKP and János Bósza

Intra-party division initially bubbles to the surface after the 2006 elections when MKP does not make it into coalition. There are internal disputes about whether or not the party achieved anything favourable for the Hungarian minority (Székely, 2014, p. 141). A change of leadership is introduced in the party in 2007: Pál Csáky replaces Béla Bugár as MKP Party Chairman. Csáky is considered more of a nationalist (Interview Tokár, 2017). Now out of power and without coalition constraints, Csáky begins to more openly use the term "autonomy" in his speeches, often causing stirs in the press (Új Szó, 2008). This alienates some within the party, and in 2009 an alternative party, Most-Híd (Bridge) forms, led by Béla Bugár himself. The party seeks to be an inter-ethnic party between Hungarians and Slovaks.

During the inner debates within MKP, in 2007, a small-town mayoral candidate by the name of János Bósza makes a case for territorial autonomy. He is dismissed by many as

an eccentric. Interestingly, however, his plan is one of the most concrete out of all the autonomy plans (Gulyás, 2008). With Bósza's initiative, 24 members formed the civil society organisation called "*Dél-Fölvidéki Önrendelkezésért Tanács*" (Southern Slovakia Self-Determination Council)[72] in July 2007. Prime Minister Fico condemned the association as revisionist and irredentist, and at the third attempt for approval Bósza renamed the organisation "*Dél-Fölvidéki Autonómia Tanács"* (Southern Slovakia Autonomy Council). However, to both options of the Council's name the Interior Ministry cited reasons of threat to the territorial unity of Slovakia. In response, Bósza instead formed a movement called "*Mozgalom a Regionalizmusért*" (MaRe), Movement for Regionalism. In early January 2008 it was approved by the Interior Ministry under the name of Nomos Regionalizmus only to be yet again banned. The reason cited was the organisation's Hungarian (country) website (Gulyás, 2008, pp. 110–111).

Bósza's organisation is significant on three counts. The first is the distancing of MKP from the claims of his movement. Major leaders of MKP including President Pál Csáky, MKP Vice President József Berényi and Miklós Duray refuse to give support to the organisation. Second, the goals of the organisation are openly to promote territorial autonomy, with two official languages (Slovak and Hungarian) and the creation of economically strong regions. The map and territorial plan put forward by Bósza include the 1918 Hodza-Bartha line which actually makes the territory majority Slovak and only about 40% Hungarian. To accommodate this, Bósza ensures the official status of the Hungarian language along with the Slovak language and also provides for self-government institutions for the Slovaks and Hungarians. In this sense, the territory has autonomy for the Hungarians yet not as a majority but minority (Aula, 2007; Gulyás, 2008). Third, Bósza's dismissal

[72] Note that the term used is "önrendelkezés" and not "autonómia". Önrendelkezés is another word for self-determination.

shows how difficult it is to receive support for territorial autonomy in the post-EU era even when there are no constraints of being in government coalition. It is simply taboo. For MKP as well, claiming "autonomy" is no longer palatable.

7.1.2 Party Platforms and the 2010 Election Platforms

Following the party split in 2009, the party platforms and election manifestos of MKP and Most-Híd show different emphases.[73] Without explicitly claiming "autonomy", MKP's 2010 election document calls for an arrangement mirroring autonomy: a legally based institutional system whereby the Hungarian community independently administers its own business (MKP, 2010c, p. 2). Amongst different claims, one to notice is MKP's claim for Hungarian to be an official regional language and to be used where Hungarians are 10% of the population. In addition, the manifesto emphasises the importance of having Hungarian-language education from pre-school through to university, as well as vocational education. It calls for the passage of a law to support minority cultures as a way to fight against assimilation. Following previous manifesto declarations, MKP also voices the need for the creation of natural regions and for reform of the administrative system and its competencies. Its 2010 manifesto as well as 2009-2029 *Programme* are written from the vantage point of the Hungarian minority and its concerns.

In contrast, Most-Híd's first platform in 2009 and its 2010 election platform show several differences. First, the multicultural nature of Slovakia is to be recognised and valued, framed as including not only Hungarians but other minorities. The concern for all minorities resonates throughout. In terms of language usage, Most-Híd recognises the importance of education in the minority tongue and commits itself to the development of minority

[73] With the party split in 2009, both parties published platforms in 2009 as well as election manifestos for the 2010 elections. For MKP this includes their 2009 party programme for 2009-2029 and 2010 election manifesto. For Most-Híd this includes their party programme in 2009, a document called *Pillars for the Future* (2009b) and the 2010 election manifesto.

education. At the same time, the party also emphasises the importance of learning Slovak in the education system so that minorities can be able to speak Hungarian, Slovak and a third foreign language. In terms of culture, it seeks to promote friendly neighbourly relations through a joint Slovak-Hungarian Peace Fund. The party supports the establishment of an independent office to support and finance minority cultures and the establishment of a law to that effect. For administrative reform, it merely supports further decentralisation and more effective public administration. Unlike MKP, it does not criticise the administrative divisions and does not call for natural regions and a renegotiating of the administrative boundaries. It does, however, put emphasis on regional development (Most-Híd, 2009a, 2009b, 2010).

7.1.3 The Role of the Roundtable

The formation of the civil society umbrella organisation in January 2009 – *Szlovákiai Magyarok Kerekasztala* or the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia – is an important development during the post-2006 period. The Roundtable brings together civil society organisations, cultural organisations, churches, businesses and prominent public individuals to work together to reverse the trends of assimilation and population decline of the ethnic Hungarian minority. Amongst its different activites, it holds an annual conference, has a legal rights aid group and provides a forum to launch petitions (Szlovákiai Magyarok Kerekasztala, 2011). It is vocal about the future plight of the Hungarian minority, and in the era of a divided Hungarian political scene is able to support coordination between the two sides. The initial and continued emphasis on population decline and assimilation becomes characteristic of the Hungarian political sphere, whereby actors repeatedly mention the pressing need to focus on the Hungarian minority's future and well-being.

The Roundtable makes two significant contributions in this field. The first is the 2011 debate material of human rights expert János Fiala-Butora on the recognition of the

Hungarian minority and the implementation of self-government (*önkormányzat*) arrangements. Along with recognition measures discussing the use of national symbols and implementation of national holidays, the document calls for a National Council to be the representative forum of the Hungarian minorities (and each minority group having its own National Council). The policy areas of the National Council include education, culture, language usage, economic and social policy. They do *not* include, notably, fiscal powers and defence.

In addition to the National Council, on the local level, communities can have elected self-governments when their population is between 5 and 70% in the area. The powers of the local councils primarily cover education, culture and language usage. If necessary, there can also be the creation of elected regional self-government institutions when there are 10 local municipalities with a population of at least 5% Hungarians. Responsibilities also include education, culture and language usage at the regional level. This was important debate material which finally provided "flesh" to the bones of what exactly a self-governing arrangement would look like, pre-dating MKP's own 2014 plan.

The second contribution of the Roundtable is its facilitation of common statements and positions across the divided political spectrum, most notably in the September 2012 *Minimum* document, signed by the leader of the Roundtable and the leaders of MKP and Most-Híd (Felvidék.ma, 2012). Given the inter-party differences, arriving at a "minimum" standard and lowest common denominator on minority claims was notable. Phrased in the language of concern over population decline and assimilation, the actors make several claims. The first is the equal status of the Hungarian language, particularly where the minority is a significant proportion of the population. The second is educational and cultural self-governance (again, with the usage of the term *önkormányzat*) where the minority itself can develop, decide and is ultimately responsible for the institutions. Local authorities are

called to be given greater competencies as well as financial resources. Finally, the document asserts the need for better regional economic development in southern Slovakia which lags behind other regions of Slovakia. It argues that development policies which respect local cultures, language and tradition can lead to future economic development.

This document is telling for two main reasons. The first is the deliberate usage of self-government (*önkormányzat)* yet the essential meaning of autonomy is actually spelled out in the document when claiming the need to have control over one's own cultural and educational institutions. As Ábel Ravasz (Interview, 2017) said, "there is no autonomy without institutions." The second is being able to get both political parties on board with the same statement. Political cooperation between the two sides had been difficult and generally unsuccessful, but the two parties came to an agreement. Furthermore, after the 2012 statement, Most-Híd starts to make more claims which are friendly to the idea of cultural and educational autonomy.

7.1.4 The Visions of Different Political Parties Post-2012

Following MKP's failure to win seats in Parliament in 2010 and 2012 elections and the feeling of some that it had "sold out" on the quest for Hungarian autonomy to enter coalition, a small party emerges in 2012/early 2013 called the *Magyar Kereszténydemoktrata Szövetség* (Hungarian Christian Democratic Alliance) or MKDSZ. As the third Hungarian political party, it openly criticises MKP for its links to Hungary's Fidesz (Bumm.sk, 2017) and claims that territorial autonomy is impossible to achieve due to the politics of the previous 25 years. Instead, MKDSZ advocates redefining the administrative regions to create 3 regions with a 40-50% Hungarian population. They also claim educational and cultural autonomy (note, "autonomy" not "self-government") and economic development (Szalay, 2016). However, the power of MKDSZ is relatively weak and indeed their electoral results prove they are a marginal party. They received only 0.09%

of the vote share in the 2016 national elections (Government of Slovak Republic, 2019, para. 272). At the same time, their small nature allows them to advocate for claims more openly. In this sense it is telling that they no longer think territorial autonomy to be feasible and worth advocating and rather focus on administrative reforms.[74]

For MKP, there are two important developments in how it decides to claim "autonomy" which demonstrate the shift from Csáky's "autonomy" claiming to focusing on policy area reform. The *Baross Gábor Plan* (2014) is formulated with the oversight of MKP politician Iván Farkas and is a detailed plan for regional development. Although previous election manifestos mention regional development, after the financial crisis in 2008, more attention is placed by MKP on the issue of unemployment and the need for economic development in the region (Interview Tokár, 2017). As mentioned in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.1, Hungarian-inhabited areas struggle with unemployment. With the detailed *Baross Gábor Plan*, MKP mixes the focus on regional economic development, including infrastructural investment, with redesigning the administrative structure to fit the "natural" regional contours of the country (2014, pp. 13–17). Its strategy includes encouraging autonomous economic development relying on Southern Slovakia's agriculture, tourism and renewable energy sectors, as well as promoting investment in industry and transport (2014, p. 115).

Meanwhile, MKP is long promising to come up with an autonomy plan of its own. By being outside of Parliament and no longer in coalition, it has fewer constraints on what it can claim. In 2014, it launches its own autonomy document officially named *The Institutional Requirements for the Slovak-Hungarian Community's Preservation, Growth and South-Slovakia's Economic Development*[75] (*A Szlovákiai Magyar Közösség*

[74] MKDSZ was a minor actor on the national political scene during the period under study. It did, however, enter into agreement in 2019 to run with Most-Híd in the 2020 national elections (Visegradgroup.eu, 2019).
[75] Translation of author. Throughout the thesis I refer to this document as MKP's 2014 autonomy plan.

Megmaradásának és Gyarapodásának, valamint Dél-Szlovakia Gazdasági Felzárkoztatásának Intézményi Feltételei (2014)). It is the only concrete proposal that any political party has had since the 1994 Komárom meeting (the proposal of János Bósza was not backed by the party). During my interviews with MKP politicians in 2017, they stood by this document as exactly what the party thinks of autonomy. The document itself speaks not of "autonomy" but of self-government for the Hungarian minority. It makes a distinction between the different examples of autonomy in Europe and European conventions on the topic of autonomy, but in the Hungarian context it speaks of self-governance.

The document makes two key claims: (1) where Hungarians are less than 50% of the local population, they should have personal minority self-government (*személyi elvű kisebbségi önkormányzat*) to manage minority education, culture, language use and the media. There would be a national institution to coordinate this, along with self-governments in the municipalities. (2) Where Hungarians form over 50% of the population, the document calls for a separate regional self-government (*regionális önkormányzat*) with additional legal and fiscal powers, in addition to powers over education, culture, media and language.

Their vision is to have referenda in settlements with more than 50% Hungarian populations to join the regional self-government unit (MKP, 2014, p. 68). At the same time, there is not a map nor distribution of what the regional self-government would look like, which is problematic when trying to envision a system of regional self-government and which territories it would include. Moreover, practically speaking, a Hungarian-majority region would then create a Slovak minority and not much space is given to how the Slovak minority would be recognised and provided for. In any case, this document is one of the strongest and well-developed claims to "autonomy" that has surfaced in Slovakia since the 1994 Komárom Meeting. The next question which follows is related to the usefulness of having an autonomy plan without having any seats in Parliament, which prompted previous

political leader Miklós Duray to dismiss it as not very valuable in my interview with him (2017). Nevertheless, there is a clear trend within MKP of advancing the cause of autonomy through administrative reform and regional development, linked to increasing control over educational and cultural institutions.

In terms of Most-Híd, the party does not make it into government after the 2012 elections but it wins 13 seats in the Parliament. As Most-Híd member Ábel Ravasz (Interview, 2017) said, it was a time for the party to think and reflect about what it stood for. An outcome of this is the party document *Civic Vision* (2016b), which spells out Most-Híd's approach to minority rights and the question of autonomy for the Hungarians. There are significant changes that occur in this document which are not present in previous election manifestos and somewhat present in the 2012 *Minimum* document.

The first change is openly advocating for reform of the administrative system to mirror the social, economic and cultural borders of Slovakia. In the 2010 and 2012 manifestos, Most-Híd was silent on the issue. In addition, Most-Híd calls for Hungarian to be acknowledged as a regional language and for the encouragement of a regional identity called "Southern Slovakian" (Dél-Szlovákia) and the promotion of this regional branding. Regarding identity politics, it calls for a shift in focus from nationality criteria to linguistic criteria in minority policy and greater support for Hungarian language education. The document explicitly states that territorial autonomy (using "autonomy") is not realistic in Slovakia and instead it will focus on the achievement of cultural and educational self-governance. To enable this, the party supports the passage of a Minority Rights law to enshrine provisions and also calls for a framework to ensure the stability of minority culture funding (2016b, pp. 97–101). In addition to a section on the strategy for the Hungarian minority, there is a strategy section on the Ruthene minority as well as the Roma. The policy

platform is very much aiming at all citizens in Slovakia, with emphasis on different ethnic minorities.

The analysis of the different policy documents and platforms of the Hungarian actors shows that by the end of this time period territorial autonomy is pushed aside completely and deemed not realistic. Regional and economic development is also noted as an important policy area to promote the well-being of the minority community. The discussion also shows how, over time, Most-Híd joins the other actors in acknowledging the need for administrative reform. However, the link between administrative reform and encouraging a *de facto* form of territorial autonomy is more precisely spelled out by MKP in 2014 and by the Roundtable's 2011 document as discussed above. All actors support educational and cultural self-governance and, as Székely (2014, p. 156) points out, they arguably start to participate in valence competition. At the same time, Most-Híd continues to brand itself as a multicultural party and appeals to voters of any nationality, whilst MKP writes directly from the perspective of the Hungarian minority. Autonomy for all actors is now almost universally claimed as "self-governance", suggesting a certain path dependence from the 1994 Komárom meeting, and where elites have adapted to constraints raised by historical legacies (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.2) and constraints of coalition belonging where "autonomy" claims are off the bargaining table.

7.2 Increasing Self-Governance through Policy Reforms in Culture, Education and Language

With the debate clearly couched as claims to "self-governance" at the national level, the creative policy game continues through pursuit of policy reforms at the national level across areas of regional development and administrative reform, education policy, language policy and policies linked to cultural institutions. During this time, with the exception of 2010-2012, Robert Fico was Prime Minister leading his social-democratic SMER-SD party.

Most-Híd is in coalition from 2010-2012 and also from 2016-2020, therefore being coalition members of both a centre-right and centre-left governments, respectively. In terms of major developments along policy areas to increase minority self-governance, the administrative divisions remain the same and no progress is made. Some changes occur within the realms of cultural financing, education and language usage – and these will be discussed below. In general, progress at the national level has been minimal in attaining increased minority self-governance.

Regarding cultural self-governance, different Hungarian minority political actors agree on the necessity of more independent institutional arrangements; the devil, however, is in the details. The idea of a fund to finance minority cultures was in gestation for a long time, mentioned in MKP's 2002 election manifesto (p. 30). Then in 2004-2005, when MKP is in coalition, it unsuccessfully advocates for a bill for the funding of minority cultures (Interview Horony, 2017). Efforts to pass a law guaranteeing the financing of minority cultures fail in 2012 as well as in 2015. One of the conditions of Most-Híd's coalition agreement was to pass a law guaranteeing the funding of minority cultures. This is successfully passed on 10 May 2017 (Fiala-Butora, 2019).

The 2017 Fund is located under the Ministry of Culture and is allocated 8 million euros annually, 4 million of which go to the Hungarian minority. Regarding decision-making, two out of five members of the Fund's decision-making committee are appointed by the Slovak government, whilst the other three members are representatives of the minority communities. In this sense, one cannot say that it is truly an independent process but the institutional infrastructure is there (Interviews Fiala-Butora, 2017; Horony, 2017). Most-Híd politicians interviewed were more split on whether or not the Fund is already evidence of cultural autonomy or something which has autonomous elements but is not yet autonomy (as discussed Chapter 5 Section 5.2.1.2). The overall impression, however, is

positive of the developments, while MKP politicians interviewed were less enthusiastic about the Fund's achievements. For example, the Fund only supports projects and is short-term in nature, and is overshadowed by the much larger percentage of Hungarian state money funnelled into Slovakia to support the Hungarian minorities (Interview Farkas, 2017).

Further analysis by Fiala-Butora (2019) argues that at least the "toxic" annual disputes over financial allocations are avoided by guaranteeing €8 million, but any increase of the amount is only within the powers of the government. The two Slovak government appointees out of the five make the Fund inherently political and the allocation of funding does not adequately account for population concentrations of the Hungarians who receive 53 per cent of the total funding despite comprising 71 per cent of all minorities (pp. 450, 454–456). Thus, while a starting point, the Fund falls short of a truly independent funding and decision-making structure for the support of minority culture.

In terms of educational self-governance, *Act no. 245/2008 on Education and Upbringing* (*School Act*) provides for the right to be educated in the minority language in elementary and secondary schools, with mandatory classes in the Slovak language and literature (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 25; Government of Slovak Republic, 2014, pp. 78–79). Although Hungarian language education is offered from kindergarten through to university, there are issues revolving around geographic names in textbooks and educational materials, the language of school documents, how to teach Slovak to Hungarian students, and the threat of school closures with dwindling student numbers. Moreover, the Hungarian community does not have control over the curriculum nor the size of classes (Interview Fiala-Butora, 2017).

Class size becomes an issue in 2013. The 2013 amendment to the 2008 *School Act* closes very small schools, but sets lower limits for the minimum number of students for

minority language schools. This is still viewed as a danger by the Hungarian minority, negatively impacting one-third of the 261 Hungarian schools in the country. When the amendment is due to enter into effect in 2015, Most-Híd pushes it off for another year. In the meanwhile, through protest across the Hungarian political divide, including a petition signed by almost 26,000 people submitted to the Minister of Education Jurai Draxler, President Andrej Kiska and Prime Minster Robert Fico, and negotiation by Most-Híd in Parliament, Hungarian schools were not affected by the minimum headcount (NA, 2015c; KA, 2016).

With the vulnerable situation of minority education, an initiative for Hungarian-Hungarian dialogue – with MKP and Most-Híd participation – issues a joint statement in 2016 promoting the preservation of Hungarian minority schools. They argue that Slovak law needs to define "minority education," and allow for Hungarian self-governance for minority schooling. The actors state that although they were able to avoid the closing of many primary schools, they advocate increased financing and the removal of the requirement for a minimum number of students in minority secondary schools as well (Dunaszerdahelyi.sk, 2016).

Concerning language usage, reforms to the *State Language Law* in 2009 lead to strong tensions not only in the country, but also between Slovakia and Hungary, and brings about the intervention of the OSCE. The amendment and its subsequent Government Principles to aid implementation (2009) increase the number of areas where the official Slovak language had to be used, extending to private bodies and persons, and reintroducing controversial sanctions amounting to 100 – 5000 euros (Wardyn and Fiala, 2009). Minority language usage could still be used in parallel in those municipalities where the minority comprised at least 20% of the population (Groszkowski and Bocian, 2009).

Most-Híd and MKP make a joint effort to take the law to the Constitutional Court – although this needed parliamentary support from opposition parties (Juhász, 2009a). Most Híd's public statement also calls on Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič not to sign the *Slovak Language Law* (which he did) (Juhász, 2009e). While this is going on MKP President Pál Csáky calls for a protest in Dunaszerdahely, alongside support from civil society organisations (NA, 2009e). The Dunaszerdahely protest, which MKP and civil society organisations label as a success, garners between 6500 (police estimate) and 12,000 people (MKP estimate) (Mózes, 2009). After significant pressure from actors including the Council of Europe, Slovakia reduces the possibility of sanctions and in a further reform in 2011, withdraws the requirement of translating cultural documents into the state language to the provision of only basic information in Slovak (Council of Europe, 2014, p. 13; Government of Slovak Republic, 2014).

The 2011 reform to the *Law on the Use of National Minority Languages* allows for place names to be put out in those localities where the minority comprises 20%, including railway stations. However, as it moves to implementation, an objection is made that another railway law does not speak about the locality's name but the station's stop (Interview Horony, 2017).[76] It is only in 2017 that railway stations start to have signs in the national minority language through an effort of the Slovak government to harmonise the *Minority Languages Law* and the *Railways Act* (Government of Slovak Republic, 2019, para. 257).

Not satisfied with the pace of legislation and implementation, civil society steps in and organises itself to promote bilingual signs. The best case of this is *Kétnyelvű Dél-Szlovákia (KDSZ),* or Bilingual Southern Slovakia, formed in 2011 to promote bilingual signs. Their initial projects involve putting up the country's first bilingual road sign to Dunaszerdahely

[76] Many thanks to my interview with Ákos Horony (2017) which explained the intricacies. The debate is about the permission to put up the minority language to identify the *helység*, or locality's name. For railway stations, the Slovak objection was that other railway legislation speaks about railway station stops (*megálló*) not *helység* and so the two laws cannot be harmonised and the minority language cannot be put up.

(Dunajská Streda) as well as a bilingual information table at Galánta's bus station (Új Szó, 2016). Moreover, in reaction to the Slovak government's refusal to take into account the successful local referendum which requested a change of the town's Slovak name of Tešedíkovo to the earlier Hungarian name of Pered, KDSZ takes matters into its own hands and sends the Slovak road sign to the Interior Minister (Új Szó, 2013). They are also well-known for their bilingual signs at railway stations, putting up the sign for Ekel (Okoličná na Ostrove) on several occasions at its railway station (Új Szó, 2012). Their more recent activities are linked to road signs, to the extent that Prime Minister Peter Pellegrini declared their Csallóközi road sign a provocation (Új Szó, 2018). Some photos are found in Appendix I.

While the above demonstrates a "creative policy game" which pursues increased powers across a range of policy areas such as culture, education and language linked to the life and sustainability of the Hungarian community, the results across the different policy areas have been minimal. The policy developments highlighted above show that progress has been slow in providing increased control over minority-related policies and in the establishment of self-regulated institutions which would provide some form of minority self-governance. Where there are elements in place, the issue becomes slow implementation, as is the case with the road signs.

7.3 Analysis of Actors, Arenas and Levels 2006-2018

The above-mentioned trends of an increase in actors and the convergence in autonomy claims for cultural and educational self-governance (but not fully in administrative reforms) are tied to the opportunities and constraints faced at the domestic, kin-state and European levels. In the Slovak context of post-EU accession, the domestic arena provides the main constraints and opportunities for the pursuit of self-governance by Hungarian minority elites. This is impacted by coalition belonging, the path dependence of claims, intra-group

competition and divergent strategies of claiming partly linked to different relations with the kin-state. The kin-state provides some opportunities as an alternative arena for funding but on the whole cannot account for the convergence in minority claiming of self-governance and a focus on policy area reforms. The European arena is also not frequently used as an arena nor is it highly influential in the domestic context during the 2006-2018 time period.

7.3.1 Domestic Politics: Coalition Belonging, Path Dependence and Intra-Group Competition

The differences in claiming strategies and convergence to supporting educational and cultural self-governance as well as administrative reform is due to a range of domestic factors. First, coalition belonging constrains demands, confirming the work of Bochsler & Szöcsik (2013a). Being outside of coalition allows more radical claims to be given voice. For example, once MKP was out of power in 2006, we see stronger claims to autonomy by Pál Csáky. Moreover, Most-Híd signs the 2012 *Minimum* statement once it is out of the Radičová coalition in September 2012. MKDSZ's stronger platform in 2013 also demonstrates how not being in coalition – nor Parliament – gives a greater opportunity for stronger claims. Finally, following the electoral losses in 2010 and 2012 and in an effort to differentiate itself from Most-Híd, MKP presents the long-awaited 2014 autonomy concept with a clear call for administrative reform to provide minority self-governance.

Importantly, autonomy for all actors is now almost universally claimed as "self-governance". This adapts to the constraints linked to the historical legacy of equating "autonomy" with secession in the Slovak mindset (Chapter 4 Section 4.2.2) as well as the path-dependent nature of claims following the 1994 Komárom meeting (Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.1). The 1994 meeting's word-play strategy to focusing on claiming "self-governance" set in motion the usage of "self-governance" which political actors have virtually all embraced. For those who still speak of "autonomy" – as János Bosza and Pál Csáky did in

2007-2008 – their claims are quickly discarded. Moreover, claims to "territorial autonomy" are also dropped and refocused to administrative reforms because of the seemingly irreversible administrative reforms of 1996 and 2001 (see Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.3).

Intra-group competition and convergence towards the *Minimum* statement with calls for cultural and educational self-governance also illustrate how educational and cultural self-governance has become a valence issue (Székely, 2014). It is an issue which cannot be ordered on a continuum because the electorate generally agree on whether it is good or bad; as a result, the policy space is narrow. The idea of educational and cultural autonomy does not divide the Hungarian electorate, and therefore Most-Híd adopts it as well. Moreover, it can tie into Most-Híd's concern for other ethnic minorities in Slovakia and is easier for its ethnic Slovak counterparts to support.

MKP and Most-Híd display different tactics in their approach and strategy to promote self-governance. One important reason is in their voter base. Domestically speaking, the two parties aim at different segments of the population. Examination of policy documents and interviews conducted show Most-Híd's concern of not only the plight of the Hungarian minority but also concern with other minorities such as the Roma and the Ruthenes (Most-Híd, 2016b; Interviews Bukovszky, 2017; Ravasz, 2017). They also appeal to Slovak voters, usually liberals, who are supportive of the idea of minority rights. Their shift in 2016 to support revision of the administrative system could partly be explained by the fact that by 2016 even the Slovak population was frustrated with the regional system because it also did not follow their natural regions either, not just the regions of the Hungarian minorities (Interview Fiala-Butora, 2017).

In contrast, MKP focuses on the Hungarian ethnic population. However, Hungarian ethnic representation is arguably also in danger with the current party system: even if more Hungarians vote in absolute numbers for MKP, Most-Híd can still be the party to pass the 5

per cent threshold to get into Parliament if they have enough Slovak votes. There is a concern on the part of MKP that Most-Híd is not truly interested in the plight of the ethnic Hungarians. In my interview with a senior leader of MKP, Iván Farkas, he argued that for Most-Híd, "the most important element is to strengthen Slovak language instruction in Hungarian-language schools" (Interview, 2017).

An important difference is the strategy of either "small steps" and gradual changes adhered to by Most-Híd or "giant leaps" as advocated by MKP. MKP argues that without strong claims the population will continue to decrease because supportive policies will not come from the Slovaks themselves: "Slovakia will give wider minority rights provisions once we will be only a few in the country" (Interview Farkas, 2017). As a result, strong claims or "big steps", in the form of administrative reform through the 2014 autonomy plan, is seen as the way forward. According to a member of the Roundtable, MKP reaches a point where even if not politically popular, claiming more powers are necessary otherwise the status quo leads to the end of the Hungarian population as such: "You cannot jump over a gap with two steps. We have to jump over a gap, not with little steps, but with a jump" (Interview Horony, 2017).

Another difference is each party's reliance on the relationship with the kin-state and EU. From Most-Híd's point of view, a focus on domestic politics and domestic partners is the best way to proceed rather than hoping for support from neighbouring Hungary: "We perceive that MKP tries to find help in Hungary and beyond, and we are trying to find partners at home" (Interview Ravasz, 2017). At the same time, another interviewee summarised the situation slightly differently, "…after MKP is split up, then from my interpretation a struggle begins over who will dominate the political scene: the Slovak government or the Hungarian government" (Interview Öllös, 2017). In addition to the kin-state, MKP's strategy is more inclusive of European Union and international support,

frequently citing EU and Council of Europe recommendations to boost backing for autonomy and also for the creation of "Euro-regions".

It is important to mention the role here of civil society organisations. There is not an equivalent in the Romanian context of an organisation like the Roundtable which aims to be politically independent and draw together the different organisations which seek to promote the minority's culture and interests. It plays an important role in bringing agreement and dialogue between the two major parties. It has also, however, been accused of partiality when one of its members Örs Orosz ran on the MKP list in the national elections (I. G. Székely, 2017). Moreover, the role of Bilingual Slovakia in supporting bilingual signs and the implementation of language rights is significant. At the same time, civil society is less mobilised with some of my interviewees arguing that the Hungarians in Slovakia have a disposition to avoid conflict and confrontation (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017).

7.3.2 Kin-State

When examining the role of Hungary, there is a clear dividing line between the approach of MKP and Most-Híd towards their relationship with the kin-state. MKP promotes good ties with Hungary and has had the backing of the Fidesz government (in power since 2010). In an example of the importance of Fidesz support, before MKP releases its 2014 autonomy plan, MKP presents it to Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (Parameter.sk, 2014). Most-Híd focuses primarily on domestic partners and less on the kin-state. Fidesz refuses to acknowledge Most-Híd as a Hungarian party since it is composed of both Slovaks and Hungarians, although Most-Híd would think of itself as a Hungarian party (Interview Ravasz, 2017).

The role of the kin-state is exacerbated by Hungary's decision to pass its amendment to the 1993 *Act on Hungarian Nationality* (2010) making it easier for Hungarians abroad to gain Hungarian citizenship. According to my interview with senior MKP member Iván

Farkas (2017), Fidesz ignored the concerns voiced by MKP when it asked Fidesz to hold off introducing the Dual Citizenship bill into the Hungarian Parliament for fear of negative reactions in Slovakia just one week before the national elections. Fidesz went ahead anyway with the bill. The same day it was passed, the Slovak Parliament amended its citizenship legislation to ban dual citizenship (Pytlas, 2013, p. 181). There was a large amount of criticism of MKP and anti-Hungarian sentiment which did not help in the elections and may have contributed to the defection from MKP to Most-Híd. Up until 2020, MKP has not received Parliamentary seats since the 2006 elections. Moreover, arguably connections to Hungary undermine MKP's appeal and trustworthiness from the Slovak viewpoint.

Hungary also acts as an arena which Hungarian minority actors in Slovakia can target to claim support or resources. Through applications to Hungarian funds such as the *Bethlen Gábor Alap,* the Hungarian government gives a sizeable financial contribution to different civil society organisations to encourage their functioning, and as a result makes many cultural and educational activities possible (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017; Öllös, 2017). The Hungarian government also supported the creation of KMAT – *Kárpát-medencei Autonómia Tanács* – Autonomy Council of the Carpathian Basin, and in general provides support for autonomy for the Hungarians in the neighbouring countries. What exactly the Hungarian state means and defines by "autonomy" is a different question, and it is not clear itself on the question (Interview Bukovszky, 2017). Nevertheless, MKP (not Most-Híd) has participated in the KMAT meetings, although what the Council actually achieves is yet to be seen.

Even with this support and connections (or lack thereof), the official position of the Hungarian government is that the Hungarian minority needs to articulate its own needs in the country it lives in (Bárdi, 2011, pp. 461–465). The Hungarian government will not do this on behalf of the minority. The benefits of this approach is that the minority has more

ownership over any agreements made domestically and avoids the issue of Hungary not having the necessary detailed knowledge of the Slovak legal context (Fiala-Butora, 2015, pp. 190–191). Most-Híd's László Bukovszky, the *Plenipotentiary* for National Minorities of Slovakia, affirms that Hungary does not have a strong impact on domestic policy and previous autonomist politician Miklós Duray also argues Hungary does not have a great influence domestically, outside of partnerships and connections (Interviews Bukovszky, 2017; Duray, 2017).

Therefore, the role of the kin-state is mixed. As a targeted arena, many cultural and educational activities could not go on without its financial support (as Chapter 8 will illustrate). However, a close association to Fidesz also ties MKP's hands domestically by questioning the independence of the party. In terms of Hungary's influence in the Slovak national domestic context, it does not push autonomy claims.

7.3.3 European level

With the pressure of meeting accession requirements removed in Slovakia, there has arguably been little incentive for the Slovak government to support further minority reforms, let alone autonomy. At the same time, MKP – more so than Most-Híd – cites international documents and looks to other European examples of autonomy to support its case. Looking at MKP's 2014 autonomy plan and different manifestos, the party alludes to European conventions such the Council of Europe Recommendation 1201, the Gross Report-Recommendation 1334, the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities*, the *European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages*, and the 1999 *Lund Recommendations*. It also discusses other European examples such as South Tyrol, Belgium and Hungary. The same level of concern and importance of other European documents is less present in Most-Híd's platforms.

However, an examination of the European institutions, in particular the EU, in influencing domestic politics in support of the Hungarian minority shows that it has little normative influence. Those interviewed from different parts of the political spectrum are in agreement. The general consensus is that politicians and voters have become disillusioned with the impact of the European Union on domestic politics. For example, soon after joining the EU in 2004, Robert Fico came to power and instigated many strict laws, particularly regarding usage of the minority language. There was also an increase in anti-Hungarian violence. Despite these events, the European Union did not step in and the population became disoriented with EU accession. The politicians interviewed generally thought that the EU had little influence in Slovakia in terms of Hungarian autonomy claims and minority rights protection. To illustrate, Most-Híd's Ábel Ravasz (Interview, 2017) argues, "nobody has the feeling that the European Union will stand up for its minorities." Roundtable lawyer Ákos Horony (Interview, 2017) argues that,

> *"In my opinion it (the European Union) doesn't even want to. That is exactly the disappointment, the Hungarians believed that the EU would stand up for its autochthonous minorities. And it absolutely does not stand up for them."*

Another expert argues that reforms need to come from an inner value system and cultural development rather than from external pressure in order for real change to happen (Interview Öllös, 2017). Roundtable leader Géza Tokár (Interview, 2017) argues that autonomy cannot be solved through international negotiations, and it was not realistic during EU accession nor after.

In terms of looking to the European Union itself as an arena to claim autonomy, it is not a powerful arena. Both MKP and Most-Híd are members of the European People's Party with one seat each in the 2014 elections, although they both failed to get seats in the 2019 European elections. There has been an effort to push forward the Minority SafePack Initiative to encourage the European Union to support its autochthonous minorities and

signatures have been collected (see Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3.2 for more information). Autonomist and long-time politician Duray (Interview, 2017) says,

> *"We thought that in the European Parliament or in the European Union's institutions we would be able to validate our interests. It turned out that we couldn't."*

On the whole, the European institutions are weak both as an arena to further autonomy interests and as an actor to encourage domestic political reform.

7.4 Conclusion

This chapter traced the evolution of autonomy claims in the post-EU era (Research Question A) and the ways Hungarian actors responded to constraints and opportunities at different political levels (Research Question B). The best way to understand the autonomy claiming trajectory is through the "creative policy game" concept. Its two elements – word-play and policy reform – are used by ethnic Hungarian minority elites in Slovakia to achieve what they would define as autonomy: control over institutions for the self-sustainability of the community. The idea of territorial autonomy – understood in the Lapidoth-an scholarly sense, is dead and arguably has been since the 1994 Komárom Meeting when the original December Plan's proposal of an assembly and Hungarian region were not accepted (Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.1). Its death is further confirmed with the dismissal of János Bósza in 2007-08 as an eccentric. The debate has changed to claiming "self-governance", rather than "autonomy", and this word-play is consistently found across the different political actors suggesting the path dependent nature of the 1994 Komárom meeting's word-play strategy.

Moreover, Hungarian minority elites pursue autonomy not just through semantic changes but also strategically through the second area of the creative policy game which targets policy area reform at the national level. Through increased control over the policy areas of culture, education, language and administration, the Hungarian minority can achieve self-regulating institutions to ensure their own cultural reproduction. The addition of new

policy areas linked to economic and regional development arise in the post-EU period in manifestos, and there is also more frequent claiming of educational and cultural self-governance by all actors. This suggests that the latter has become a valence issue: everyone supports educational and cultural self-governance, but the devil is in the details.

In accounting for these trends, on the domestic level there is intra-group competition and different bargaining strategies which impact the type of self-governance that is claimed. MKP makes stronger calls for administrative reform and regional and economic development and advocates a "big steps" approach compared to the "small steps" approach of Most-Híd. Moreover, during the post-accession period the kin-state and European levels do not greatly impact the strength of claims at the national level. In terms of arenas to claim to, the European arena is weak and the kin-state arena is preferred more by MKP than Most-Híd, and the kin-state provides funding for cultural and educational projects.

With little movement at the national level towards greater self-governance for the Hungarian minority, the next two chapters extend the examination of policy area claims to a lower level to incorporate autonomy claims through the local perspective. These chapters demonstrate how autonomy is pursued by local actors, spanning not just political elites, but also civil society actors and associations who claim "autonomy" creatively across the policy areas of regional development, education, culture and language. The inclusion of this local dimension provides a full account of how "autonomy" is creatively pursued in Slovakia and forms a part of normalised domestic politics.

8 A "Bottom Up" Approach to Autonomy: Self-Governance in Education, Culture and Language

> *"I think that if we want to maintain the community in the long-term, then we must realise autonomy in its variety of forms. If things continue as they have, then we will disappear. This is the sense of public opinion as well"* (Interview Horony, 2017).

In the Slovak context, Hungarian minority elites have not been able to achieve much success in their claims to autonomy at the national level, as illustrated in Chapter 7. As mentioned in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.3, one conditionality criterion for MKP's (*Magyar Koalíció Párt*/Party of the Hungarian Coalition) inclusion in government coalition between 1998-2006 was to drop its claim to "autonomy". Moreover, as Chapter 7 illustrated, both MKP and Most-Híd make claims using the term "self-governance" and focus on policy area reforms at the national level. However, during the time period of 2006-2018, achievements in the policy fields of culture, education, language and administration at the national level are slow even with the increased inclusion of political and civil society actors.

With reticence at the national level across different national government coalitions, in the next two chapters I extend the second element of the "creative policy game" down a level to incorporate the local perspective. I trace changes over time in claiming to different autonomy-related policy areas and how elites make usage of opportunities and constraints at the local, national, kin-state and European levels – addressing Research Questions A and B. The politics of claim-making from the local perspective is a dimension not adequately studied (Chapter 2 Section 2.4).

In the next two chapters, I trace the claims in the local newspaper archives of *Komáromi Lapok* and *Gömöri Hírlap* from the years 2009-2011 and 2015-2017.[77] I discuss the nature of the claims and identify the most frequently claimed topics and issues. I make three contributions. The first is that the claims trace back to a wider range of elite actors outside of the typical political party leaders, to include civil society actors, local government council representatives, business leaders and others. I, therefore, incorporate the voices of different elites engaged in claim-making across a range of autonomy-related policy areas – such as regional development, education and culture. Second, some of the claims at the local level are made – somewhat surprisingly – by elites who are not just ethnic Hungarians. This is the case in the policy area of regional development (next chapter), where claims are made by a range of ethnic Slovak and Hungarian actors serving often in government positions. This highlights how some autonomy claims are not just positioned along an ethnic dimension. Third, I trace how the claims target different arenas: the local, national, kin-state and European arenas. These different levels offer opportunities in claim-making for elites – as well as constraints – which can be used simultaneously or sequentially to further autonomy claims. Indeed, the reality of autonomy claim-making is that it is disparate and includes a range of actors targeting different arenas.

The focus of this chapter is on claims in the fields of education, culture and language (ECL). Autonomy, or "self-governance", is seen as a solution to guarantee the cultural survival of the community, whether through "cultural self-governance", "educational self-governance" or increased "linguistic rights" (Interview Fiala-Butora, 2017). Linked to the

[77] As a reminder to the reader, two three-year segments were chosen to examine claims at the local level (Chapter 3 Section 3.3.3). These years were chosen for three reasons. First, examining each year from the 2004-2018 time period was simply not possible given the amount of data, coupled with time constraints. Second, two time periods were chosen based on important national events, such as the party-split in 2009 (for the 2009-2011 time period) and the development of significant autonomy plans and national elections during the 2015-2017 period. Finally, *Gömöri Hírlap* was out of print from 2013-2014 and re-emerged at the end of 2015 with three issues.

discussion on elite conceptions of autonomy in Chapter 5 Section 5.2.1, to achieve these forms of self-governance, the elements in place would have to include control over institutions, financial provisions and the ability to make decisions linked to the life of the minority. Increased self-governance in ECL fields would enable the minority to ensure its survival, addressing worries over assimilation and a declining population. As is found throughout the analysis in this chapter, ECL claims are framed often in reference to "rights" to use the minority language, for the need to support educational measures to ensure the sustenance of the community and in reference to the legal context of certain ECL provisions.

Following a brief recap of events at the national level, the analysis of ECL claim-making from the local perspective demonstrates how controversies at the national level often spark the movement of local actors to demand better ECL provisions from the local or the national level. Financial support is also important, particularly for the upkeep of educational institutions and cultural projects. In this regard, the kin-state and EU emerge as additional claiming arenas. The kin-state is relied on for both financial and moral legitimacy which is a double-edged sword. The minority is also financially vulnerable in its reliance on Slovak domestic goodwill and the EU for the upkeep of education institutions. Moreover, the analysis shows that the involvement of civil society organisations has increased – such as *Anyanyelvünkért Polgári Társulás*[78], Via Nova (the youth wing of MKP), the Slovak-Hungarian Teachers Union and the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia. – claiming across ECL areas and often working together with political actors.

8.1 The National Context

On the national level, as discussed in Chapter 7, there are several challenges across the ECL fields during the 2006-2017 time period. Hungarian schools do exist but there have been issues with access and textbook provision, there is a limited amount of funding

[78] Best translated as the Civic Association for the Mother Tongue.

available for cultural institutions such as museums and theatres, and language usage has been challenged on its implementation and also limited in its scope.[79]

Prime Minister Robert Fico (SMER-SD) is in coalition with Vladimír Mečiar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (HZDS) and Ján Slota's Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS) from 2006-2010. The combination of nationalist actors leads to tensions and a souring of Hungarian-Slovak relations. With MKP out of coalition, the 2009 controversial amendment to the 1995 *Slovak Language Law* makes the Hungarian minority go on the defensive and angers the kin-state as discussed in Chapter 7 Section 7.2. Issues also arise at the national level in 2009-2010 linked to the Hungarian spelling of geographic names in textbooks. The proposed 2010 *Patriotism Bill* has several suggestions including singing the Slovak national anthem in all schools on Monday mornings, hanging the Slovak national flag in all classrooms and having the nation anthem's text hung up in schools (Bilefsky, 2010). It evokes a strong reaction from the newly created civil society organisation the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia, issuing a statement for the government to immediately take it off the table,

> *"We expect the representatives of the Slovak Republic's National Council not to vote for any form of this bad law, and to definitively make it disappear into history, because that is where it belongs in 21st century Europe!"* (The Roundtable, 2010)

Most-Híd enters Parliament in 2010 with MKP left behind with no seats in Parliament. Most-Híd joins the centre-right coalition with Slovak Democratic and Christian Union - Democratic Party (SDKU-DS), Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) and Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) until March 2012 after which it is then out of coalition but in Parliament from 2012-2016. Most-Híd returns to coalition government in 2016 with Fico's SMER-SD,

[79] This is a brief overview of the national political scene, more is done in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.3 and also in Chapter 7.

Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS), and Network (NIET). MKP remains out of Parliament but active in the local and regional level.

While Hungarian education is guaranteed from nursery through to university, during 2015-2016 a proposed education law regulating the minimum number of students would have put one-third of the Hungarian schools in danger. It is fended off by Most-Híd. Language usage and bilingual signs receive a long-awaited change in 2017, when the Ministry for Transport gives the order to put up bilingual names at trains stations where the Hungarian minority comprise at least 20% of the population. Moreover, in terms of financial support for cultural activities, Most-Híd passes the *Cultural Fund Act* in 2017 which formalises the decision-making structure and annual budget for the funding of minority cultural activities. These national developments help put into context the different claims made in the local newspaper archives of *Komáromi Lapok* and *Gömöri Hírlap* and show the constraints faced at making claims for increased self-governance at the national level.

8.2 Pursuing Self-Governance in ECL Policies: Komárom and Rimaszombat

The basis of this analysis is the different newspaper archives collected from *Komáromi Lapok* and *Gömöri Hírlap* for the years 2009-2011 and 2015-2017. These years were chosen due to their importance of capturing key moments and the availability of local-level data (see Methodology Chapter 3 Section 3.3.3 for detailed discussion). The two towns of Komárom and Rimaszombat also have almost perfectly reversed population concentrations of Hungarians and Slovaks. Komárom has 56 % ethnic Hungarians and 33 % ethnic Slovaks; Rimaszombat is comprised of 31 % and 54 % of Hungarians and Slovaks, respectively (Statistical Office of Slovak Republic, 2017). The newspapers of the two towns of Rimaszombat and Komárom and time periods allow for a within-case analysis and for a fuller view of the local perspective of claim-making.

As mentioned in Methodology Chapter Section 3.4.1, a *claim* is understood as a need, a lack, a demand, or a goal to achieve something. The content of the claim is coded using a hybrid deductive-inductive method. I then constructed an additional dataset of claims which identified the type of actor, their level, political party affiliation, ethnicity, and the level claimed to for each claim.[80] The claims cover the different policy areas of autonomy such as regional development, education policy, cultural policy, etc. By focusing on the unit of analysis as the *claim* and tracing it back to the actor, interesting findings arise regarding the breadth of different types of elites making claims as well as the result that claims to regional development are less ethnically positioned than claims to education, culture and language.

For the ECL policy areas, I adopted rules of inclusion and exclusion so that education policy covers education in the mother tongue; cultural policy encompasses cultural monuments as well as cultural institutions such as museums and minority language use in the media; linguistic policy addresses usage of language in areas such as public administration and signposting. These are the policy areas which overlap with how Hungarian elites and their policy documents claim autonomy – through educational self-governance, cultural self-governance and linguistic rights (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.1.2).

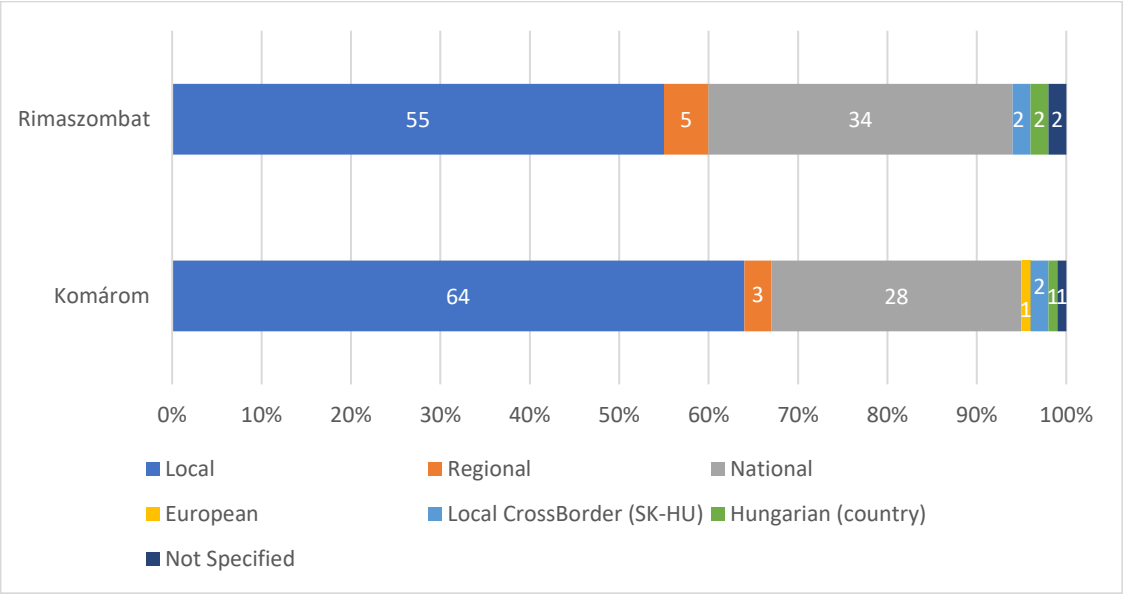
In this chapter as well as the next, finding trends regarding the order and choice of arenas is challenging for two reasons. First, a large percentage of claims are categorised as to the "general" level, meaning that in the newspaper article the claimants do not explicitly target an arena but rather make a claim without specifying a targeted actor or arena. An example is when a representative criticises the fact that EU funding targeting infrastructure development does not make it to Eastern Slovakia but rather stays in Western Slovakia (Juhász, 2009b). The actor does not specify who he is criticising – the EU, the Slovak

[80] Please see Appendices E, F and H for definitions of policy areas, coding frame for newspaper archives and database categories, respectively.

national level, or Slovak local level. The lack of specification may be due to simply to how the article is written – for public consumption – rather than deliberate vagueness on behalf of the actor. I decided, methodologically, to not attribute a claiming level and rather classify the claim as to the "general" level rather than make an assumption of the claiming level and have false positives. A second challenge is that many of the claims are one-off issues or events rather than repeated claims for the same thing. In addition, there are changes in the number of editions per year of the newspaper (summarised in Table 1 p.63). To keep this in mind, in each chapter the particular figure summarising trends over time show both the absolute count as well as the proportion of claims. That said, observations of trends can be found for the controversies mentioned and will be discussed.

Looking first at the types of actors making claims, Figure 8 provides a breakdown of the level of actors engaged in claim-making as covered in the newspapers in the fields of ECL. In both towns, local level actors are the most active – comprising 55 and 64 per cent of ECL claims in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively – followed by the national level actors at 34 and 28 per cent in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively. Regional level actors are far behind with 5 per cent or less. Therefore, whilst the coverage shows the importance of national level actors making claims on behalf of the minority – such as MPs or national civil society organisations like the Roundtable – the significantly large proportion of local actors also making claims illustrates the relevance of analysis of the local perspective in the claims to autonomy.

Figure 8 Level of Actors Making Claims to Education, Culture and Language in Rimaszombat and Komárom 2009-2011, 2015-2017 (%)



N=112 Rimaszombat; N=116 Komárom

Table 10 below provides a breakdown of the percentage of claims by all actors in the ECL fields in Komárom and Rimaszombat. The towns are similar in the sense that cultural claims are the most prominent, followed by education and language. However, when looking in detail at the *cultural* category, Komárom has a higher proportion of claims for cultural monuments and cross-border cultural claims (cultural projects involving both Hungary and Slovakia). On the other hand, cultural media claims took up a significant portion of claims in Rimaszombat (13 per cent), undoubtedly due to plans to close the Hungarian newspaper. The differences will be expanded in the next sections below. Regarding the field of *education*, this saw most of the claims in the sub-field of primary and secondary education at 27-28 per cent. In the field of *language*, Rimaszombat has a noticeably higher proportion of claims than Komárom at 25 per cent and 17 per cent, respectively.

Table 10 Breakdown of Claims in Education, Culture and Language in Komárom and Rimaszombat 2009-2011, 2015-2017 (%)

	Type of Claim	*Komárom*	*Rimaszombat*
	Education General	0	3
	Education Primary-Secondary	28	27
	Education Tertiary	3	0
	Cross-Border Education	0	0
	Intl Education	2	1
Education Total %		**33**	**30**
	Culture General	10	13
	Culture Media	3	13
	Culture Religion	1	1
	Culture Venues	5	3
	Culture Monuments	20	10
	Cross-Border Culture	11	4
	Intl Culture	0	0
Culture Total %		**50**	**45**
	Language	17	25
Language Total %		**17**	**25**

N=112 Rimaszombat; N=116 Komárom

In terms of claims over time, Figure 9 and Figure 10 illustrate how claims over the ECL categories vary over time in the two towns. The increase in 2010 in culture and language in Komárom are related to the Duna Menti Museum controversy and the ramifications of the 2009 *Slovak Language law* controversy, while the peak in education in 2015 is related to the proposed bill to lessen the number of hours of education in the mother tongue and minimum headcount of students in schools. In Rimaszombat, cultural claims increase in proportion over time, owing to debates surrounding the local newspaper and the erection of statues. There is a peak in education-related claims in Rimaszombat in 2016, however this is skewed by the fact that there were only 3 editions in 2015; the claims in 2016 for education are linked to the national elections. Language claims are claimed most often in 2009 linked to the amendment to the *Slovak Language Law*, and then remain relatively low through to 2017.

Figure 9 Proportion of ECL Claims in Komárom and Rimaszombat 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (%)

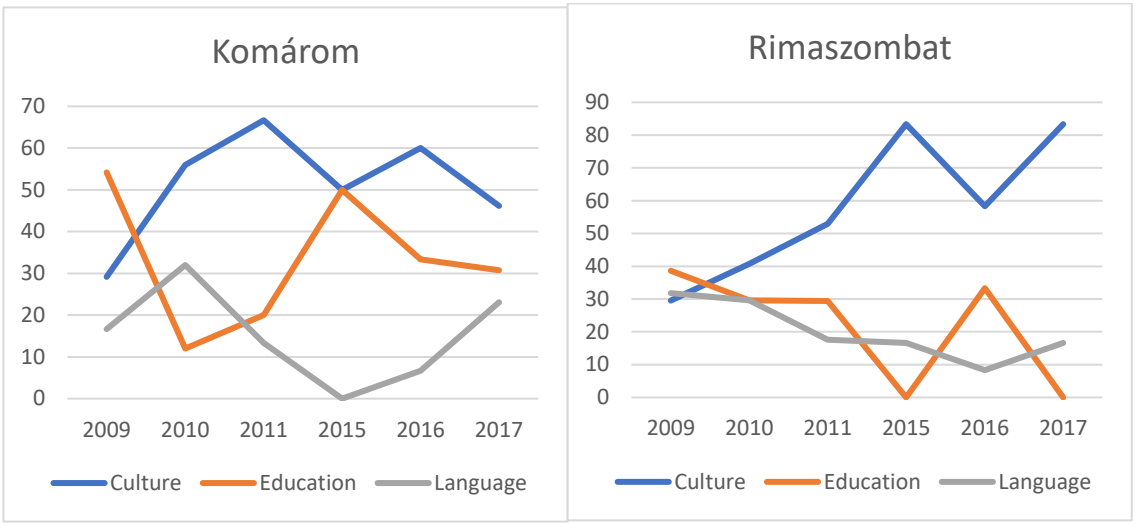
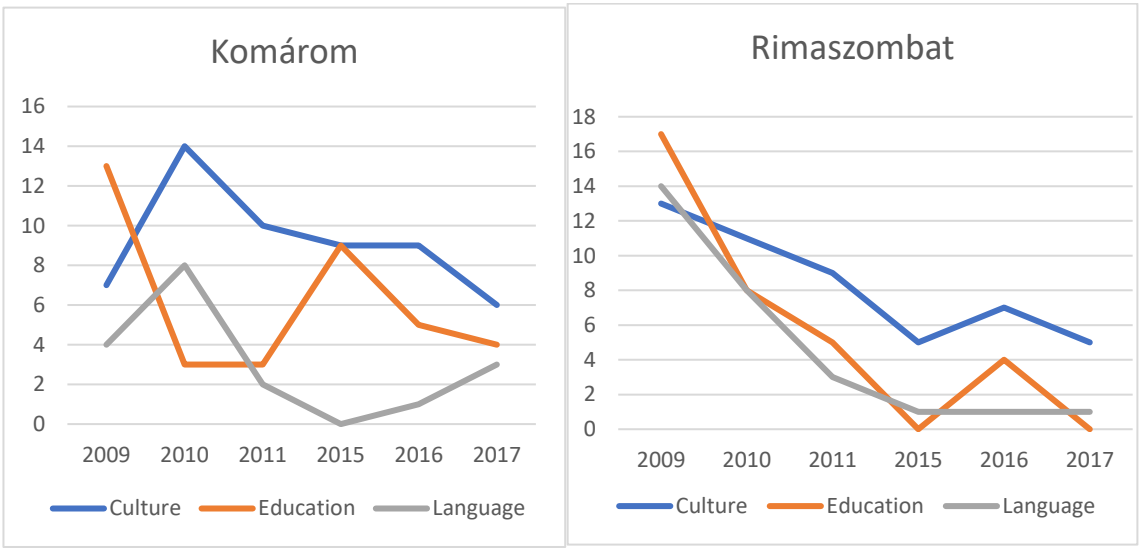


Figure 10 Number of ECL Claims in Komárom and Rimaszombat 2009-2011 and 2015-2017



N=112 Rimaszombat; N=116 Komárom

The discussion below takes each policy area in turn. It highlights the contributions of the local perspective, particularly claims by civil society organisations and how local claims in language and education are often in response to events at the national level.

8.2.1 Language Policy

One cross-cutting theme in education and cultural policy is the use of language. Language usage, however, is not just limited to these institutional structures, but also extends

to public administration and signs for place names and can be seen to challenge the state language. As Csergő (2007, p. 6) writes about linguistic territoriality, the state wants to "mark its ownership" through language in physical spaces – through signs and place names – and also within public institutions such as public administration. This, however, does not sit well with the minority. In both Komárom and Rimaszombat, the majority of language claims lodged are during the 2009-2011 period which is during the time of the 2009 Amendment to the 1995 *Slovak Language Law*. Claims relate to protesting the law as well as calling for better bilingualism. In the 2015-2017 period, there are much less claims lodged and they are all linked to bilingualism. Claims are framed with reference to Slovak legal provisions, the general right to use the mother tongue and the need to affirm the community. Civil society takes an increased role in claiming compared to other policy areas. Across the claims by different actors, the key arena targeted is the national.

The 2009 amendment to the 1995 *Slovak Language Law* was certainly an earthquake in Slovak-Hungarian relations and led to many questions, protests and mobilisation. Much of the rhetoric surrounding the claims is around the right to use one's mother tongue and the legal inconsistencies between the *Slovak Language Law* and the *Minority Language Law* (KV, 2010). Regarding the legality of the amendment, Most-Híd and MKP make a (failed) joint effort to take the law to the Constitutional Court (Juhász, 2009a) and Most-Híd makes a public statement asking Slovak President Ivan Gašparovič not to sign the Slovak Language Law (which he did) (Juhász, 2009e). MKP also launches a petition to protest the language law and its legality, calling for the removal of fines, the recognition of Hungarian as a regional language, and the widening of the ability to use the minority language (Juhász, 2009c; NA, 2010a).

At the local level MKP Chair Pál Csáky calls for a protest in Dunaszerdahely, alongside support from civil society organisations (NA, 2009e). The Dunaszerdahely

protest, which MKP and civil society organisations label as a success, garners between 6500 (police estimate) and 12,000 people (MKP estimate) (Mózes, 2009). The protest was called "Kiállunk a jogainkért" – "We stand up for our rights" – which again evokes the idea of the right to use one's mother tongue and challenges the legality of the 2009 amendment. In Komárom, there is also a relatively well attended protest of 400 students in Klapka Square with different leaders such as Csaba Cúth from the *Anyanyelvünkért Polgári Társulás* (Civic Association for the Mother Tongue) and Tímea Tóth – the president of the Bratislava-based Student Network – calling for changes to the language law and better respect of the minority's culture. It was clearly framed as not being *against* the Slovaks but rather being *for* minority language rights (KV, 2010).

A common theme throughout the claims to language is that Hungarians themselves need to be encouraged to use their language rights. The claims are often framed to encourage the community to use the minority language bravely, without fear and without passivity. It is also pointed out that there are European frameworks which guarantee minority language usage and other countries where minorities can use their language (Bara, 2010; KV, 2010; MKP, 2010b; NA, 2011d). In this vein, the leader of the *Anyanyelvűnkért Polgári Társulás* urges Hungarians to use the rights that they already have: when in state offices Hungarians should use their mother tongue because they simply can – there are often Hungarian-speaking staff who can help them with their questions (NA, 2011d). In the interviews I conducted with elites, some mentioned that the need to encourage Hungarians to use their language – such as in public administration – is because many Hungarians simply switch to Slovak, are not aware of their rights (Interview Simon, 2017), or simply want to avoid conflict and switch to Slovak:

> *"Hungarians are raised that if they go into the state office to do business, why should they provoke in order to use their language, they'll be happy if the staff will do what they need"* (Interview Horony, 2017).

Another contested realm is bilingual language signs, an issue pushed by both civil society and politicians. The Palatinus Civic Organisation in Komárom successfully lobbies to rename six streets and further specifies the Hungarian translation of two streets (NA, 2009b). Komárom mayor Tibor Bastrnák also says that whilst he will encourage MPs to change the law at the national level regarding bilingual language signs, he will encourage the local council leadership to find solutions. One such solution is to put up bilingual signs on those areas where property owners agree to have them (NA, 2010b).

The national level makes life difficult for the local level in terms of bilingual signs. Komárom City Council wanted to put up signs in its periphery areas in the minority language, but the Transport Authority denied them the right to do so. The matter is taken to the Interior Ministry, to then be bounced to the state police to then be rejected on grounds that the *Minority Language Law* does not regulate bilingual signs (NA, 2010b). In Rimaszombat, the battle is focused on the local level, where the city's Law 51/2000 regulating bilingual signs on city, regional and national state buildings but was not yet implemented (MKP, 2011). After protests by MKP about monolingual signs, bilingual signs are indeed put up (NA, 2011j). The claims are lodged with a reference to the legality of using the minority language and of trying to come up with creative ways to still use the minority language (like Tibor Bastrnák above).

By 2017 and with Most-Híd in coalition, the situation seems to have improved, with a national victory in the provision of bilingual signs over railway stations. In those municipalities where the minority population reaches 20% or above, minority language signs would also appear; this meant 54 Hungarian language signs and 1 Ruthenian would appear along the railway lines (B, 2017; NA, 2017d). The fact that such small steps are heeded as victory demonstrates just how fragile and slow-moving the situation is in terms of increased language rights. At the unveiling of Komárom's railway sign, different speakers

emphasise the importance of comfort and the richness of culture as reasons why it was good to have bilingual signs (B, 2017).

However, the practicality of bilingualism is challenging because it can affect all realms of life. For example, in 2017, mayor László Stubendek writes a letter to supermarket chain LIDL requesting the chain to take into consideration the Hungarian population concentration and respect their customers – as it does similarly for the minority in South Tyrol (Városi Hivatal, 2017b). Outside of supermarkets, even transport matters such as a bus signs and timetables can be tricky.[81] Bilingualism plays an important role in making the Hungarian community feel at ease and respected.

The above discussion on language rights shows how national developments can lead to opportunities to mobilise at the local level, as happened in the difficult nationalist context during the 2009 *Language Law* and the protest at Klapka Square. Moreover, constraints at the national level linked to bilingual signs lead local level politicians to push for bilingual signs within their legal remits in Rimaszombat and Komárom. In 2017, bilingual signs at railway stations are approved and there are other calls for bilingualism like in LIDL. The local level is more reactionary to national level developments rather than proactive in the field of language rights. There are also important civil society organisations which take part in protests and mobilisation to encourage Hungarians to use their native tongue (also discussed in Chapter 5 with *Bilingual Slovakia*'s activities). However, the general Hungarian population is less actively involved – as seen in their virtual absence in the Duna Menti Museum controversy to be discussed in Section 8.2.3.2 and their hesitation to use language rights (Interviews Horony, 2017; Simon, 2017). The framing of claims is around the legality

[81] In my interview with MKP Muzsla mayor and MKP's Economic and Regional Development Vice-Chair, Iván Farkas, he insisted I take a picture of one of the few places in all of Slovakia with a bilingual bus sign, in Appendix I Figure 33 .

of provisions, the right to use one's mother tongue and the importance of the mother tongue usage in the self-respect and confidence of the Hungarian community.

8.2.2 Education Policy

In both Komárom and Rimaszombat, the majority of claims linked to education revolve around primary and secondary education in three main areas: (1) calling for parents to enrol their Hungarian children in Hungarian language schools, (2) asserting the need for financial support for the upkeep of educational institutions and school materials and (3) protesting certain national developments. There are many more claims in the earlier 2009-2011 period in Rimaszombat and much less in 2015-2017 whereas the claims are more evenly spread out over time in Komárom. Reasons for the difference in Rimaszombat could be simply a decrease in number of newspaper editions per year in 2015-2017. Claims emphasise the importance of minority education to strengthen the identity of the Hungarian community and highlight the uphill struggles faced in ensuring the continuation of minority education – both legally and financially.

8.2.2.1 Enrolment in Hungarian-Language Schools

Regarding enrolment, members of civil society such as *Anyanyelvünkért Polgári Társulás* emphasise having parents enrol their children in Hungarian language schools or risk the loss of identity and confusion. As its President Csaba Cúth argues,

> *They learn all the values, they understand the things of the world which enrich their personality, and which make it easier for them to reach their dreams. The thinking of a Hungarian mother-tongue speaker who goes to a Slovak language school becomes confused, they will not be Hungarian nor Slovak, they only learn the language and by contrast, their knowledge is neglected (Csölle, 2010).*

The call for the increased importance of Hungarian-language education continues with other meetings of civil society, including in Komárom where the leader of the Slovak Hungarian Teachers Federation, Tibor Jókai said, "The Slovak-Hungarian education sector has a key role to play in the strengthening of the Slovak Hungarian community" (Jókai,

2015). The large emphasis on the education of young Hungarians in Slovakia spans the two times periods studied and shows the community's concern over its own survival and the mobilisation of civil society to encourage parents to educate their children in Hungarian.

8.2.2.2 School Materials and Education Institutions

There are reasons for parents and civil society to be concerned. Political actors at both the local and national level have had to lobby against various measures which undermine their sense of ownership and control over the minority education system, impeding "educational self-governance". There is a sense that the Hungarians cannot rely on the support of the Slovak government and Hungarian-Slovak collaboration is an illusion. It was for this reason, moreover, that Hungarian teachers formed their own teachers federation (Juhász, 2010f).

The controversy found in the archives for the 2009-2011 period surrounds minority language school textbooks. The issue begins in 2008 when a proposed education law would have geographic names in the state language rather than in the minority language. This leads to outrage at the local and national levels, with MKP petitioning a change to the law so that Hungarian names would appear (without the Slovak translation in brackets) (Felvidék.ma, 2009a). In 2010 the Constitutional Court rules that geographic names in Hungarian appearing in minority language textbooks do not violate the constitution (NA, 2010g). With such politicisation of geographic names and the usage of the minority language, it is perhaps not surprising that the Slovak Hungarian Teachers Federation's Rimaszombat Regional Centre applies to Hungary's Homeland Fund (*Szülőföld Alap*) to receive 1 million forints of funding for the creation of a Regional Reading Book (*Regionális Olvasókönyv*). The book is aimed at students between the ages of 9 and 15, providing information on the different regional landscapes and with names of geographical places in Hungarian (Felvidék.ma, 2009b; Juhász, 2009d). The importance of the Hungarian regional textbook is to show

children where they come from and the values shared by the region and community. As with language claims, some of the framing of the issue also revolves around the legality of Slovak measures in place (Juhász, 2010a).

In addition to dilemmas linked to educational materials, there are serious issues surrounding the upkeep of school buildings. This occurs in both towns and covers both time periods. Claims for building renovations are more likely to target European funds in Rimaszombat whereas in Komárom they target both the national and European. During the 2009-2010 academic year, the Tompa Mihály school – the only Hungarian language high school in Rimaszombat – is in serious need of renovation. Unfortunately funding does not come through from the EU Regional Operational Programme, with mayor István Cifruš describing the school as in a "catastrophic state" (Juhász, 2010e). The rejection of EU funding is not well-received as the author of the newspaper article entitled it "The EU flag cannot wave proudly here" (Homoly, 2009b). Other schools also shut down due to demographic reasons – i.e. not having enough students – such as the Ferenczy István school and a vocational secondary school (Műszaki Szakközépiskola) despite the disappointment and consternation of the mayor and the school's vice principal, respectively (Juhász, 2010b, 2011f).

Educational institutions in Komárom also face difficulty with renovations, and claims are phrased with serious concerns about a stable and sustainable future of the schools (NA, 2009d). The Munka Utcai school – the best performing Hungarian grammar school in the Nyitra region – struggles to secure funds on three occasions. Most-Híd MP Péter Vörös intercedes to offer his help. The school finally receives 1.2 million euros from the EU Regional Operational Programme (NA, 2011f). The Selye János High School's bid is also rejected in 2009 for 1.5 million euros, despite the backing of the local and regional government (Andruskó, 2009). Fortunately, in 2017 the Nyitra regional council votes to

provide 1.85 million euros for the high school and the detailed plans of renovations illustrate the extent to which the school was run down (Szerkesztőség, 2017). Therefore, the difficulty of ensuring the survival of the educational institutions – even its buildings – is seen as an uphill challenge. It relies on the goodwill of the Slovak government, whether at the regional or national levels, and occasionally from EU funding.

8.2.2.3 National Developments on the Future of Minority Education

With this happening at the local level, there are also major political battles being fought in the national arena, particularly during 2015-2016. This is covered in *Komáromi Lapok*. A key moment identified in the article coverage is when a proposed law regulating the minimum number of students to guarantee school provision threatens the existence of one-third of the 261 Hungarian schools in the country. As Most-Híd MP Péter Vörös stated, "they are regularly making decisions above our heads" (NA, 2015a) which further illustrates the connection between decision-making and self-governance (autonomy) in education policy from the Hungarian perspective.

There is protest across the Hungarian political divide, including a petition signed by almost 26,000 people submitted to the Minister of Education Jurai Draxler, President Andrej Kiska and Prime Minster Robert Fico. It is a jointly sponsored movement – both between the MKP and Most-Híd political parties – as well as through cooperation with the Roundtable and several other civil society organisations. Through negotiation in Parliament, as detailed by Péter Vörös in an interview, he is able to guarantee that Hungarian schools would not be affected by the required minimum student headcount (NA, 2015c; KA, 2016). Following this, MKP and Most-Híd issue a joint statement on the importance of Hungarian education which emphasises that a strong Hungarian educational system is the fundamental tool to ensure the maintenance of the Hungarian community in Slovakia (Dunaszerdahelyi.sk, 2016).

With the future of schools put into question, or in any case into a vulnerable position, different members of civil society across Slovakia, including TANDEM organisation, the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia and the Magyariskola.sk (Hungarian school) portal join together to launch a project to encourage dialogue about the future of Hungarian schools (NA, 2016a). The focus on strong minority education is not just about passing on cultural identity, but also about ensuring there is a future for Hungarians *in* Slovakia, rather than emigration to Hungary (Juhász, 2010e).

On the kin-state side, Hungary also provides financial support through the *Szülőföld Alap* and its successor, the *Bethlen Gábor* Fund. These funding opportunities are vital when the domestic situation is unfavourable. For example, the Hungarian government provides 50,000 euros for lab equipment in a Komárom vocational secondary school (NA, 2017b), as well as 17 million forints to another vocational school for more up-to-date machinery (NA, 2017g). With kin-state funding, the schools are able to further develop and address the needs of the local Hungarians.

Although most of the action and debate happens in the fields of primary and secondary education, Slovakia does have one Hungarian-language university located in Komárom, the Selye János University, established in 2004. It has three faculties: faculty of education, of economics and of reformed theological training (János Selye University, 2019). The different claims lodged for the University all target the European level. In 2016, the University wins money on three occasions from the European Union to support its work on nanotechnology and AI, careers services, and information and communications technology development. Funding for the three projects is 5 million euros (the majority coming from the EU), 857,000 euros and 1.86 million euros, respectively. The first project makes the University the biggest in Central and Eastern Europe in nanotechnology and

robotics. The University's success in its project applications are recounted gratefully, showing how the projects improve the standing of the University in the region. (NA, 2016b).

What the above discussion highlights is threefold. The first is that education-related claims are often in reaction to developments at the national level, as demonstrated by controversies surrounding Hungarian-language textbooks and the proposed education reform in 2015, alongside the general national trend of a declining Hungarian population. The second is the importance of Hungarian minority civil society organisations in claiming for more Hungarian control over education institutions, whether this be to ensure local level school enrolment of Hungarian children, guaranteeing Hungarian geographic names in textbooks or mobilisation against proposed national education reforms of the minimum student number requirement. Civil society and political actors emphasise the importance of minority education as the fundamental building block of the Hungarian community's ability to pass on its culture. Without Hungarian schools, the future of the Hungarian community is at stake (Homoly, 2009a). The third element – which ties to education's importance for the community's survival – is the importance of funding for projects and the renovation of education buildings. Financial considerations are very real, with the national level not always providing the money necessary. The situation is precarious with actors like MKP parliamentary representative (and later turned Most-Híd member), Imre Andruskó, even claiming financial discrimination against the Hungarian minority, "there are signs of financial discrimination, such as the allocation of EU funds for the renovation of schools and school buildings." (NA, 2009c).

Financial support is an uphill battle. The role of the Hungarian government in support of education also highlights how the kin-state is used as an additional political arena to claim to and to receive financial support to meet the minority's educational needs. Its funding is aimed at supporting young Hungarians in their own home countries. Such reliance may not

be ideal, however, but it is perhaps one of the few options available alongside applying to EU financial programmes. The kin-state and EU arenas are used, it seems, when the national level cannot provide adequate funding support. The national arena is the main target when it comes to bargaining over legal measures, with the engagement of minority political parties and in some instances, collaboration between the political party and civil society as was the case in 2016.

8.2.3 Culture Policy

The debates and claims surrounding cultural "self-governance" – having more control over the decisions, financial structures and the institutions to enable cultural reproduction – are almost inherently contentious because of the polemical nature of identity politics. As mentioned in Section 8.1, the 2009 amendment to the *Slovak Language Law* and the 2010 *Patriotism Bill* is not well received by the Hungarian community. A disputable success at the national level was the passage of the *Cultural Fund Act* in 2017, with a budget of 4 million euros for the Hungarian minority for cultural projects, as discussed in Chapter 7 Section 7.2.

With a tense environment at the national level, local-level politics around culture can be fraught with tension. Claims to this policy area are grouped into two sub-categories tied to the preservation and reproduction of the minority culture: (1) debates about cultural monuments and (2) about Hungarian language representation in cultural institutions such as the media and cultural venues. The frequency of claims for cultural monuments in Komárom and Rimaszombat are similar during the different time periods in both towns. Claims linked to cultural institutions are typically linked to the Duna Menti controversy in Komárom and the closing down of *Gömöri Hírlap* in Rimaszombat. There is also close coverage of the results of bidding for different projects from the country's Cultural Ministry,

as well as the Nyitra regional government, and occasional success of projects funded by the kin-state.

8.2.3.1 Cultural Monuments

Decisions surrounding cultural monuments are highly politicised, not the least because cultural monuments are linked to commemoration of the past and are a form of identity politics. Commemorations of identity and affirmation of a "historical memory" provide an avenue for creating a political community with a "shared past" and a "perception of unity" (Bruggemann and Kasekamp, 2008). The role of commemorations to pass on identity becomes all the more important in the Hungarian-Slovak context where the Hungarian minority does not have institutional provisions guaranteeing full oversight of minority reproduction of culture in the fields of education and language use.[82] The politics behind cultural monuments can indeed become a quagmire, but it is fertile ground for asserting the needs of self-governance of the Hungarian minority community: control over decisions to encourage the cultural reproduction which it can do through supporting cultural monuments.

Cultural commemoration does not necessarily happen successfully, however, especially when the Slovak community also wants to assert itself. In July 2010, national politics becomes embedded in local politics when Prime Minister Fico confronts the city of Komárom over the placement of the statues of Saints Cyril and Methodius – two religious figures important to the Slavic nation and called "Apostles to the Slavs" – which are originally on the facade of the Matica Slovenská cultural institute. He argues this is not a prominent enough place fitting for the two key figures. The contest over the statues is conducted in terms of legality on the part of the Mayor and MKP. Mayor Tibor Bastrnák

[82] Parts of this section are from an article by the Author forthcoming in *East European Politics & Societies* in 2021.

argues that permission was not sought from the local council to move the statue and believed the Prime Minister's actions were due to the impending national elections. He did not want the local population to fall for nationalist politics (B, 2010). The local MKP leadership criticises the breach of rule of law (MKP, 2010a). Nevertheless, in 2010 Saints Cyril and Methodius are moved to a roundabout next to the Kossuth square (BU, 2010).

There are several successful claims made by the local government as well as civil society organisations which receive funding from the Nyitra regional government, the Slovak National Cultural Ministry and in the case of the St Rosalia local church facade renovation, from the Hungarian state's *Szülőföld Alap* (Homeland Fund) (Elek, 2010). The Nyitra regional government hasa fund called "*Óvjuk meg Nyitra megye kulturális emlékeit*" – "Protecting the Nyitra region's cultural sites" (Andrej, 2016), similar to the fund within the Slovak Cultural Ministry "*Újítsuk fel házunkat*" – "Let's renew our home". The latter fund enables the restoration of the Ferdinand Gate in Komárom as well as its memory plaque which cost €35000 (NA, 2009a). The Fund also provides €15,000 for the renovation of the Öregvár fortress' façade (Andrej, 2016). The local level government launches public funding which individual persons or organisations can apply to for work with protected or renovated cultural sites (NA, 2017f).

There are local civil society organisations involved in encouraging cultural preservation, such as the Pro Comaromiensis which renovates the Lipót Gate's commemorative plaque with the money coming from the bank, "Általános Hitelbank" (NA, 2011i). The Teátrum local organisation seeks to raise money through a fundraising ball for the erection of a statue in memory of the *Arany Ember* – The Man with a Golden Touch – a well-known novel by Komárom-born Hungarian writer Jókai Mór (Batta, 2016). Moreover, when it comes to the renovation of two Hungarian churches – St Rosalia and St Andras – different local-level ethnic Hungarian political leaders and civil society come together to

fundraise the amount (NA, 2010c).[83] In these instances, unlike education for example, the importance of preserving and erecting different national monuments is phrased as a common venture and the community comes together to take responsibility for the passing on of its culture. Cultural claims in general are less phrased as lamentations of the Hungarians' situation as education claims are.

Turning to Rimaszombat, the politics of cultural monuments at times becomes heated, especially with the local government council's vote for the creation of a "monument park" (*emlékpark*) in the central Tompa Square. The debate goes on for more than three years before the councillors finally vote for the monument park (Juhász, 2016d). There is also controversy over the Square's renovation, where local government representatives are at loggerheads over which statues should be erected and their exact location within the square. Debates about where to put Tompa Mihály's statue – a famous Hungarian poet local to Rimaszombat – along with the possible statue of Hungarian poet and revolutionary Sándor Petőfi and the creation of a prospective third statue, occupy the local government council for more than one year. Accusations of re-Slovakisation and magyarisation surface. In the end, the Council narrowly agrees to have János Arany's – a famous Hungarian writer – statue in the square alongside Petőfi and Tompa (Juhász, 2017d).

Outside of local government actors in Rimaszombat, civil society plays an active role in establishing increased responsibility and ownership over cultural resources. The biggest movement to provide cultural safeguarding is the initiative of Via Nova. This youth wing of MKP initiates "Saving our Ancestors' Tombstones," whose goal is to clean up the tombstones of deceased Hungarians. It is in reaction to a 2005 law which clears away tombstones that have not paid the cemetery fee after a 5-year notice period. One notable

[83] These were listed as: Mayor Tibor Bastrnák, Deputy Mayor Éva Hortai, Tamás Hollósy, Béla Keszegh, Imre Andruskó, Attila Czíria, Imre Dubány, and the civil society organisation Palatinus and Pavilon.

tombstone Via Nova renovate is of József Törköly, a Czechoslovak Senator representing the Hungarian minority. He was born in 1878 in Rimaszombat and plays a key role in the interwar period in politics, representing the Hungarians but also focusing on peaceful coexistence between Hungarians and Slovaks (Juhász, 2010h, 2011a). Linked to a respect for ancestors, in 2017, the idea of taking care of tombstones is taken up also in Komárom by a group of volunteers of the *Egy Jobb Komáromért Polgári Társulás* (For a Better Komárom Civic Association) where 3500 tombstones are documented. It is seen as a best practice to be spread to other Hungarian towns in the Carpathian basin to better protect the cemeteries. The Hungarian government was also open to funding some of the costs of the venture (Padlovics, 2017).

The above discussion highlights how asserting control and enabling Hungarian cultural monuments to be erected or renovated affirms the presence of the Hungarian identity. Moreover, these elements and actions revitalise the past and reinforce a sense of identity and unity amidst a politically divided Hungarian minority electorate. In the case of the Cyril and Methodius statues, the Komárom mayor did not want to fall prey to nationalist politics and instead kept a legal line of argument. The politicisation of statues, however, is sometimes inevitable as can also be seen in the debates in Rimaszombat's monument park. To a large extent, work on cultural monuments is done by local-level actors: the local government with significant contributions of civil society and an emphasis on collaboration. They claim to a range of levels, usually related to funding which is the necessary enabler. Financial support comes from the national government, or occasionally regional government and kin-state. In the first two cases, the local council usually has to contribute 5% of the total cost. Thus, while progress can be made to successfully exert control over the renovation and protection of cultural monuments, at the end of the day the power is still with those who provide the funding. Some civil society organisations skirt the issue by self-

funding through balls/gala, collections, or appeals to the kin-state. However, it remains that financial sustainability is not guaranteed.

8.2.3.2 Institutions and the Transmission of Culture: Media and Museums

Control over institutions which transmit culture – such as museums and media – are additional components of the quest for increased cultural "self-governance". In the aftermath of the 2009 amendment to the *Slovak Language Law*, the debate around subtitles and the implementation of provisions is a thorny topic. Inadequate Slovak language use in the media has serious financial ramifications when the local Komárom television channel receives a fine from the Slovak Television and Radio Council for not translating two commercials which appeared during airing – one about a newspaper called Delta and the other for a real estate agency. The tone of the television channel's complaint is one of injustice and surprise and says that it was the advertisers who asked for the commercial to be in one language (NA, 2010f).

A major controversy emerges when the Hungarian language is not provided in the Duna Menti Museum scandal in 2009-2010 in Komárom. The museum organised its annual seminar on "Ethnology and the museum" and releases a publication regarding the event. To the behest of many who cite the history of the Hungarian community in the city and representation in the museum's own collections, the book does not have any translation in Hungarian; only summary sections in English. Nyitra regional MKP politicians issue a protest petition and are joined by the local MKP chapter as well. The petition argues that the lack of Hungarian is an insult to the Hungarian community's struggle to sustain itself and its language. Part of the petition is below:

> *We cannot accept that in a region where the proportion of Hungarians is 30%, in a city where a significant majority of ethnic Hungarians live, and in the institution which Hungarians in Komárom initiated and established, and of which the current museum is the successor, an exclusively Slovak-language publication appears* (NA, 2010d).

Not only MKP but also Most-Híd issues measured support for the petition in the name of linguistic rights, and also criticises two MKP officials for not signing the petition (MKP, 2010b). The museum issues a statement in its defence arguing that the seminar brought together folk textiles from across Slovakia and was not about introducing the Hungarian textiles and ethnographic objects. It would have a Hungarian translation the book next year, but reminded the Hungarian community that there were Hungarian language signs in the exhibit (Duna Menti Múzeum, 2010). During the controversy, interestingly, there is not much local mobilisation or involvement compared to the involvement of civil society in the field of cultural monuments. This ties into the findings in section 8.2.1 on language rights where generally the Hungarian population as a whole does not mobilise or actively use their language rights because it is seen as too confrontational.

The biggest controversy arising in Rimaszombat in 2010 and 2011 is the closure of the regional newspaper *Gömöri Hírlap.* This occurs with the unexpected move by local councillor Julius Sojka (SDKÚ, Slovak Democratic and Christian Union) to put to vote the holding up of the printing of the newspaper. It narrowly passes, despite opposition of the local independent mayor Šimko József. He argues the lack of debate about such an important topic was not appropriate (Juhász, 2011b). Support for the newspaper issues forward, with many arguing that a district's capital needs its own regional newspaper and the Hungarian minority should have the ability to read in its mother tongue (Juhász, 2010c). While seemingly a failure on behalf of the Hungarian minority to maintain a newspaper in their own language, by 2015 the local newspaper returns and is cited as a success by MKP local government leader Zoltán Cziprusz (Juhász, 2016a). The newspaper is re-established as a biweekly edition, and after some debate the local council approves the newspaper's main statute which establishes that the Hungarian and Slovak editions of the newspaper do

not need to have mirror translations, but can cover different topics for the two communities. (Juhász, 2016e). This is not an inconsiderable victory.

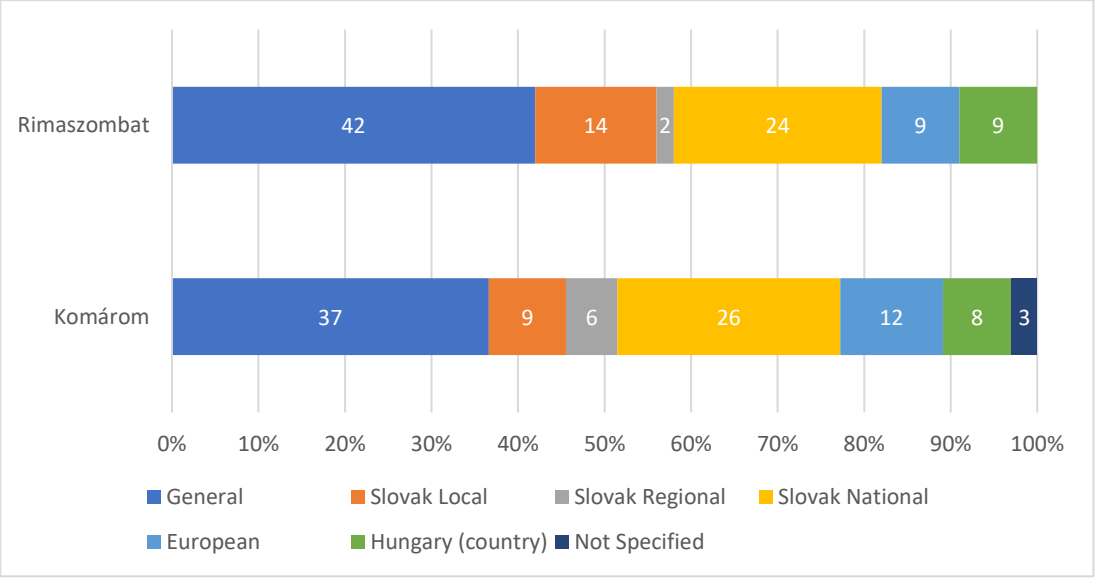
What these different debates show is the political nature of cultural reproduction, whether arguing about placements of statues, the funding of cultural monument renovations, or the use of the Hungarian language in media. If successful, the claims provide the Hungarian minority with more control over its cultural affairs like the dissemination of Hungarian media, the reproduction of its culture and remembrance of its own history. Cultural claims are phrased in terms of respect for the community, for its linguistic rights (in media), and the need for cultural measures to support the well-being and future survival of the Hungarians. In terms of claim-making, local civil society manages to mobilise itself in the preservation of cultural monuments much more so than in asserting the right to use the Hungarian language in media and museums. There is less legal regulation covering the realm of cultural monuments and commemoration compared to language usage in cultural institutions giving civil society actors more room to manoeuvre. In addition, actors are predominantly local and claim to the local and national arenas, with occasional reliance on the kin-state in the realm of cultural monuments. The European Union takes a backseat in the Hungarian community's assertion to cultural self-governance.

8.3 Actors, Arenas and Claiming Preferences

As can be seen in the above discussions on education, culture and language (ECL) policies, many of the disputes surround legal frameworks – whether it be the passage of a law, its reform, or its implementation – or demands for funding in various forms. The target level of the claim is diverse: it can be an actor or institution located at the local, national, kin state or European levels. Figure 11 below provides an illustration of where actors have placed their claims. The national level is where roughly one quarter of the claims are targeted in both Rimaszombat and Komárom. This has been, as we have seen throughout the chapter,

linked to topics such as language law reform or the national financing of cultural projects. However, the national level is not the only level where actors target their claims. Whilst many claims are "general" in nature – i.e. not explicitly targeting an actor or level – between 9-14 per cent target the local level. These are claims such as against the suspension of the *Gömöri Hírlap* newspaper, the push for the erection of a monument park in Rimaszombat and spending more on local schools.

Figure 11 Level of Actors Targeted for ECL Claims in Rimaszombat and Komárom 2009-2011, 2015-2017 (%)



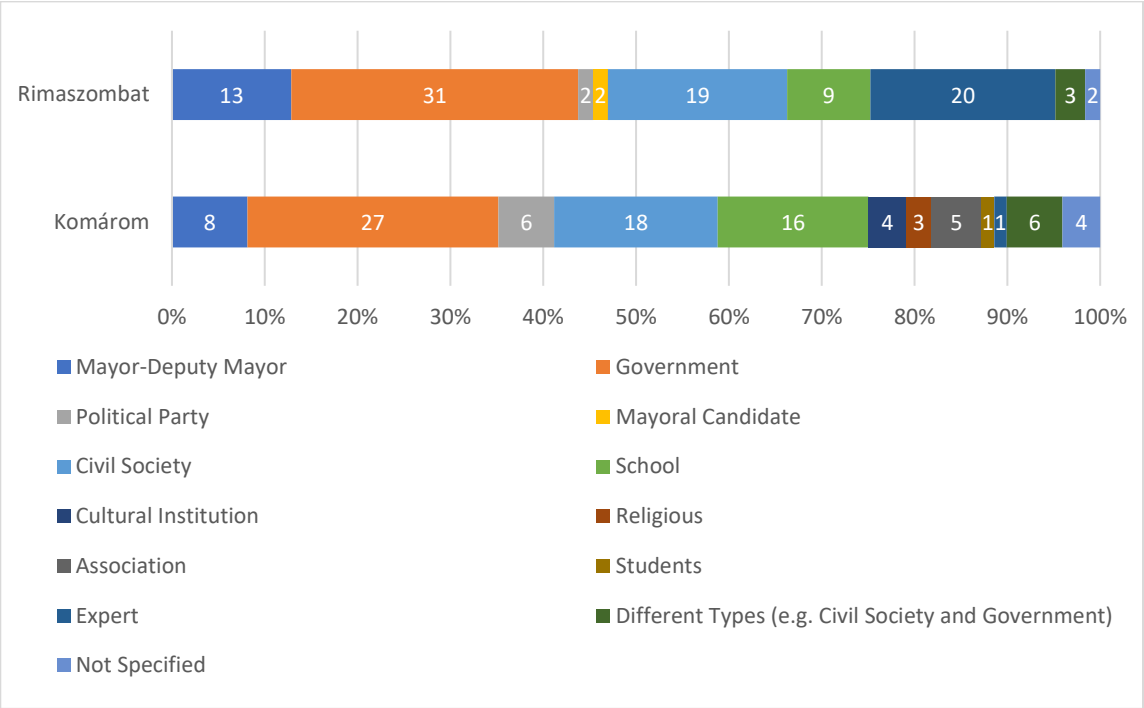
N=112 Rimaszombat; N=116 Komárom

8.3.1 The Domestic Level: Local and National Actors and Arena Choices

The discussion in Sections 8.2.1 and 8.2.2 highlighted how claims in the field of education and language are often in reaction to national developments. The national events, whether the passage of an unfair law or threats to close Hungarian schools, mobilise national and local actors. National events are less an instigator of cultural claims at the local level, with the one exception of the St Cyril and Methodius statues in Komárom. In the field of cultural monuments, civil society has had more moving space to make claims for statue renovations.

Figure 12 below provides the breakdown of local actors. What is significant to notice in this graph is that whilst political actors – such as the mayor or different local government actors – are involved in claim-making, there are other actors also involved who are often not discussed in the literature in claim-making. These include civil society actors – making up 18 and 19 per cent of claims in Komárom and Rimaszombat respectively – as well as schools, experts, and other actors such as associations like Pons Danubii and cultural institutions like the Komárom Jókai Theatre. These actors play an important role in making autonomy happen. For example, advocating enrolment of Hungarian children in schools, developing a textbook with Hungarian geographic names in the Regional Reading Book (Felvidék.ma, 2009b; Juhász, 2009d), making usage of kin-state funding to support better laboratory equipment in schools (NA, 2017b) or applying for funding for cultural monuments (Lajos, 2015), all give more control to the minority to determine the content and direction of its own affairs.

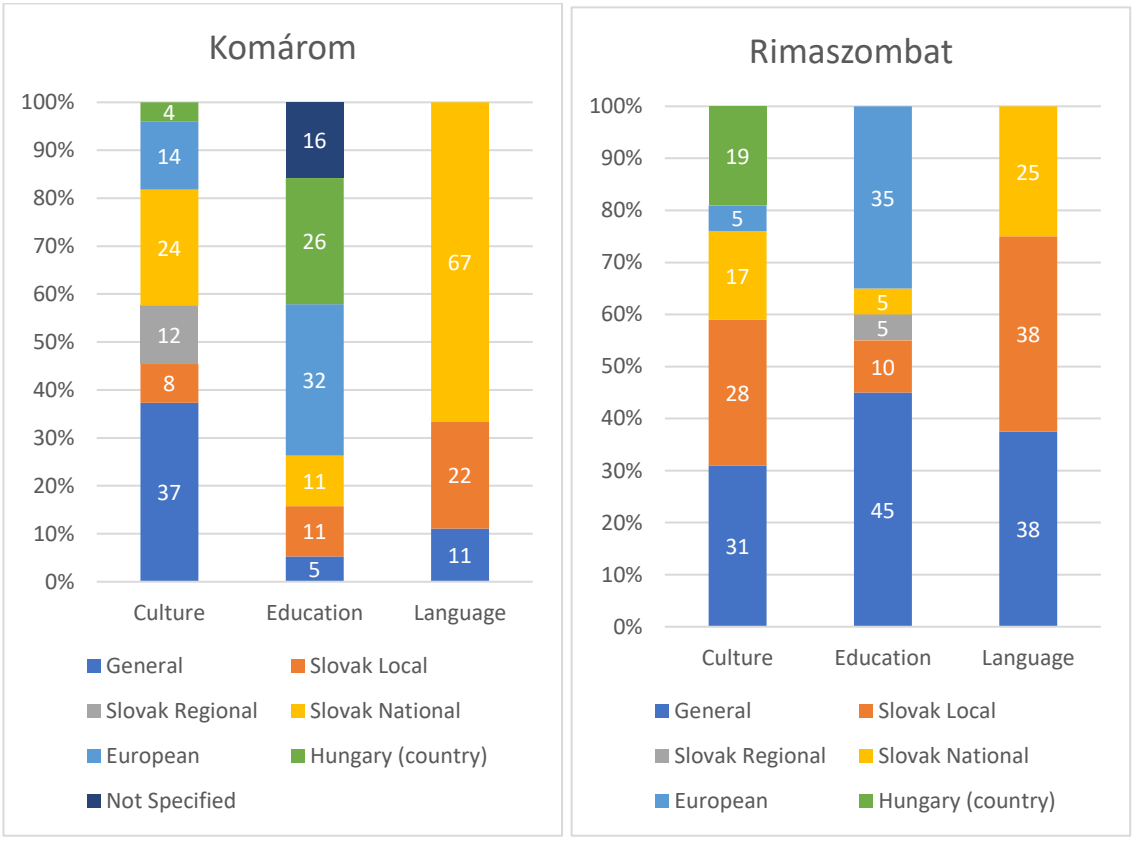
Figure 12 Breakdown of Local Level Actors by Type Making ECL Claims in Rimaszombat and Komárom 2009-2011, 2015-2017 (%)



N=77 Rimaszombat; N=64 Komárom; Sub-categories of actors given in Appendix H.

The next Figure 13 provides a breakdown of the two towns across the ECL fields and the level to which *local* actors (only) targeted their claims. Some important differences emerge. In the field of culture, Rimaszombat makes more claims to the kin-state level (for funding, generally, of cultural monuments) than Komárom does, with claims to the kin-state comprising 19 per cent and 4 per cent, respectively, of total culture claims. Moreover, Rimaszombat has almost one-third of its culture claims to the local level compared to 8 per cent in Komárom; this is mainly accounted for by the claims to keep the *Gömöri Hírlap* newspaper in Rimaszombat. Komárom also shows more claims to the European level, accounting for 14 per cent, which are for cross-border cultural activities.

Figure 13 Local Actors' Targeted Level Across ECL Areas in Komárom and Rimaszombat 2009-2011, 2015-2017 (%)



N=77 Komárom (Culture = 49; Education = 19; Language = 9)
N=64 Rimaszombat (Culture = 36; Education = 20; Language = 8)

Turning towards education-related claims in the above Figure, Rimaszombat surprisingly has a high proportion of claims to the European level at 35 per cent of education claims which are linked to funding claims for education buildings. Komárom also has 32 per cent of its education claims to the European level mainly for funding of education buildings, but also has 26 per cent of its claims to the kin-state. This makes usage of the *Bethlen Gábor Fund*'s for support of education materials and equipment. There is no coverage of *Bethlen Gábor Fund* applications in Rimaszombat. Finally, in the field of language, the primary arenas for local actors in both towns are the local and national (in reverse order) while the kin-state and European Union do not constitute targeted arenas. What emerges, therefore, is a picture where local actors are targeting different arenas in their

pursuit of increased autonomy in the fields of education, culture and language. The domestic arenas are important, but the fields of culture and education see a more diversified tactic of claim-making partly due to the role of civil society actors targeting the kin-state and EU arenas.

8.3.2 The Kin-State

The kin-state offers a political arena in which minority elites who engage in claim-making can achieve results. This is done by acting primarily as a financial enabler and by supplying an element of normative weight to different claims across the fields of education, culture and language. What is significant to remark is that the main actors applying for kin-state money are not local government councils or political parties, but rather civil society organisations and schools themselves. Thus, while local governments and political parties make their claims to the local and national levels, other civil society actors look for alternative arrangements.

Regarding finance, the two key funds are the *Szülőföld Alap* (HomeLand Fund) and its successor the *Bethlen Gábor* Fund. These funds provide support across the realms of culture and education. In the realm of education, the *Szülőföld Alap* supported the provision of educational materials – as it did for the *Regionális Olvasókönyv* in Rimaszombat with 1 million forints (Section 8.2.2.2) – and the *Bethlen Gábor* Fund also gave money for families who sent their children to Hungarian language schools; in 2017 this amount was 75 euros per child (NA, 2017e). As discussed also in Section 8.2.2.3, the Hungarian government also donated generously to different vocational secondary schools in Komárom in 2017 through the *Bethlen Gábor* Fund.

For culture, the *Szülőföld Alap* funds the renovation of the St Rosalia church façade in Komárom (Elek, 2010). In 2016, the Minister for Human Resources, Zoltán Balogh, visits Komárom on behalf of the Hungarian government to donate 1 billion forints to support the

Slovak Hungarian Reformed (Calvinist) church (P, 2016). Collaboration and support also occurs directly through the local level, where in 2011, the city of Komárom in Hungary gives 6 million forints to the Jókai theatre in its Slovak sister city (NA, 2011c). Local-level collaboration is also encouraged by national-level actors. The Hungarian government put out calls for applications for projects between municipalities across different countries with Hungarian minorities – Slovakia, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Austria, Croatia and Slovenia – which would create projects which have a historical and cultural dimension to them (NA, 2017h).

While having a smaller impact in the field of linguistic rights and bilingual signs explicitly, in general the Hungarian government supports a range of initiatives and projects to pass on the Hungarian language. For example, it launches a call for applications for civil society and religious groups to apply for activities aimed at young people of the Hungarian community to remain in their home-country and to use their mother tongue (NA, 2017c). Moreover, the mere support and existence of the kin-state and visits of members of Hungarian government to Slovakia – giving speeches in Hungarian – provide a sense of moral legitimacy to the quest for increased minority powers in the fields of education, culture and language. For example, the kin-state visits Hungarian-inhabited regions of Slovakia for a range of events surrounding national commemoration. The anniversary of the 1945-48 deportation sees the visit of Hungarian Parliament President László Kövér and State Secretary Árpád Potápi. Hungarian ambassador, Éva Czimbalmos, visits Komárom on the occasion of 20th August (Hungary's National Day) (Batta, 2015a). Some visits are even controversial, as is the aborted visit of Hungarian President László Solyom to unveil the statue of St Stephen in Komárom in 2009 (BBC, 2009). Across the different visits and speeches, the Hungarian co-ethnics offer their support – both financially and morally – and

emphasise the unity of the Hungarian nation which historically had co-existed with other national groups such as the Slovaks, Roma, Serbs, etc. (Batta, 2015b).

Reliance on the kin-state is a double-edged sword, however. As some elites interviewed mentioned, without the financial support of the kin-state cultural institutions simply would not exist, "Cultural organisations receive more money from Hungary than from Slovakia, without which they could not exist" (Interview Öllös, 2017). The Slovak system gives money for projects, but is not too concerned about the upkeep of institutions, which is what Hungarian funding also provides (Interview Horony, 2017). This runs, however, with a risk of being at the whim of the Hungarian government. Ferenc Auxt, the MKP district president and regional MP, criticises the Hungarian government for cutting funding by 1/30 for those attending Hungarian-language schools in 2011, arguing that for the Hungarian government the votes of the minorities abroad are more important than their actual opinions (Juhász, 2011c). Normatively, reliance on the kin-state is also a double-edged sword, running into questions of loyalty and legitimacy of the actors involved and their place within Slovak society if an external actor is propping up their institutions (as Chapter 6 and 7 Sections 6.3.2 and 7.3.2, respectively discuss). Thus, while providing a useful arena for claim-making, it can potentially come with the cost of over-reliance and decreased legitimacy in Slovak eyes.

8.3.3 The European Union

The European level is an arena for claim-making in terms of its financial opportunities in the two sub-fields of cross-border cultural activities and the renovation of educational institutions. Moreover, unlike the previous section which highlights the predominant role of civil society actors in claiming to the kin-state, a range of different actors have claimed to the European level. This includes local governments, associations like Pons Danubii EGTC (to be discussed in the next chapter) and schools.

The Regional Operation Programme provides financial support for school renovations, such as for the Botto Street grammar school in Rimaszombat for the sum of 433,000 euros (Amb, 2009). At the same time, it does not support the reconstruction of another school, the Tompa Mihály grammar school in 2009, with the newspaper reaction of "the EU flag cannot fly proudly here", as mentioned earlier (Homoly, 2009b). The upkeep of educational institutions in Komárom is a bit luckier with the Regional Operations Programme funding 1.2 million for the renovation of the Munka street grammar school (NA, 2011f). In terms of educational programmes, it gives the Hungarian Selye János University funding for three different programmes, as highlighted already in Section 8.2.2.3.

Through the 2007-2013 EU-funded Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, the European Union also finances different projects which support cross-border cultural activities. One example of this is a project run by Pons Danubii to support bilingual media through a regional webpage and television shows which appeal to both sides of the border (Batta, 2011). It also supports local cross-border projects, such as one which increases collaboration between local councils. This is particularly the case between the town of Ózd in Hungary and the town of Rimaszombat in Slovakia which receives 115,700 euros to increase collaboration across fields such as cultural activities and sport (Juhász, 2011g). The EU, therefore, remains a key actor to apply to for financial resources in certain fields, particularly those which support cross-border activity. It can also occasionally can be relied on for support for renovation of educational buildings.

In other aspects, however, the EU is not used as an arena to support claims, particularly in the sense of linking to its normative power. The fact that it is not mentioned at all linked to linguistic rights and usage of the minority language demonstrates its weak power in the field of minority protection and that it cannot be a strong partner in supporting further autonomy claims. It was rather the Council of Europe's Venice Commission which stepped

in during the 2009 *Slovak Language Law* controversy to resolve the dispute (although this was not covered in the local archives). Therefore, the EU's role can be said to be a financial enabler, used primarily by local actors, to further claims in culture and education.

8.4 Conclusion

This chapter demonstrated how the local perspective shines additional light on the nature of the creative policy game of autonomy-claiming in the fields of education, culture and language. The analysis of the local newspaper archives of *Komáromi Lapok* and *Gömöri Hírlap* added flesh to the bones of how elites can claim autonomy in a national and international environment which are generally unsupportive. It demonstrated how claims change over time across the different sub-areas and the usages of different arenas by a range of actors to further autonomy claims across the ECL policy areas (addressing Research Questions A and B). I would like to highlight two findings.

The first is that actors are many as are the arenas they appeal to for claim-making. Political party members at the local, regional and national level, along with mayors have their role to play in claim-making, as do civil society organisations. There is occasional mass mobilisation – which is elite-led – to support increased self-governance, as was the case against the 2009 amendment to the *Slovak Language Law*. In the fields of education and language, it is often events at the national level which lead to reactions of claim-making by both national and local actors. Claim-making in the cultural sub-policy area of monuments are not as reactive to national events, but can be politicised as was the case in Rimaszombat's long-standing debate on which statues to erect in its town square. Moreover, the actors making the claims are generally of Hungarian ethnicity. This is not surprising given that claims to education, culture and language are for the Hungarian community.

Secondly, the different arenas used show a diversified tactic of claiming-making. The national level is the most frequently targeted with approximately 24 and 26 per cent of

claims in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively (Figure 11 p.241). The kin-state and European levels are also important, particularly in the sense of financial provisions, but attract certain types of actors rather than others. For example, it is mainly civil society organisations who apply to the kin-state and a mixture of local governments, schools and associations who use the European opportunity structures in the fields of education and cross-border cultural activities. Both the kin-state and EU are not utilised for support for increased linguistic rights.

The claiming tactics of Hungarian minority actors in this chapter has proven to be multi-pronged in terms of the arenas targeted and the range of actors active in claiming. The pursuit of "autonomy" is made through claiming to different policy areas which would assure the cultural survival of the Hungarian community. These tie into elites' understanding of autonomy as the provision of institutions, financial measures and the ability to make decisions linked to the well-being of the minority (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.1.1). Rather than limited to political elites bargaining at the national level for reforms, this chapter has unpacked how local level actors from different organisations play their part in claiming across the areas of education, culture and language. The claims of these different actors are also framed in ways which touch on the minority's "right" to use its language, the need for the Hungarian community to use its language "bravely" and be proud of its culture, and the foundational role – now at serious risk from lack of funding and problematic legislation – that Hungarian minority education has in passing on the Hungarian identity. The next chapter extends the analysis to another important policy area: regional development.

9 A "Bottom-Up" Approach to Autonomy: The Local Level and Regional Development[84]

> *"Autonomy does not only affect collective rights, it is not only about collective rights, but it is also about economic questions"* (Interview Őry, 2017).

The regional economic dimension emerges more prominently in the Hungarian minority elite's discourse linked to autonomy in the mid-late 2000s. MKP embraces economic and regional development more prominently in its 2006 election platform, and this aspect of autonomy is today supported by both MKP and Most-Híd in their 2014 and 2016 policy platforms, respectively. Moreover, as Chapter 7 Section 7.1.4 discussed, MKP also comes out in 2014 with its *Baross Gábor Plan* for regional development. South Tyrol is often cited as an example of a region which benefitted from regional development and economic investment and in which the minority now flourishes. As the quote above illustrates, autonomy for the Hungarian minority is not simply linked to cultural questions but also to economic ones. Claims to economic and regional development supplant explicit claims to autonomy.

This chapter examines the local perspective of claim-making for regional development focusing on two of its important policy areas: economic development and infrastructure. Similarly to the previous chapter, I draw on newspaper archives from the two local towns of Rimaszombat and Komárom from the years 2009-2011 and 2015-2017. To answer Research Research Questions A and B, I examine *how* claims are made over time by a range of actors across different policy areas, making use of opportunity structures not just at the local and national levels, but at the European Union and kin-state levels as well to provide for an alternative way to reach *de facto* autonomy.

[84] An earlier version of this chapter was presented at the International Studies Association (ISA) conference in Toronto in March 2019.

The two towns demonstrate considerable differences, particularly in the role of associations such as Pons Danubii EGTC in making claims to further regional development in Komárom, as compared to the dominance of local political actors in Rimaszombat. The towns also differ in the larger proportion of claims to the European level in Komárom compared to Rimaszombat. I demonstrate how both the kin-state and EU act as financial enablers encouraging different actors to take advantage of the funding opportunities available to further their goals of increased regional development. The extent to which these opportunities are used depends on the characteristic of the town itself such as its geographical location, type of actors and the ethnic composition of Hungarians. Moreover, in this policy area, the claims cross the ethnic divide since both Hungarian and Slovak communities stand to benefit. Minority researcher and expert Attila Simon (Interview, 2017) best encapsulates the connection,

> *"In this sense, autonomy in Southern Slovakia would also serve Slovak interests. We would have regional competencies that decide about industrial development and other things, road construction…what is not good for the Hungarians here is also not good for the Slovaks. If we do not have investment here, it is just as bad as for the Slovaks."*

The chapter proceeds as follows. I first draw out the connection between regional development and minority autonomy. I then analyse the claims to regional development and its two sub-components – infrastructure development and economic development – in the local newspaper archives for Rimaszombat and Komárom. The final section examines how elites make use of the domestic, kin-state and European arenas to further their claims to regional development. I conclude with a short comparison of claims to ECL (Education, Culture and Language) policy areas and regional development.

9.1 "Autonomy" through Regional Development

Regional and local development are catchy themes amongst Hungarian minority political actors, especially given that some districts where there are large portions of

Hungarians are amongst the least developed and face high unemployment, as discussed earlier in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.1. Moreover, as Chapter 5 Section 5.2.1.3 elaborated, elites discussed the economic dimension to autonomy. The important shift to focusing on regional development issues occurs in 2006, when MKP starts making claims linking the economic dimension with autonomy, in addition to focusing on education and culture. Prior to MKP's 2006 election manifesto, regional development took less prominence in election manifestos. As time passes, and motivated also by the 2008/9 financial crisis and economic difficulties in Slovakia, MKP more explicitly draws the link between economic issues and autonomy (Interview Tokár, 2017). Both MKP and Most-Híd highlight the need to focus on regional economic development and create a stronger region – whether this be a stronger "Southern Slovakia" region as labelled by Most-Híd or through the creation of a form of regional self-government as proposed by MKP (MKP, 2014; Most-Híd, 2016b). These claims to economic self-government occur regardless of whether the ethnic party is in coalition (as was the case for MKP in 1998-2006 and Most-Híd from 2010-2012 and 2016-2020) since it is more easily palatable to the Slovak counterparts. Moreover, on the local level, archival analysis shows that regional and economic development are frequently claimed, much more so than other autonomy-related policy area.

What is the connection between autonomy, ethnic minorities and regional development? Having control over the development of a region links directly to the idea of "autonomy" as the ability to make decisions linked to the well-being of the minority, including financial considerations and control over institutions. There is a range of ways that regional development can support the minority. One decision elites make for regional economic development is to focus on "high-road strategies" or "low road strategies". The former links to increasing regional competitiveness and living standards by focusing on skilled labour and the knowledge economy whilst the latter makes policies based on

unskilled labour and low-value-added activities (Doloreux, Rangdrol and Dionne, 2010, p. 144). Regional economic development can also create regional clusters to support infrastructure and labour markets, as well as support regions with "economies of association" through a focus on institutions and social contexts (Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Cooke, 2007). In practice, this happens through the formation of Euro-regions which the EU supports. In the Slovak context, minority elites have generally focussed on "high-road strategies" as well as supporting regional infrastructure and cross-border connections with Hungary to capitalise on the similar language and culture.

An economically well-off region benefits the ethnic minorities living there (as well as the rest of the local population), and encourages young people to stay in the region. Most-Híd MP Péter Vörös emphasises the importance of economic development to keep young people and cultural survival,

> *"we need to create an economically strong and empowered community because this will be the pulling force. This will be the pulling force which will keep us together and bring home those who are looking for their happiness abroad"* (Szerkesztőség, 2015a).

Looking across the Atlantic, similar initiatives have been put in place for the Francophone minority communities in Canada. The Réseau de Développement Économique et d'Employabilité de la Francophonie Canadienne (RDÉE) was created to address the disparities between the anglophone and francophone minority communities with the hope that economic development would tackle the differences and help the Francophone community prosper. The four sectors targeted are tourism, rural development, youth and the knowledge-based economy (Doloreux, Rangdrol and Dionne, 2010, p. 146). Closer to home, a frequent example cited by MKP is South Tyrol. One reason for South Tyrol's success is its control over economic and social spending (Benedikter, 2009, p. 78). Emerging out of World War II as a poor region in Italy, it received autonomy and is now one of the

economically best performing regions in Italy. MKP politician Péter Őry (Interview, 2017) makes the direct link between self-government and economic performance:

> *"Today it (South Tyrol) is in the EU's top 5 or 8 regions in economic performance. They decide what the breaking points are which increase their economic development taking into account their own context, their own affairs and their own mentality. They govern themselves, in fiscal policy they govern themselves, in their settlements they govern themselves, in their development policy they govern themselves, in transport they decide."*

Therefore, regional development serves as a means of improving the well-being of minorities and ensuring their survival when the minority is territorially concentrated. The policies would also benefit other groups living in the territory. Policy areas for regional development can vary, but two main areas of intervention are economic development and infrastructure, similar to the Canadian example. Economic development can target different sectors, such as tourism. Having good infrastructure in place is also arguably a precondition for economic development.

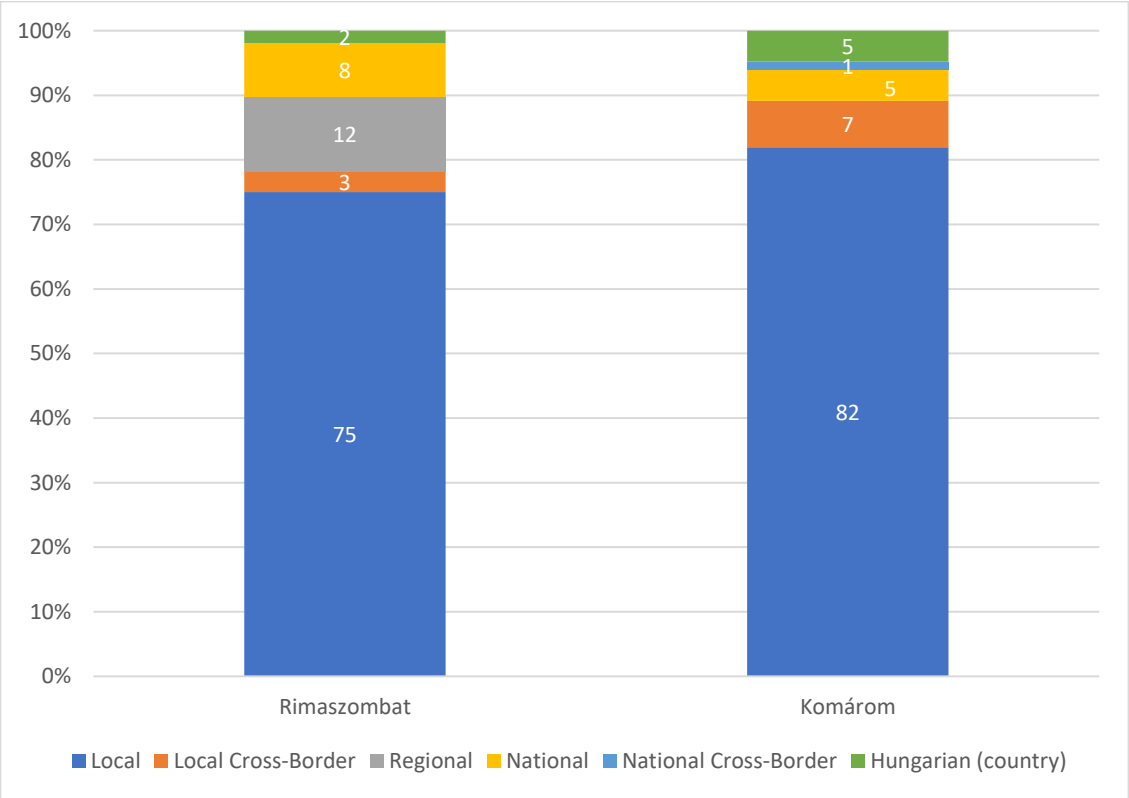
9.2 Regional Development: The Local Perspective

As in the previous chapter, the basis of this analysis is the different newspaper archives collected from *Komáromi Lapok* and *Gömöri Hírlap* for the years 2009-2011 and 2015-2017. During the 2009-2011 period, MKP experiences a party-split resulting in the formation of the moderate inter-ethnic Most-Híd which wins in the 2010 elections whilst MKP does not pass the minimum threshold to enter parliament. Although Fico's SMER wins the most seats it cannot form a government, Most-Híd enters into coalition with the Slovak Democratic and Christian Union - Democratic Party (SDKU-DS), Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) and Christian Democratic Movement (KDH) (International Parliamentary Union, 2017). The 2015-2017 period sees the development of policy platforms of Most-Híd and MKP, even though MKP is still unsuccessful at entering into Parliament in the 2012 and 2016 elections. The 2015-2017 period has Fico's SMER- Social Democracy (SMER-SD) in power until 2016, when it then enters into the interesting coalition concoction between

SMER-SD, Most-Híd, Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS), and Network (NIET). In addition to the domestic context, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and the Fidesz-KDNP coalition comes into power in 2010 and has been in power until the time of writing. These six years of newspaper archives allow me to get a good idea of what is going on between the 2009-2017 period and to be attentive to the realities of the Hungarian minority on the ground. Finally, a *claim* is understood as a need, a lack, a demand or a goal to achieve something. The focus is on identifying the claim first and then tracing it back to the actor making the claim. The two towns are not compared as such but rather are useful within-case analyses in Slovakia to see the different realities in which the Hungarian minority find themselves.

It is first worthwhile to ask a basic question: are local level actors making claims related to regional development or is regional development mainly the concern of national actors at the national level and covered in the local newspapers? Figure 14 below shows the dominance of local level actors in claim-making in both towns, comprising 75 per cent and 82 per cent of claims to regional development in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively. Other actors – such as "local cross-border" actors – refer to claims made by two municipalities or by the two mayors of Komárom, Slovakia and Komárom, Hungary, for example. "Local cross-border" claims are more common in Komárom than Rimaszombat, at 7 and 3 per cent respectively, which is not surprising given the town's location just across the border from Hungary. Analysing the local perspective of claim-making for regional development can therefore add another dimension to the analysis of autonomy claim-making.

Figure 14 Level of Actors Making Claims to Regional Development in Rimaszombat and Komárom, 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (%)

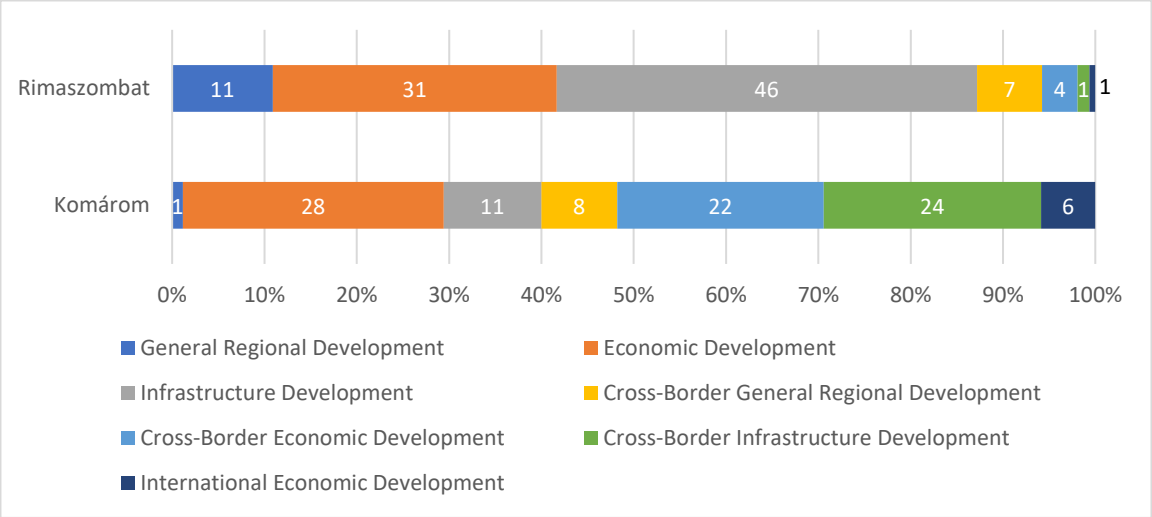


N=156 Rimaszombat; N=83 Komárom, two "non-specified" actors are not included.

Claims to different dimensions of regional development occur frequently in both towns; however, the focus is different. A breakdown of the different types of claims is provided in Figure 15 and the definitions for these sub-categories are found in Methodological Appendix E. The percentage of claims which touch on "economic development" are similar, with 31 and 28 per cent of claims for Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively. Likewise, for "cross-border general regional development" the percentage of claims is 7 and 8 per cent for Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively. Where the towns show the greatest difference is in Rimaszombat's emphasis on "infrastructure development" with 46 per cent of claims – to be elaborated shortly – compared to Komárom's focus on "cross-border infrastructure development" which comprises 24 per cent of its claims. The latter comprises debates around the construction of the Elisabeth bridge. Such distinctions tie into the literature from Section 9.1 above which mentions "clusters of regions" and

economies of association, where the obvious connection to Hungary across the border and historically being one city makes for a strong reason to collaborate. Therefore, adding a local perspective to claim-making demonstrates that even within a country there can be differences of policy area claiming preferences, arguably impacted by certain characteristics such as geographic location.

Figure 15 Breakdown of Claims to Regional Development in Rimaszombat and Komárom, 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (%)



N=156 Rimaszombat; N=85 Komárom.

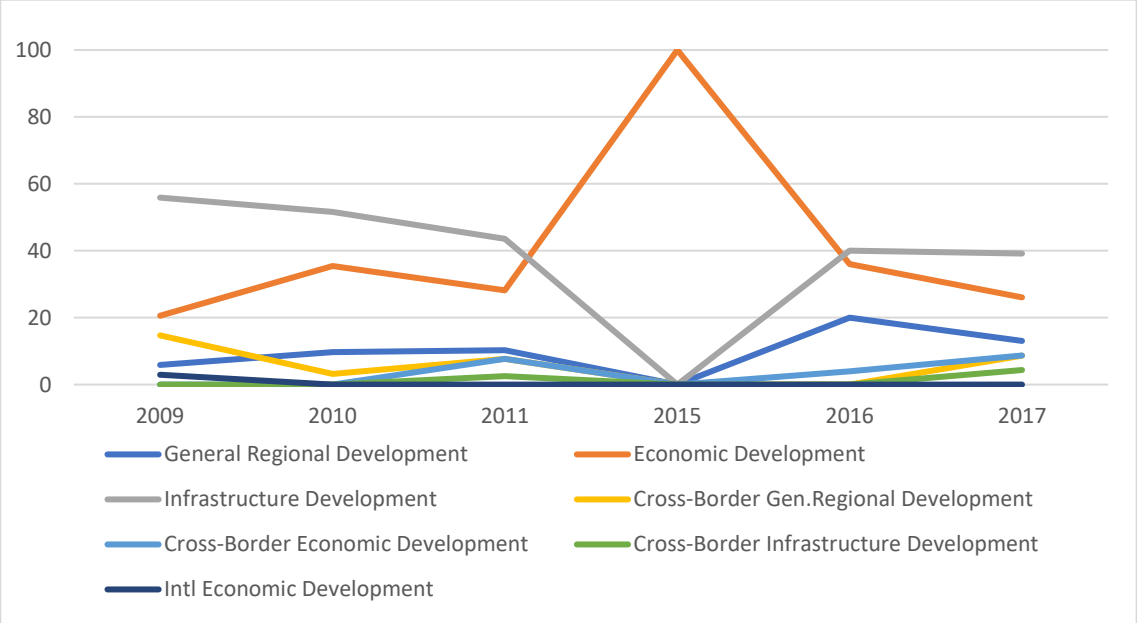
9.3 Rimaszombat and Regional Development

During this period of analysis, different elite actors in Rimaszombat make claims across a wide range of areas of regional development, with an emphasis on infrastructure development and economic development. Figure 16 and Figure 17 below illustrates how the different areas of regional development change over time.[85] The focus on infrastructure development remains relatively stable as does economic development – with the exception of 2015 in both cases. However, 2015 is an outlier due to just 3 newspaper editions being

[85] I am showing both the percentage of total claims per year as well as the total count of claims per year. This is to show a more accurate picture of the change in claiming over time and to factor in the fact that the number of editions per year was not consistent in the newspaper archives. The number of editions per year for the two newspapers in provided Table 1 p.63. Similar decision is for Komárom's figures in Section 9.4.

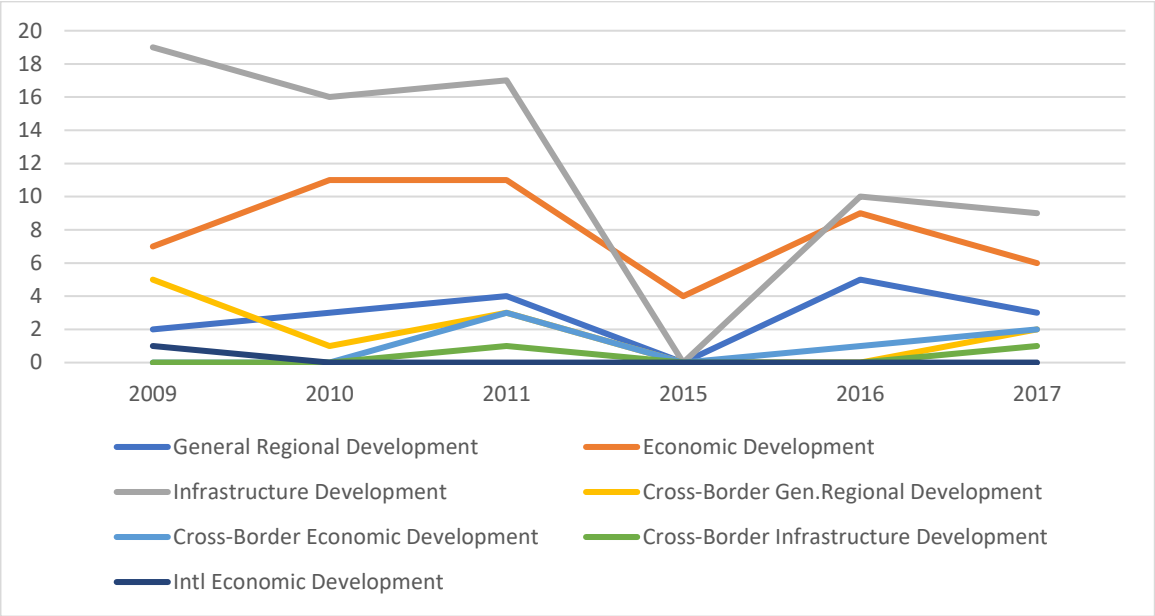
printed that year. Therefore, 2015 data need to be viewed more as an anomaly given the few data sources. “General regional development” claims, such as criticising the regional disparities and lack of government action (B. Kovács, 2011), increase slightly over time. In terms of cross-border claims related to regional development, “cross-border economic development” comes and goes over time, initially taking advantage of the EU’s Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme and then returning with the Hungarian-state supported cross-border business activity.

Figure 16 Proportion of Claims to Sub-Types of Regional Development Over Time in Rimaszombat 2009-2011, 2015-2017 (%)



N=156 Rimaszombat.

Figure 17 Number of Claims to Sub-Types of Regional Development Over Time in Rimaszombat 2009-2011, 2015-2017



N=156 Rimaszombat.

In general, in the figures above, one can observe that "infrastructure development" remains the most often claimed, slightly dropping over time, with "economic development" coming in as the second most often claimed policy area, slightly increasing over time. In other words, these two areas are consistently a concern of elites. When looking at these two areas in depth, as I will below, I find that a range of claims are made in economic development consistently over time, spanning the need for investment in the sectors of tourism, agriculture and the support of businesses, amongst others. In contrast, for infrastructure development the claims are initially widespread across several issue areas in the time period of 2009-2011, while from 2015-2017 the claims narrow down to mainly encompass claims for better roads and the R2 motorway. In all these cases, there is range of actors making claims, rather than one actor in particular with a monopoly over a type of claim.

9.3.1 Infrastructure Development

One tactic to promote greater *de facto* autonomy is through claims to infrastructure development. Better infrastructure serves two key purposes. The first is to bring the Hungarian community into closer contact with each other. The second is to promote economic development and investment. During the earlier period of analysis 2009-2011, there is a range of claims made for infrastructure development, spanning protesting the closure of the railways, claiming money for the funding of the ZTS infrastructure park, emphasising the need for infrastructure in the region to attract future investment, and more. In the 2015-2017 time period, the claims visibly narrow to a focus on claiming for the construction of the R2 motorway and other, less frequent, claims for better investment (linked to the ZTS park) and a roundabout.

Beginning with the link between infrastructure and economic development, as one expert puts it, "investment goes where the infrastructure is good" (Urban, 2009). Across the political spectrum, Hungarian actors agree on the importance of infrastructure for economic development. One MKP politician claimed:

> *"We need to recognise that where infrastructure is missing, investment will not go there. Our goal is to make the underdeveloped parts of southern Slovakia reach the Slovak average in the near future"* (Juhász, 2011j).

The link between infrastructure and economic development is made in Rimaszombat in two main controversial areas consistently in the archives: the phasing-out of the railway line and the renovation of infrastructure around the ZTS park which houses the heavy machinery industry. Regarding the former, despite petitions by passengers and criticism by political leaders, the closure of railroad links between local towns is made public and implemented in 2011. Branded as the "phasing out" of the railroads, to local actors it is perceived as turning the region into "no-man's land" (*senkiföldje*) by the railway company (Juhász, 2011i). Prime Minister Iveta Radičová holds off the shut-down for a few months,

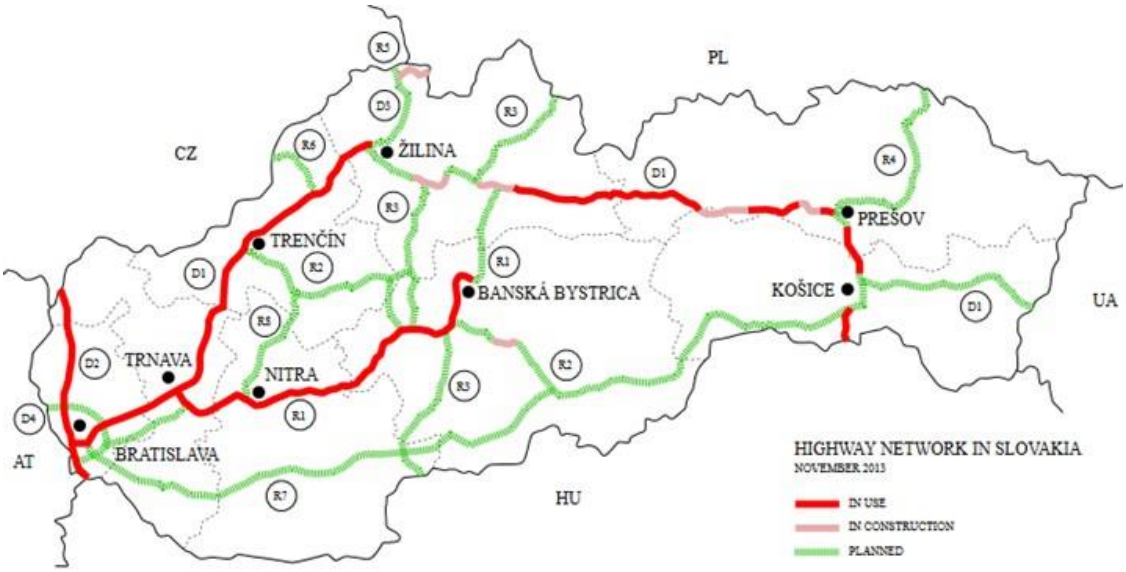
however her efforts are in vain when, by May 2011, the damage is done and enacted (Juhász, 2011h; NA, 2011e). Despite the phasing out, other forms of transport such as bus-links are not put in place to connect the different towns, to the behest of the County Council President, Vladimír Manka (NA, 2011e). The despair facing the region is highlighted by local town councils which point to the 40% unemployment rate which would be exacerbated by the closing down of the railway line and would encourage the emigration of young people from the region (NA, 2011b).

To add to the sense of despair, Rimaszombat is promised €2 million investment for the infrastructural renovation of the ZTS heavy machine industry park. The mayor József Šimko – who is a political independent – as well as other mayoral candidates and the local council are vocal and confrontational towards Prime Minister Fico and his successor Radičová in 2010-2011 in claiming the reception of the promised €2 million. The sum is promised strategically to the town before the 2010 elections (Juhász, 2010d), but without the financial aid the town is left without the ability to attract investment and create jobs (Etrend.sk, 2011; Juhász, 2011d). The battle for attention and further government investment continues by independent mayor József Šimko later in 2016 and 2017 with open letters in *Gömöri Hírlap* challenging Prime Minister Fico to a television debate and also criticising the lack of government aid and investment in job creation in the region. He argues the Prime Minister is "making an idiot" out of them by thinking that €1.3 million will bring the region out of poverty (Šimko, 2016). He emphasises the need to confront the problems of the migration of young people from the region (Šimko, 2017). Mr. Šimko's harsh stance towards Prime Minister Radičová and Fico are independent of their political party affiliation; his position as an independent allows him greater manoeuvrability to be critical.

In addition to these issues is the topic of the R2 motorway. It is on the agenda of different actors in 2009-2011 – amongst the different issues as highlighted above – but then

dominates the claims for infrastructure development from 2015-2017. The planned R2 route connecting Kassa (Košice) with Zólyom (Zvolen), running through Rimaszombat, begins in 2007 and still is not completed, with one Finance Minister suggesting it could be 2040 by the time it is finished (Juhász, 2017a). The other expressway, the R7 which would connect Bratislava with different Hungarian-populated towns along the southern section of Slovakia, also does not yet exist. Difficulty reaching each other undermines a common sense of regional identity. The lack of road infrastructure in Slovakia is shown the map below in Figure 18. With the Hungarian population concentrated along the southern sliver of the country, the state of the R2 and R7 expressways impedes easy access to each other. The green lines illustrate what is only planned, whilst the red and pink show what is in use and under construction, respectively. The whole southern sliver of Slovakia is not adequately connected.

Figure 18 Map of Slovak Road Transportation as of 2014



(Kubasáková and Simková, 2014)

The claim for the construction of the R2 motorway is a long-standing concern of Hungarian minority actors, surfacing in the entire time span of archive analysis. Given Rimaszombat's multi-ethnic composition of Slovaks, Hungarian and Roma and its high

unemployment rate, the claims to R2 development are made by a range of political actors and also mobilise civil society and businesses. In 2009, local and regional political leaders along with business leaders call for the speedy completion of the expressway to enable the region to climb out of its "catastrophic" economic situation (Juhász, 2009b). In 2010 and 2011, a petition is launched by previous mayoral candidate Peter Bartakovič to get 300,000 signatures to call for the completion of the R2 expressway to be sent to the Transport Minister, Ján Figeľ (NA, 2011a).

The issue also mobilises different Hungarian actors to work together across party-lines. For example, the second annual "Day of Gömör Cohesion" (Gömöri Osszetartas Napja) in 2016 with the theme "Where to next for the Hungarians of Gömör?" brings together MKP and its youth branch. Leaders point to the need for the next topic of "Hungarian-Hungarian" dialogue (referring to cooperation across the political parties of MKP and Most-Híd) to be the infrastructural and economic development of the Hungarian-inhabited southern districts of Slovakia (Homoly, 2016). Local politicians like MKP's Zoltán Cziprusz argue the priorities of the national government towards the region should be "R2, R2 and R2" (Juhász, 2017a). Although there is a focus on the need of the Hungarian community in particular, it is not simply a Hungarian issue. In 2017, the Slovak population joins the Hungarian minority in protesting against the Slovak government in the claim for the completion of the R2 motorway (NA, 2017a). This further demonstrates that it is not just the Hungarian community who benefits from better infrastructure but the whole population in the region.

The debates highlighted above are the key claims to infrastructure development during the two time periods in Rimaszombat. The R2 and ZTS debates demonstrate that national level stagnation incites local actors to make claims. The newspaper coverage shows claims for R2 are exceptionally from the local level, made by a broad range of actors

including civil society organisations, the mayor and local councils. There are also joint claims by civil society and the local government as well as MKP and civil society. The arena targeted is the national, more specifically the Ministry for Transport and the government. Particularly with the return of Most-Híd to government coalition in 2016, claims are more targeted at the government either as criticism by MKP (Juhász, 2016a) or joint initiatives targeting the Ministry for Transport and national government in hopes that change will happen (Juhász, 2017b).

Similar to the R2 situation, the claims for investment for ZTS happen when progress on the national level is slow and static. Local level actors such as members of the local council or the Mayor himself (József Šimko, an independent) make claims on several occasions across 2009-2011 to the national level to both the Ministry of Economic Affairs and to the Prime Minister for funding of the renovation of the industry park. The lack of investment and support further pushes Mayor József Šimko to protest to Prime Minister Fico in 2016-2017.

These cases highlight, therefore, how infrastructure development is an important claiming area for achieving *de facto* autonomy. Without good means of transportation and investment, the local community does not have a long-term future in the region where they live. With better roads, railways and investment in infrastructure, the community increases control over its own affairs and can make better decisions. Moreover, claims to infrastructure are made by a range of actors – both Hungarian and Slovak – which further demonstrates how the issue is not specifically ethnic and can benefit everyone involved.

9.3.2 Economic Development

In comparison to infrastructure development which has differences in emphasis across the two time periods, economic development claims in *Gömöri Hírlap* cover a range of areas during the time periods under study. This includes general claims for investment

(such as “we want to get more money and investment in this region” (BBSK, 2010)), claims for the need to invest in the tourism sector, in agriculture, in support for businesses and jobs for young people.

Economic development and investment across different sectors such as tourism and agriculture are seen as solutions to the dilemma of young people emigrating to Hungary or moving to Bratislava, and also of a way to reduce unemployment. In Rimaszombat, the issue of emigration touches both Slovak and Hungarian youth, with the additional threat that Hungarians also go to Hungary for work and livelihood, not just Bratislava. Better opportunities for young people and coping with high unemployment could keep young people in the region. As then mayoral candidate József Šimko claims in an interview in 2010,

> *“There are many priorities…we need to do something about the unprecedented high unemployment rate and that young people and professionals are leaving the region. I am going to continually pester Prime Minister Radičová and Zsolt Simon Agricultural Minister to do everything they can so that investors come to the region”* (Juhász, 2010d).

Calls for further attention to be placed in the tourism and agricultural sectors spans the time periods under analysis. Regarding tourism, most claims are linked to the Kurinc bath complex which Rimaszombat struggles to renovate over the years. Different local actors claim the importance of finishing renovations and attracting investment. The works are successfully finished but more funding is applied to for further development in 2017 (Juhász, 2017c). Other tourism-related claims are for cycling paths around the city to attract tourism from the neighbouring areas. These claims are by local level political figures and mayoral candidates. On the other hand, claims for better agricultural investment come not just from the local level but also from national figures. For example, Most-Híd politician and Agriculture Minister Zsolt Simon criticises the government for not giving agriculture enough attention (Juhász, 2011e) and MKP politician László Miklós argues that ever since

agriculture has declined, jobs have been lost (Juhász, 2011j). Local level politicians, such as the mayor, also take up the cause of agriculture by arguing that increased employment opportunities in agriculture would help those with lower qualifications (Juhász, 2017a).

Most of the claims made in economic development are by local level actors, although occasionally national level actors also make a limited number of claims. However, the four claims identified in 2015-2016 are near the 2016 national elections. The level targeted by the claims of local level actors is most often categorised as "general" rather than specific to a level. For the instances when a level is clearly identifiable, claims are to the national level, followed by the local and then European levels. Claims for investment, agriculture and job creation are more often found to be to the national level, whereas issues like Kurinc and tourism are more to the "general" or local levels.

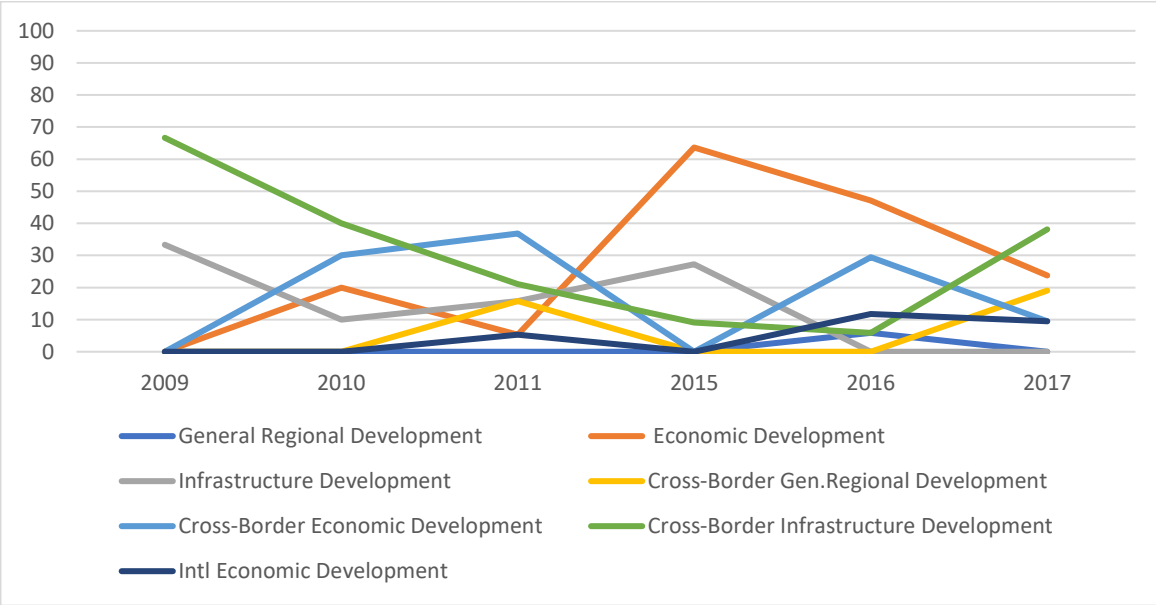
This discussion shows how economic development is a multi-pronged issue covering claims across sectors such as tourism and agriculture and demanding increased investment and job creation. By improving the economic situation of the town and region, elites have better chances of keeping young people from emigrating and improving their future prospects. This touches not just the ethnic Hungarian minority but the general population. Again, as with infrastructure development, claims come from not just ethnic Hungarian actors but from those acting in civic positions, and the situation in Rimaszombat is quite dire economically.

9.4 Komárom and Regional Development

From the period under study, unlike Rimaszombat which saw a relatively stable proportion of claims over time for economic development and infrastructure, Komárom shows more variation over time (Figure 19 and Figure 20). For example, "cross-border infrastructure development" was the main area claimed in 2009 at 67%, dropping off over

time and then rising again in 2017 to 38% of annual claims.[86] Claiming is usually linked to the construction of the Elisabeth Bridge (connecting Hungary and Slovakia) over time. "Economic development" also increases in prominence in 2015 and remains the most often claimed or second most-often claimed until 2017. Topics here are primarily linked to tourism and follow the creation of Dunamente in 2015 (to be discussed below). "Cross-border economic development" also is prevalent in 2010 and 2011 linked to the EU's Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme, and then returns in 2016 mainly through the activities and claims of Pons Danubii EGTC, an association created in 2010. Komárom's location across the border from Hungary facilitates such cross-border activities with EU funding. As mentioned in Section 3.3.3 of Chapter 3, Komárom is on the southern border of Slovakia and was one city spanning the Danube before the 1920 Trianon Treaty. The part of the city to the south of the Danube belongs to Hungary, and the part to the north of the Danube to Slovakia.

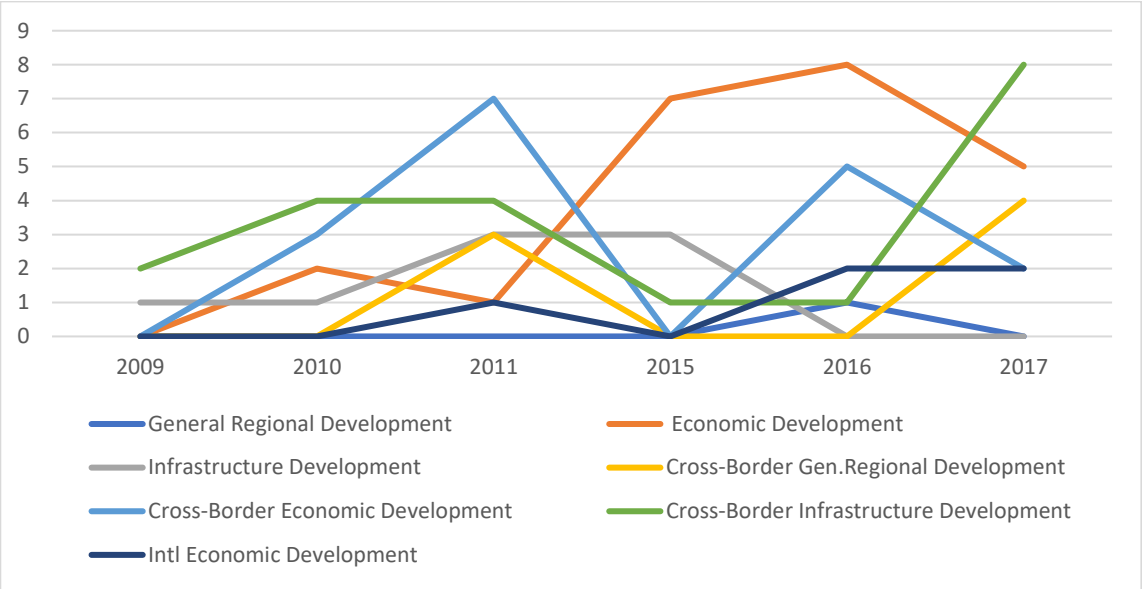
Figure 19 Proportion of Claims to Sub-Types of Regional Development Over Time in Komárom 2009-2011; 2015-2017 (%)



N=85 Komárom.

[86] This is high because it is 2 out of the 3 claims logged for 2009.

Figure 20 Number of Claims to Sub-types of Regional Development Over Time in Komárom 2009-2011; 2015-2017 (%)



N=85 Komárom.

9.4.1 Infrastructure Development

As mentioned, the focus on infrastructure and economic development plays out differently in *Komáromi Lapok* than *Gömöri Hírlap*. The key issue across the 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 time period relates to the construction of the Elisabeth Bridge across the Danube. Initially, in 2009, claims for the bridge's construction are mainly by local level actors such as Mayor Tibor Bastrnák who argue for the necessity of a new bridge in Komárom. Later in March 2010, an announcement is made by the two Komárom mayors (one of Komárom, Hungary and the other in Komárom, Slovakia) that the decision was made in Bratislava by the office responsible for Slovak-Hungarian relations on the exact location of the new bridge to be built (NA, 2010e). Mayor Bastrnák in 2010 underlines the importance of the bridge by revealing what different ambassadors told him of the necessity of good infrastructure in order to attract investment. He also argues,

> *"I cannot over emphasise the extent to which our city and region have an enormous need for this new bridge…if the bridge is not built in Komárom, then our city, our region will be at an irreversible disadvantage"* (Bastrnák, 2010).

In 2015, Slovakia and Hungary put in a joint application to the EU's Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) to win European funding for the bridge (NA, 2015b).

A main challenge, however, in the implementation of the bridge project involves the location of the bypass on the Slovak side, which occupies the key claim related to the bridge in the 2015-2017 time period. Civil society organisations and locals sign a petition to avoid the Holt-Vág area of the city in 2017. Despite the opposition, the Hungarian Tibor Bastrnák - now out of his mayoral post and the region's representative in parliament under the flag of Most-Híd – along with the MKP local representative and President of Selye János University Imre Andruskó argue that as representatives they need to look ahead for what is best for the city in the long-term (SE, 2017). In 2017, the Elisabeth bridge is finished – with funding by the EU, as well as Slovak and Hungarian governments – and unites the sister cities across the Danube. It is unveiled by a visit of Prime Ministers Robert Fico and Viktor Orbán, the latter emphasising that the Danube does not separate but rather brings together the two countries (Városi Hivatal, 2017c).

There are other claims for infrastructure development. In the earlier period 2009-2011, local actors – the government and a sewage company – make claims linked to the development of the sewage system and win funding from the European Union as well as the national government (N.A, 2009; Szerkesztőség, 2011). In 2015, the focus moves to drinking water and good usage of Komárom's port (Szerkesztőség, 2015d). Regarding cross-border infrastructure claims, one claim involves the joint city *Komárom Development Plan* providing €37,000 to the Komárom sister cities in 2011 (Radics, 2011b). The *Plan's* goals are to harmonise the two cities' plans for investment, and economic, cultural and infrastructure development (Radics, 2011b). Another *City Development Plan* is on the table in 2017, with business and civil society making claims to local government linked to the Elisabeth Bridge's bypass. Moreover, Pons Danubii in 2016 puts through a claim for better

public transport between the two Komároms (NA, 2016c). These cross-border claims tie back to the idea of regional clusters to support infrastructure and labour markets, as discussed in Section 9.1(Cooke, 2007)

Whilst it is difficult to draw generalisations from all the infrastructure claims, the Elisabeth Bridge case in particular demonstrates the importance of local level actors in initiating claims for better infrastructure as well as their sequential choice of arenas. The main arena claimed to is the national in order for the proposed changes to be agreed upon. In the meanwhile, there are local disagreements about the placement of the bypass made by civil society organisations to the local government. From this sequence of events, the local level voices its needs which then is authorised by the national level. At that point, funding is sought from the European level. The different claims to infrastructure demonstrate the importance of strengthening local institutions and putting in place different measures which allow the local population to be able to prosper.

9.4.2 Economic Development

In Komárom, there are different emphases on economic development and cross-border economic development across the two time-periods. In the earlier years 2009-2011, the main focus is on tourism and there are different cross-border projects making usage of EU funding. The claiming actors are at the local level, whether it be the government or associations like Pons Danubii. There are also projects which increase collaboration across different municipalities in the district of Komárom for economic development. For example, the EU supports a range of projects including €450,000 to Martos municipality for water cleaning and development for tourism (NA, 2011g). In addition, the EU encourages collaboration across different Hungarian-speaking towns in Slovakia such as between Komárom and Ógyalla for a project worth €2.5 million for IT collaboration (Radics, 2011a).

A shift occurs in 2015-2017, with an increase in claims for tourism such as investment in cycling paths and the thermal bath – and its link to job creation (Szerkesztőség, 2015c). As one Hungarian local city representative and Tourism Committee President put it, the opportunities offered by Komárom are not being exploited, whether this be cycling paths, thermal baths or its fortress, and is in need of investment (Szerkesztőség, 2015b). The importance of tourism and the need to develop it are made repeatedly by the local mayor, as well as deputy mayor and other members of the local city council. Other local associations – like Pons Danubii and Dunamente – play an important part in claiming for tourism-related funding and projects, which will be discussed in the next section.

The 2015-2017 period also has more claims for investment which is seen as key for Komárom. The majority of claims are made by local political actors, targeting a mix of the local, national and European levels. As with other districts in southern Slovakia, Komárom has a higher than average unemployment rate. Most-Híd MP Tibor Bastrnák criticises the lack of attention to the southern districts when he demands more attention to investment in the region from the SMER-SD Minister of the Economy Pavol Pavlis (NA, 2015d), whilst Most-Híd are out of coalition. For Hungarian actors, the overall logic behind the focus on economic development, investment and promotion of sectors such as tourism, is to strengthen the Hungarian community. Most-Híd MP Péter Vörös emphasises the importance of economic development to keep young people and ensure cultural survival, while other initiatives in Komárom explicitly target young people in helping them transition to the labour market. For example, the Hungarian-speaking Selye János University in Komárom opens up a Career Advisory and Application Office to help Hungarian young people transition to the Slovak labour market (NA, 2011h).

What the different claims to economic development show is an increase in claims in 2015-2017 linked to tourism – the most typical claim – and the important role played by

associations in cross-border claims for economic development. Many of these claims make usage of the European level for claiming. In Komárom, tourism is seen as a key way to increase the well-being of the town and its inhabitants and to further its development. An economically strong town gives its inhabitants hope for the future. Moreover, the claims that are not made by associations are made by local government actors – both Hungarian and Slovak – which shows how the issue also crosses across the ethnic divide.

9.4.3 The Role of Associations

While political representatives and actors highlight the need for economic development, especially in tourism, a notable portion of claims are often made by businesses and associations which would enable the further development of the tourism sector. There are two notable associations - Dunamente TDM (Tourism Destination Management) and Pons Danubii EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) – which have the active support of representatives across the political spectrum. Each association has a broad portfolio of activities focusing on cooperation and development of the Southern Slovak region, making usage of domestic and European opportunity structures. The increase in claims for economic development in 2015-2017 is largely attributed to the activity of Dunamente and the increase in cross-border economic claims is largely due to Pons Danubii.

The passage of a 2011 Slovak law provides support for the collaboration between businesses and city councils for the promotion of tourism. Consequently, Dunamente TDM forms in 2015 with the inclusion of local municipalities and businesses. Dunamente TDM's goal is to provide a unified marketing of the Dunamente ("along the Danube") region in Slovakia which covers the region from Komárom to Párkány. Most-Híd Mayor Tibor Bastrnák advocates "strength in unity" in support of Dunamente TDM, which speaks to the need to unite together across the region to be more effective in developing the tourism sector (Szerkesztőség, 2015b). Dunamente TDM supports regional tourism, focusing on thermal

baths, historical sites and gastronomy, and collaborates with Hungary (Podunajsko Dunamente TDM, 2019). After one year, results are seen with an increase in tourists at the Komárom fortress and also more cyclists. By 2016 the organisation is receiving state funding and also collaborating across the border with the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in a joint project application for €1 million to support tourism-linked infrastructure on both sides of the Danube (Városi Hivatal, 2017a).

Pons Danubii EGTC Group is a significant actor in its usage of the European Union's funding opportunities and for increasing economic and regional development. Its projects are 95% funded by the European Union, with the other 5% self-funded. At its founding in December 2010, Pons Danubii was the 17th European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) in Europe. The participating towns of the Pons Danubii EGTC are Komárom, Tata, Kisbér and Oroszlány in Hungary and Komárom, Gúta and Ógyalla in Slovakia. The EGTC uses European Union funds to further its goals of removing differences of opportunity across the border. It has a wide portfolio covering areas such as transport, economy, tourism, energy and renewable energy, culture, education, human resources, sport, environment, health and collaboration across public services (NA, 2011k). As noted by the author in an article, the ethos is best summed up as "two countries, one region" (NA, 2012). Independent Mayor László Stubendek highlights the importance of regional collaboration, "In order to work effectively, we need to think in terms of regions, to strengthen each other" (Padlovics, 2016). By the end of 2016, Pons Danubii had become one of the most successful EGTCs of those bordering the Hungarian-Slovak border in terms of its successful project applications (Padlovics, 2016).

Pons Danubii puts in several applications to the 2007-2013 Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Cooperation Programme in fields covering water management, business cooperation, information exchange, and other projects in health, tourism, and cycling path development

(NA, 2012). One project worth €2.5 million was joint between the towns of Komárom, Hungary and Ógyalla, Slovakia for the expansion of their industry parks (Radics, 2011a). Pons Danubii's focus on tourism is successful, with a cycling path project involving Komárom, Slovakia, winning 90% of its total cost of €40,000 (NA, 2016d), and it submits further projects for the expansion of the bicycle path to connect the towns of Komárom-Martos-Ógyalla (Városi Hivatal, 2016). Another project linked to tourism is SWARE (Sustainable heritage management of Waterway Regions) in collaboration with Milan, the Hague, Tipperary (Ireland,) and Vidzeme, Latvia which wins funding from the Interreg Europa 2014-2020 Programme (Városi Hivatal, 2017d). Pons Danubii is also the lead partner in another successfully funded tourism-related project by the Interreg Danube Transnational Programme called INSIGHTS (Integrated, Slow, Green and Healthy Tourism Strategies) which looks to create sustainable tourism strategies for regions along the Danube which protect their cultural and natural resources (Pons Danubii EGTC, 2014b).

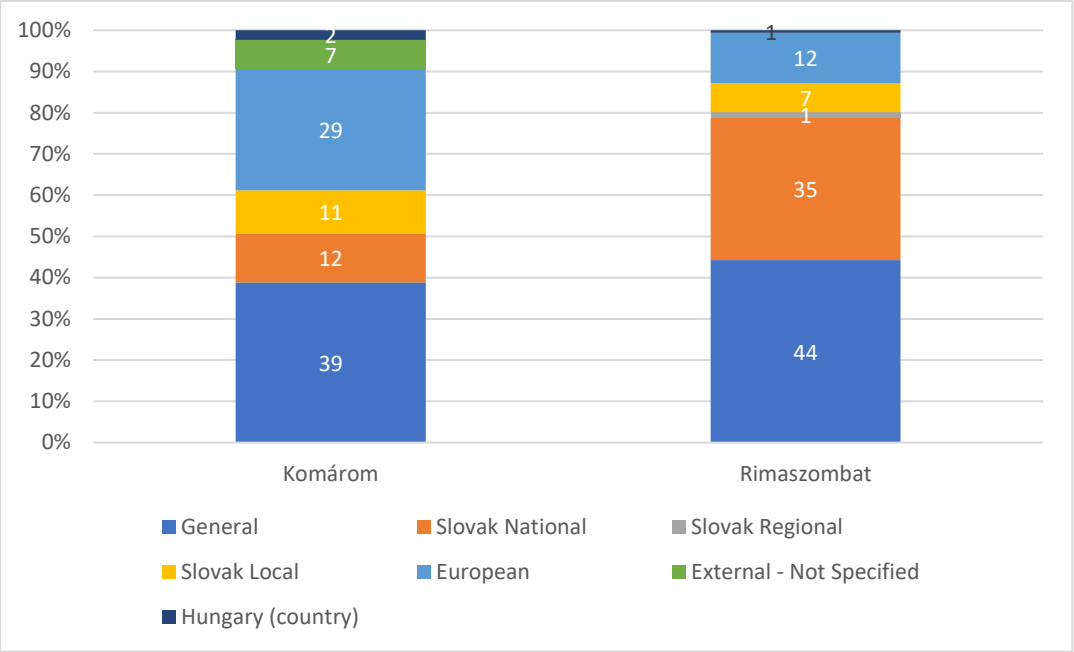
The role of associations highlights how an initial opening – such as the 2011 law promoting collaboration between businesses and local councils or the European formation of EGTCs – creates opportunities for local actors to make claims. Dunamente and Pons Danubii are successful in their claim-making to the national and European arenas in promotion of economic development and particularly the tourism sector. Their efforts highlight how local associations play a key part in promoting regional development and in increasing the local community's own economic development, or economic "self-governance".

9.5 Actors, Arenas and Claiming Preferences

With the above discussion illustrating the importance of incorporating the local level perspective in an analysis of the "regional development" angle of autonomy claim-making, it is useful to examine the choice of arena – local, national, kin-state or European – targeted

for the claim. A closer examination of the level of the actors targeted for regional development highlights the discrepancy between Komárom and Rimaszombat in terms of the tactics and preferences of claim-making actors. Figure 21 below breaks down the level of actors targeted between the two towns.

Figure 21 Level of Actors Targeted for Regional Development Claims: Rimaszombat and Komárom, 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (%)



N=156 Rimaszombat; N=85 Komárom.

The "General" category in both newspapers is the most commonly made, where actors do not specify who they are targeting in their claims, as mentioned in Methodology Chapter Section 3.4.1. Nevertheless, two prominent differences emerge in the usage of the national and European/External levels. More than one-third of claims in Rimaszombat are made to the national level (particularly in the controversial areas of the ZTS, roads infrastructure and railroads described above) and only 12 per cent of claims to the European level. This is contrasted to the smaller portion of claims in Komárom to the national at 12 per cent and the 36 per cent of claims made to the European or external levels. Not many claims are made to the kin-state itself, which is not surprising given that infrastructure and economic development are more likely to be claimed to the national or the European level

(especially for funding). The role of Hungary in funding culture and education is more prominent. However, Hungarian actors are not infrequent partners in cross-border claims made to regional development, and these claims tend to target the European level for funding. The difference between Komárom and Rimaszombat in targeted actors is not surprising given the location of Komárom near the border of Hungary, which lends itself to easy collaboration with the kin-state to be supported by different projects of the European Union. Moreover, Pons Danubii – an active actor in Komárom – also makes significant usage of European funding for projects.

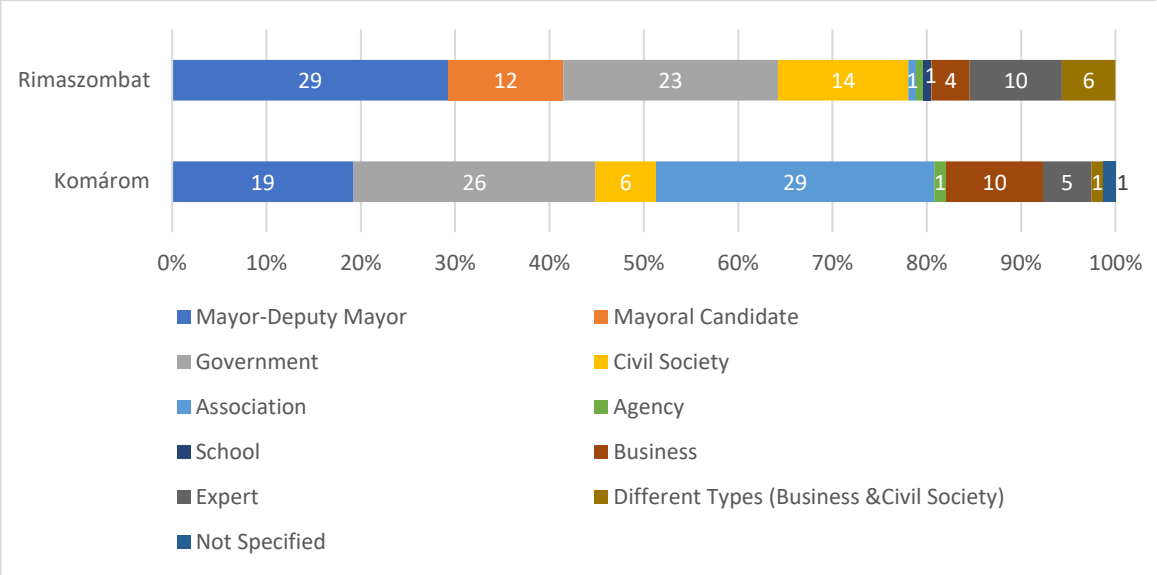
9.5.1 The Domestic Level: Local and National Actors and Arena Choices

As mentioned in the Methodology Chapter Section 3.4.1, the approach taken in tracing claims is to focus on the claim first and trace it back to the actor making the claim. As Figure 14 on p.257 shows, between 75 and 82 per cent of claims are made from local level actors in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively. When looking *within* this category of local actors, there is also a difference across the two newspapers in the *type* of actors making claims. This difference, as I argue later, is due to a combination of geographic and demographic considerations.

Figure 22 provides a breakdown of the types of local level actors making claims. The "political" actors encompass the *mayor-deputy mayor, mayoral candidates and government (local)* categories. There is a stark difference between the total percentage of claims these political actors make in Rimaszombat – 64 per cent – compared to Komárom – 47 per cent. Another stark difference is the important role played by *associations* – such as Dunamente TDM and Pons Danubii – and *businesses*. This category of actor makes noticeably more claims to regional development in Komárom – 29 per cent of total claims – than in Rimaszombat at 1 per cent. At the same time, there are slightly more claims which emphasised collaboration across different types of actors in the case of Rimaszombat, where

some claims are made jointly by government and civil society, or civil society and business, etc.; however, in both towns this type of claim is marginal. This distribution shows the importance of including a range of actors into the study of claims to regional development. Focusing solely on political actors would have overlooked other significant players which also make usage of local, national, kin-state and European opportunity structures in their efforts to promote regional development.

Figure 22 Breakdown of Local Level Actors by Type making Regional Development Claims in Rimaszombat and Komárom, 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (%)

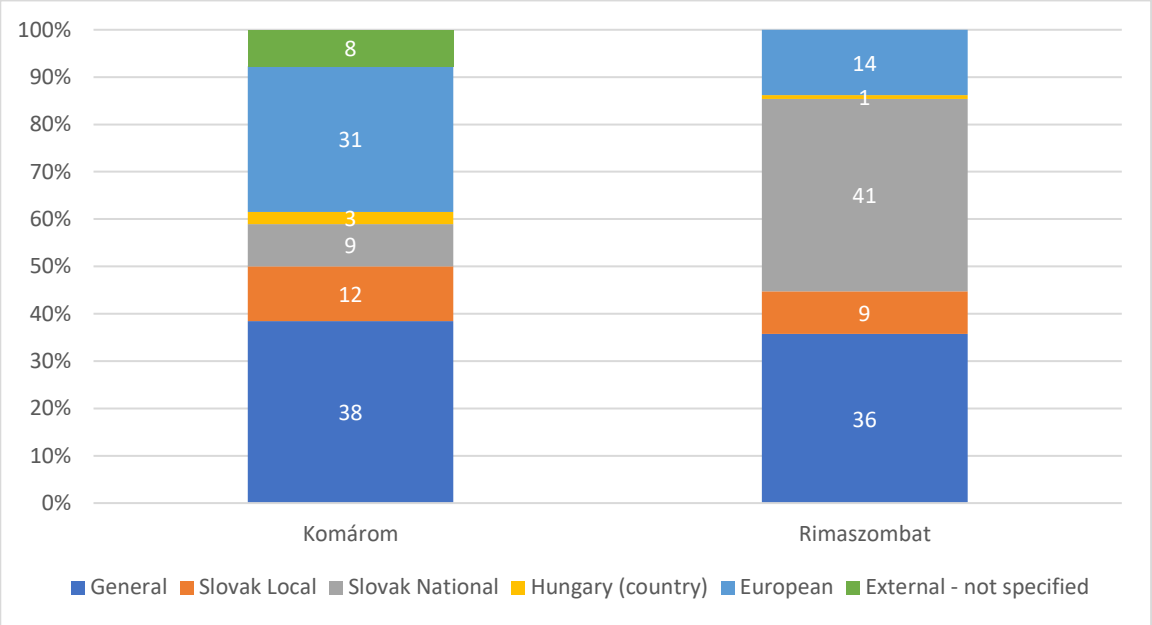


Rimaszombat N=123; Komárom N=78

Figure 23 illustrates the arenas for claims chosen by local level actors. In Komárom, after the 38 per cent which are "general" claims, 31 per cent of total claims are made to the European level, followed by 12 per cent to the local and 9 per cent to the national. In contrast, local level actors as covered in the Rimaszombat newspaper make 41 per cent of their claims to the national level, 14 per cent to the European level and 9 per cent to the local. The "general" category accounted for 36 per cent. As discussed in Section 9.3.1, local actors target the national level in Rimaszombat primarily when there is stagnation on issues such as R2 or the ZTS park renovation. This is in contrast to the usage of the European arena

in Komárom by the association of Pons Danubii or in the funding of the Elisabeth Bridge which is in response to a funding opportunity provided by the European level.

Figure 23 Arenas Claimed to by Local Level Actors in Rimaszombat and Komárom, 2009-2011 and 2015-2017 (%)



Rimaszombat N=123; Komárom N=78.

9.5.2 The Kin-State

Hungary acts as a partner in claiming as well as an arena to be claimed to. However, as the previous Figure 23 shows, Hungary is not a significant claiming arena for regional development. It acts more often as a co-partner in claiming. Hungary, through its own local governments particularly in Komárom, Hungary, makes joint claims with its Slovak neighbour in areas such as the Komárom bridge and as a collaborator with Pons Danubii claims. The EU's Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Cooperation Programme provides incentive to make joint claims across different areas of regional development such as tourism and infrastructure as already detailed. Thus, while Hungary may not be a frequent arena to claim to, it is a co-partner in claiming.

The Hungarian government's role as an arena for claiming is more pronounced in the fields of culture and education (previous chapter). That said, in regional development, the Hungarian government can be applied to for funding of activities linked to economic and regional development. These activities have the overall goal of offering economic opportunities to encourage young Hungarians to stay in Slovakia. Moreover, the *Baross Gábor Plan* (Chapter 7 Section 7.1.4) is funded by the Hungarian government with the aim to encourage the preservation of the Hungarian minority community through strengthened economic development (Homoly, 2017). It focuses primarily on small and medium enterprises and offered as much as 5 billion forints (approximately 15.5 million euros) in funds (Juhász, 2017e). At a joint meeting between Hungarian officials (from Hungary) and the MKP party to discuss the *Plan*, MKP President József Menyhárt noted,

> *"If there is work, then young people will stay in the region, there will be children, education, culture and life…this economic plan plays a huge role in encouraging this"* (Homoly, 2017).

The kin-state also has different outreach activities aimed to support business investment. In 2016, it encourages Hungarian young people to stay in Slovakia through supporting their local start-ups (Juhász, 2016b). Further links are strengthened when the Hungarian Trading House (Magyar Nemzeti Kereskedőház) opens up seven offices in Slovakia to develop better trading contacts (Juhász, 2016c). As such, the activity is geared towards encouraging the self-sustainability of the Hungarian community which means having young people stay in their native region.

Unlike the general strategy of using the EU as a financial enabler to promote regional and local development which is found across a range of political actors as well as businesses and civil society, political actors are more split in their decision to depend on the kin-state for support. Local leaders who are part of MKP have a traditionally closer connection to the Fidesz government, whilst those from Most-Híd do not. From the latter's perspective, "We

perceive that MKP tries to find help in Hungary and beyond, and we are trying to find partners at home" (Interview Ravasz, 2017). Therefore, political party affiliation impacts the desirability to use kin-state support as well as the offer of support by the kin-state.

9.5.3 The European Union

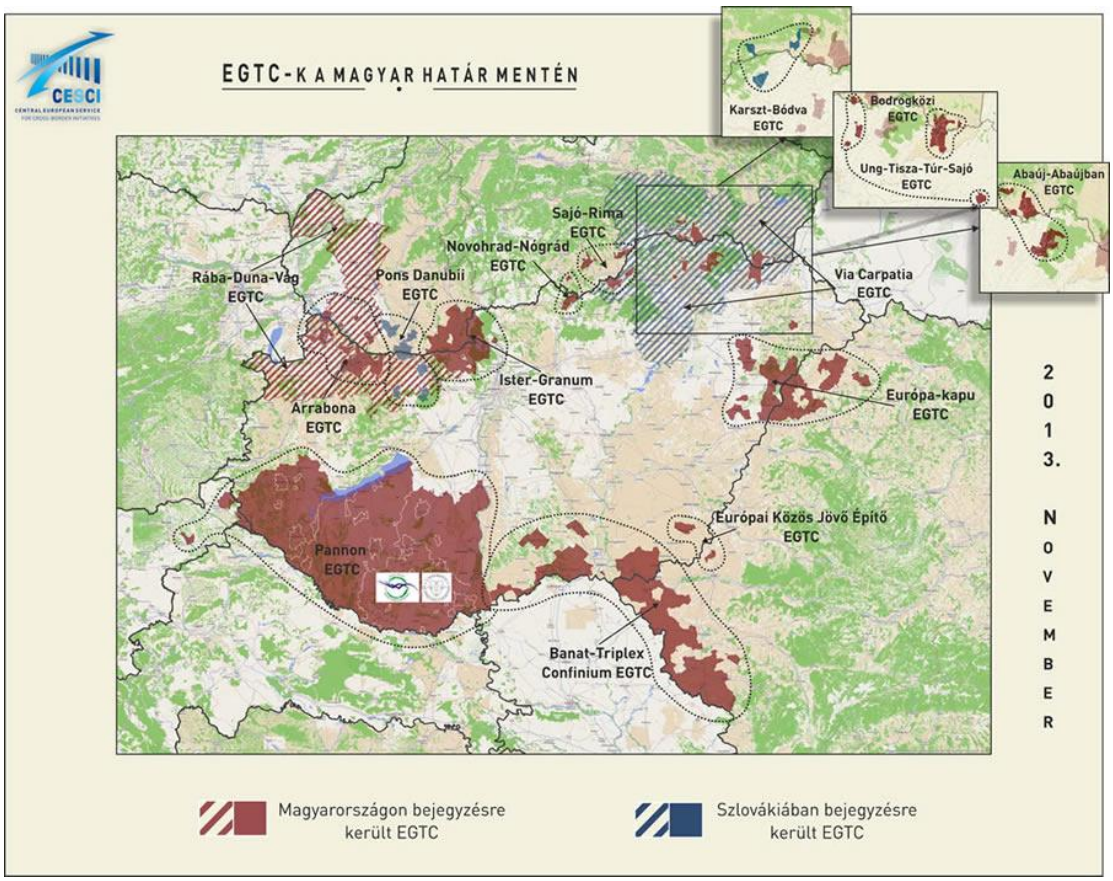
The role of the European Union as an arena to further claims to regional development happens primarily through financial mechanisms. Through these financial provisions, the EU provides the minority community with opportunities and new institutional structures of cooperation to pursue greater control over its future, which feeds into the minority elites' tactics of advancing regional and local development as an alternative way to achieve *de facto* autonomy. This ties back to what Csergő & Regelmann (2017) argue that elite minority actors find new ways to use Europeanisation opportunity structures to further their claims.

The EU provides funding for the Hungarians in Slovakia through supporting cross-border activities. The 2007-2013 EU project Hungary-Slovakia Cross-border Cooperation Programme supports a range of cross-border activities. Different actors applied to the scheme, including Pons-Danubii as well as the city councils of the Komárom sister cities. Moreover, the EU is a key donor to the Elisabeth Bridge project completed in 2017 in Komárom. Rimaszombat also has a City Development Plan 2007-2013 whose development is funded by the EU, and for which it sought European funding for the implementation of many of the *Plan's* projects (Juhász, 2011g).

As Figure 15 on p.258 shows, there is significantly less activity documented in Rimaszombat compared to Komárom linked to cross-border activity (12% and 54% of claims, respectively). Cross-border claims often target the European arena. Of claims to the European arena, as Figure 21 on p.276 illustrates, Rimaszombat lodges 12 % of its claims compared to 29 % by Komárom actors. One frequent claim by politicians is to make better usage of EU funding opportunities, with MKP mayoral candidate and MKP regional

representative Ferenc Auxt arguing that, “the EU thinks in terms of regions today, and we have to maximise this” (Juhász, 2010g). In 2013, Rimaszombat also becomes part of an EGTC, the Sajó-Rima EGTC, which includes two towns of Ózd and Putnok in Hungary and the Slovak towns of Rimaszombat and Tornalja. The goals of the cooperation are to increase business, employment and culture links (Felvidék.ma, 2013). However, the website of the EGTC does not contain information past 2014 (Sajó-Rima EGTC, no date). Figure 24 below shows the different EGTCs which dot the Slovak-Hungarian landscape, including Pons Danubii and Sajó-Rima, as well as others surrounding Hungary. Komárom, through Pons Danubii, has made good usage of European opportunity structures and the EU has acted as a financial enabler and alternative source of support and sustenance.

Figure 24 Map of EGTCs along Hungarian Border



(Pons Danubii EGTC, 2014a)

9.6 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the different claims to regional development to map out how autonomy claims have changed over time and how elites respond to different opportunities or constraints in different political arenas (Research Questions A and B). The transition to focusing on the theme of regional and economic development is made initially by MKP in 2006 and becomes a key issue for both MKP and Most-Híd in their national policy platforms (MKP, 2006, 2010c, 2012, 2014; Most-Híd, 2016b, 2016a). The focus of regional development as a new policy area further supplants explicit claims to "autonomy". How this unfolds in practice is best unpacked by an analysis of the local level perspective. Through the above archival analysis, the local level provides an insightful additional perspective in the understanding of autonomy claim-making. This "bottom up" approach to how local politics unfolds to improve the likelihood of the Hungarian community to prosper was laid out in the discussion on infrastructure and economic development. These areas are seen to hold the key to keeping young people in the region and to creating a better future for the population as a whole, and especially for the Hungarian minority.

The analysis shows two different realities of the Hungarians in Slovakia. The two towns of Komárom and Rimaszombat are different in terms of who their claims target – the former makes claims towards a range of actors whilst Rimaszombat primarily focuses on the Slovak government during periods of stagnation on key issues, regardless of the political party in power at the national level. There are also differences between the towns in the types of actors making claims, with a significant role in Komárom to associations like Pons Danubii. The inclusion of different actors outside of political party elites in the above analysis demonstrates how associations like Dunamente TDM and Pons Danubii, along with civil society, have an important role to play in the creative claiming of autonomy.

The different trajectories between the two towns in terms of arenas claimed to and the range of actors doing the claiming can best be attributed to the different geographic and demographic characteristics of the two towns. Komárom's cross-border location to Hungary and Hungarian-majority population make it easier for associations like Pons Danubii and Dunamente to form and to claim to the European level for funding. The Hungarian-majority population also facilitates collaboration across the border. Rimaszombat, on the other hand, cannot make as much use of the European opportunity structure and as such, its political actors level more claims to the national level.

The discussion has highlighted the importance of international arenas for local actors which are all the more important in the Slovak context where there is limited national support to the pursuit of autonomy. With MKP out of the national Parliament and Most-Híd in coalition, the prospects of claiming "autonomy" are small, but speaking about regional development is more easily acceptable. The opportunity provided by the EU and kin-state as financial enablers is considerable, as this allows local actors to rely on external support. Where there is a strong connection to the kin-state – which is not to be assumed as seen in the case of Most-Híd – minority actors do promote regional development with kin-state money; otherwise attention is put on the domestic or European levels. The European Union offers a stable platform to make financial claims to, and over time more and more projects are given to Pons Danubii to pursue regional development. To relate back to the language of Waterbury (2017), Hungarian minority actors have made usage of new *arenas* offered by EU financial structures, connected to *allies* in ways to suit their promotion of regional development such as the kin-state or domestic government coalition members, and have engaged in a range of *activities* such as the associations of Pons Danubii to promote the aims of regional development.

Therefore, adding a local perspective to claim-making demonstrates that even within a country there can be differences of policy area claiming preferences, arguably impacted by certain characteristics such as geographic location and opportunities for cross-border collaboration. These sub-policy area preferences are then tied to the different usage of targeted arenas for claim-making. Moreover, regional development offers the chance for inter-ethnic cooperation since the benefits extend to all inhabitants. The content of the policy area and its different subdivisions are less political and controversial since it is not explicitly tied to identity politics in the same way as education, language and culture (ECL) policy areas are.

Comparing ECL and regional development claim-making highlight some important differences. To begin, there is less discrepancy of the level of actors claimed to (Figure 11 in Section 8.3) in the ECL demands as covered by the two newspapers. This occurs regardless of different population concentrations across the two towns. In regional development, the European Union is a much larger receiver of claims in Komárom than in Rimaszombat (29 per cent compared to 12 per cent, respectively). In terms of the types of actors making claims, the proportion of claims made by local actors is lower in ECL areas than in the case of regional development, where the latter's proportion of claims were as high as 75 per cent and 82 per cent in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively, as illustrated in Figure 14 in Section 9.2. A possible explanation for this difference is that the opportunity structure offered by the EU is better able to be utilised in the case for regional development than in the case of education, culture and linguistic issues. Furthermore, the role of associations is much more prominent in regional development. They made a large proportion of cross-border claims as well as claims to the European Union. Civil society organisations are more active in ECL policy areas than in regional development – accounting for approximately 20% of ECL claims (Figure 12 p.243). They also target alternative arenas

like the kin-state and EU. There is a similar breakdown of actors across ECL areas in the two towns, again regardless of different demographic compositions. Finally, both ECL claims and regional development claims make reference to the importance of the survival of the Hungarian community, while only the framing of ECL claims make reference to legal rights.

The local perspective of claim-making, therefore, highlights how elites claim to different arenas and further "autonomy" across a range of policy areas. Elites are creative in their claiming tactics not just at the national level or in discourse (as Chapters 5 – 7 have shown), but also at the local level and target different arenas for their claims. This chapter has shown how the discourse surrounding regional development – and claims linked to issue areas such as infrastructure and economic development – has supplanted explicit claims to autonomy. Moreover, in this policy area, the claims cross the ethnic divide since both Hungarian and Slovak communities stand to benefit. Having now analysed the last ingredient of the creative policy game of Slovak-Hungarian elites in their pursuit of autonomy, the next chapter examines explanations for *why* differences have emerged in the autonomy-claiming trajectories between Hungarian elites in Romania and Slovakia, bringing the findings of the thesis together.

10 Comparing the Trajectories of Autonomy Claims in Romania and Slovakia

> *"In Felvidék (Upper Slovakia), territorial conditions and Hungarian cultural relations do not make it possible that the Hungarians in Slovakia…besides being targeted by an ethnic party, can think of itself as an independent community"* (Interview Bakk, 2017).

The starting-point for this dissertation is of similar ethnic minority communities in two countries which share important characteristics – such as comparable population proportions, similar kin-state ties, well-organised ethnic political parties, experience with communism and European accession – yet have different trajectories of autonomy claiming. In Romania, territorial autonomy claim-making is alive and well, largely due to the work of splinter organisations which arguably bring territorial autonomy back onto the agenda of RMDSZ in 2014. In comparison, Hungarian elites in Slovakia rarely claim "autonomy" but rather "self-governance". The strongest claim – after János Bósza's plan which is dismissed as eccentric – is one of administrative revisions in MKP (2014)'s policy document which the party refers to as its autonomy plan.

Accounting for the different trajectories of autonomy claiming prompted two research sub-questions: (a) how have autonomy claims by Hungarian minority elites evolved over time in the post-EU accession era and (b) how have actors responded to different opportunities and constraints faced at the local, national and international levels. Data from political documents, elite interviews and newspaper archives were analysed through qualitative content analysis to fit into a broader discourse analytic framework which takes into account power relations between actors, how the meaning of concepts changes over time and how the concepts are used by different actors. The goal of the project was to

generate case-specific insights and explanations rather than generalisations about autonomy claim-making which could travel to other cases.

The previous chapters demonstrated how the explicit claiming of “autonomy" is not just the only way minority elites can make demands. Elites also engage in a “creative policy game” to claim autonomy. Part of this encompasses a “word-play” by substituting other concepts such as “self-governance”, “decentralisation”, “regionalisation” and others to claim autonomy. In Slovakia “autonomy” claiming is avoided as much as possible in exchange for “self-governance”, whereas in Romania “autonomy” itself can still be claimed alongside other demands such as “decentralisation”. In contrast to the scholarly literature which differentiates these concepts (Chapter 2 Section 2.1), for elites the terms are interchangeable. Another dimension of the creative policy game is claiming reforms in policy areas such as education, culture and decentralisation in order to attain *de facto* autonomy. This is seen in both countries, pursued by RMDSZ, Most-Híd and MKP. In Slovakia, however, national level reforms have been very slow. Consequently, incorporating a local level dimension to the analysis on claiming autonomy through policy reforms further elaborated the creative ways autonomy is claimed in Slovakia. Local level actors make claims across a range of policy areas – regional development, education, language and culture – to different arenas such as the local, national, kin-state and European. Therefore, the picture painted through the previous chapters of the dynamics of autonomy claim-making is one which illuminates the normalised nature of autonomy claims. Autonomy claim-making is part and parcel of domestic politics rather than a threat to secession and ethnic violence.

As a comparative case study, the primary achievement of this thesis is the rich empirical description – making usage of materials in the original Hungarian language – to uncover and trace in depth the ways in which Hungarian elites have claimed autonomy over

time in Romania and Slovakia. However, from the data and analysis some patterns emerge to account for the differences in how autonomy claiming unfolds in both countries. Delving deeper into the two cases demonstrates just how different the two countries' starting conditions are which, in turn, impact the different trajectories autonomy claim-making takes in both countries.

This chapter brings together and extends the findings thus far to address the leading research question of what accounts for the different autonomy claiming trajectories of Hungarian minority elites in Romania and Slovakia. The analysis shows that both countries operate within different parameters which impact the manoeuvrability of claiming "autonomy". These parameters include demographic considerations, historical legacies linked to autonomy, path dependence of previous autonomy claims and a legislative framework within which claims occur. Acting within these parameters – of which historical legacies and path dependence play the leading role and which are quite different in Romania and Slovakia as the discussion below will highlight – there are political constellations of minority elite actors who engage in intra-group competition with different approaches to how best claim autonomy. Part of the disagreement is on the strategy at the domestic level – strong claims to autonomy (SZNT, MKP) versus a strategy of small steps (RMDSZ, Most-Híd) – but this also plays out with a different usage of other political arenas, namely the kin-state and the European. Those actors which engage in a small steps approach put most of their energies into claiming in the domestic arena, whilst other actors like SZNT and MKP have a more diversified approach with an increased emphasis on the kin-state and European arenas.

10.1 Parameters for Claim-Making: Constraints and Opportunities

Elites in Romania and Slovakia are faced with different starting positions in their claims to autonomy in the post-EU accession period. These parameters can constrain and

limit their ability to claim "autonomy" or they can act as an opportunity and thereby enable the claiming of autonomy. Such parameters are generally more constraining in the context of Slovakia and more enabling in the context of Romania. Such parameters include demographic differences linked to territorial concentrations as well as the activation of particular historical legacies. Moreover, there is an element of path dependence which differently affects elites in Romania and Slovakia. Finally, the legislative frameworks in place governing the different policy provisions linked to autonomy shape the terrain in which claims are lodged by different elites. As the discussion below will elaborate, historical legacies and path dependence play the leading role in shaping the trajectories for claim-making.

10.1.1 Demographic Considerations

Both Slovakia and Romania have territorially concentrated minorities. This is partly why they are an attractive comparison to other scholars as well (Csergő, 2007; Jenne, 2007; Saideman and Ayres, 2008; Stroschein, 2012; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013b, 2013a). As discussed in Chapter 4 Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1, Hungarians in Slovakia are populated across the southern sliver of the country and Hungarians in Romania are concentrated in Transylvania. At the same time, not all scholarly accounts unpack the more precise ways in which the population concentrations are different between the two countries and the consequences this can have on autonomy claiming. The conflict studies literature – mainly Jenne (2007) and Saideman and Ayres (2008) – do not highlight the population concentration differences found in Transylvania and do not look at the sub-national level. The comparative politics literature unpacks the intra-group bargaining dynamics (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a) and the fact that there are different sub-populations in Transylvania (Stroschein, 2012; Székely, 2014). What I would like to extend is *how* the population concentration characteristics impact the dynamics of autonomy claiming.

In Romania, virtually all the Hungarians are located in Transylvania, which is divided into 16 counties. According to the latest 2011 census, approximately half – 609,000 – of the Hungarian minority population is in the sub-region of Transylvania called the Szeklerland, comprised of the three counties of Harghita, Covasna and Mureș. Here, Hungarians make up 85.2%, 73.7% and 38.1% of the county's population, respectively (Institutual National de Statistica, 2011, p. 5). There are also those Hungarians living in inter-ethnic environments where they form a large minority of the county's population such as in Bihar (25.3%) and Szatmár (34.7%). Finally, there are those living in counties where they are a small minority, such as Arad (9%) and Temes (5%). At the same time, in some minority counties, Hungarians can be concentrated in Hungarian-majority municipalities or communes (such as Torockó in Fehér county numbering 94.1%) or form a sizeable minority within a large city, as Hungarians do in Kolozsvár (50,000) and Marosvásárhely (61,000) (Institutual National de Statistica, 2011; Csata and Marácz, 2018, pp. 395–399; T. Kiss, 2018, pp. 24–27).

The implications of this different set-up affects what type of autonomy is desired and relevant for the population. The perceived *needs* of Hungarians living in inter-ethnic or local-majority environments are different compared to those territorially concentrated in Hungarian-majority counties – namely in the Szeklerland. Key issues for Hungarians in inter-ethnic or local-majority environments are in the provision of cultural autonomy – including education in the mother tongue, cultural institutions and language usage, particularly in public administration. In contrast, for Hungarian-dominated areas where Hungarians are a majority in the county – as in Covasna and Harghita – the local administration is almost *de facto* Hungarian and therefore issues such as education and language are less contentious. Rather, the focus is on greater territorial autonomy and powers of decentralisation to the county level. Consequently, for the Szeklerland, the main dynamic

is between Bucharest and the Szeklerland in terms of what powers to have from Bucharest and in pushing the idea of regional development (Interviews Bakk, 2017; Kovács, 2017).

It is also important to note that the leader of RMDSZ from 1993-2011, Béla Markó, was a prominent figure in Marosvásárhely – the town of the 1990 deadly ethnic riot[87] - alongside other important RMDSZ figures under his presidency like György Frunda and László Borbély. Their background of living in an interethnic city, as well as the trauma experienced by the Hungarian population following the deaths in 1990, influences RMDSZ strategy for the years to come by focusing on the needs of Hungarians in inter-ethnic environments. This is evidenced in the focus of RMDSZ during its first 10 years in coalition on codifying the right to bilingual signs, usage of Hungarian in public administration and Hungarian language schools (Interview I. G. Székely, 2017).

The issues RMDSZ was addressing in Parliament whilst in coalition, however, were not the key issues for the Szeklers since they already constituted a large majority. Moreover, as Chapter 4 Section 4.1.4.3 detailed, RMDSZ's moderate approach did not sit well within the Reform Tömörülés group within RMDSZ, eventually resulting in the two splinter organisations of SZNT and EMNT in 2003 to pursue the quest for territorial autonomy without compromise, as originally envisioned in the early 90s by RMDSZ (Interview Bakk, 2017).

The formation of SZNT demonstrates the tensions between the different needs of the Hungarian community in Romania. Arguably, cultural autonomy and territorial autonomy are competing projects (Interview Bakk, 2017). Cultural autonomy will not serve the Hungarians living in the Szeklerland while territorial autonomy for the Szeklerland does not

[87] The Hungarian community was hit early by a serious setback early on in March 1990 with an ethnic riot in Marosvásárhely, a town with a roughly equal ethnic composition. At least six people died and about 300 injured when violence disrupted in the central town square followed debates about language in schools (Stroschein, 2012, p. 25). Fortunately, the democratisation process progressed relatively peacefully following the early violence.

address the needs of those Hungarians outside of it. While some elites did not agree that they were competing projects (Interviews Kelemen, 2018; Tőke, 2018), analysis of the claims in Chapter 4 and 6 has shown that it has certainly split the efforts of the Hungarian community rather than uniting them.

The Hungarians in Slovakia, on the other hand, are territorially concentrated along the southern sliver of Slovakia. Their population concentrations, however, do not lead to a competing dynamic between cultural and territorial autonomy. Hungarians are located in 16 – out of 79 – districts (járás) and 2 cities (Bratislava and Kassa). They are an absolute majority in Komárom district and Dunaszerdahely districts (63% and 75%, respectively), amounting to approximately 153,000 of the total approximately 458,000 Hungarian population. In this sense, territorial autonomy to only these two districts would not be to the advantage of most of the Hungarian population and, moreover, there is no historical experience of autonomy of the region. In another 9 districts, Hungarians form between 20-36% of the population and in 5 districts they are less than 20% (Horbulák, 2015). While the population is located along the southern border, there are interruptions between population concentrations particularly in the east, as Figure 5 p.96 demonstrated, which would make a regional unit difficult to construct. Previous autonomy plans such as that of the Komárom Declaration proposed either a unit with Hungarians making up 60% of the population or a subdivision of southern Slovakia into 3 administrative units with a Hungarian majority (Komáromi Nagygyűlés, 1999).

With the above statistics about territorial distribution, there does not arise a different competing dynamic between those Hungarians who would vouch for cultural autonomy or territorial autonomy. Territorial autonomy – if it were to encompass all the southern municipalities – would benefit the vast majority of the Hungarian population. However, it is off the bargaining table for reasons of historical legacies and also because it would entail

a large revision of the current administrative structure of the districts and also of the regions. This is highly unlikely to happen. Moreover, Hungarian elites do not think in terms of the territorial-cultural autonomy dichotomy. The idea of "cultural autonomy" as understood in the Romanian perspective is instead unpacked in Slovakia to encompass the sub-divisions of educational self-governance, cultural self-governance and linguistic rights (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.1).

The local level analysis in Chapters 8 and 9 also demonstrate how the different realities of the Hungarian minority communities –a local majority in Komárom and a local minority in Rimaszombat – are different but do not compete with each other. These two communities are mirror opposites in terms of population concentrations, with Komárom have 63% Hungarian population and Rimaszombat 36% (Horbulák, 2015). The dynamic behind regional development claims in Rimaszombat brought more involvement of ethnic Slovak actors whilst in Komárom it was the role of associations such as Pons Danubii which lodged claims for regional development. For the policy areas of education, language and culture, the two towns had a similar breakdown of the ECL policy areas (Table 10 p.2211) but differed in the level to which they lodged their claims. At the same time, the claims were not in competition with each other but rather reflected the different opportunity structures available.

Therefore, different territorial concentrations impact the type of autonomy desired by the minority as well as the type of autonomy that is realistic given the concentrations in administrative units. The population concentrations in Romania of ethnic Hungarians lead to a competition between the desires for cultural versus territorial autonomy which is not present in Slovakia. Moreover, the different concentrations at the municipal level in Slovakia show different strategies rather than competing priorities of elites. Both towns demonstrated the importance of regional development and ECL policy claims but differed in the

prominence of the type local level actors lodging claims and the choice of arenas claimed to.

10.1.2 Historical Legacies and Path Dependence

The activation of particular historical legacies linked to autonomy has different consequences in Romania and Slovakia. In Romania the historical legacies linked to autonomy of the Hungarian minorities are more enabling for autonomy claiming while in Slovakia it is the legacy of Slovak independence which serves as a constraint for the Hungarian minority. In addition to these historical legacies, in the early post-communist period certain developments in terms of autonomy plans and claiming rhetoric lead to path dependence in the way autonomy claims are made in the post-EU accession era.

The Hungarians in Romania have their own history of autonomy. Unlike the Slovak case where the Slovak titular majority had autonomy, in Romania the Hungarian minority itself has a history of autonomy. This historical context can be relied upon and resonates across the Hungarian population in Transylvania. As Most-Híd MP Ravasz (Interview, 2017) says when comparing the Slovak and Romanian cases,

> *"If you take Transylvania, or Vojvodina, those regions are rather compact, they have some form of historical context, whereas the Hungarian regions in Slovakia are basically the rim of the territories."*

The history of the Szeklerland as well as the different status of Transylvania over the centuries (Chapter 4 Section 4.1.2) provide Hungarian minority elites with more historical capital to draw upon. One can see this in the small Transylvanist movement's references to the multicultural history of Transylvania which seeks regional autonomy within Romania. It is most obviously demonstrated in the "historical" autonomist strategy of SZNT which makes reference repeatedly to the historical Szeklerland and the natural right to autonomy of the Szekler people. SZNT also channels the historical references through modern symbols

such as the Szekler national anthem in 2009 and the Szekler flag which SZNT started using in 2003.

The history of the Szeklerland and Transylvania also means that "autonomy" has greater mobilisation potential in Romania, which also hints at why the term has been so sticky in Hungarian discourse. The mobilisation potential is unleashed in the early 2010s by SZNT, particularly with the 2013 rally in Marosvásárhely (Chapter 6 Section 6.2.2). Survey data in 2019 show that 85 % of Hungarians in Covasna county believe that the Szeklerland needs autonomy (Kiss, 2019). In Slovakia, by contrast, elites argue that there is not much mobilisation surrounding autonomy due to the conflict-avoidance nature of Hungarian-Slovak mentality (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017).

In addition, in Romania there is the legacy of the Hungarian Autonomous Region (HAR) 1952-1968 under communism (as discussed in Section 4.1.2). The significance of the HAR is more from the Romanian perspective than the Hungarian: autonomy is seen as a foreign-imposed concept to the Romanians. "Autonomy" is in this sense is a suspicious "dirty word", yet it is not as provocative as "historical dynamite" as for the titular Slovaks as will be discussed below. This affects the "word-play" dynamic in Romania where "autonomy" can still be claimed by Hungarian minority elites alongside other terms such as "regionalisation" and "decentralisation".

In the Slovak context, on the other hand, the main historical legacy is linked to the history of Slovak national self-determination where claiming "autonomy" is equated with secession in the Slovak mind (Tokár, 2014). As mentioned in Chapter 4 Section 4.2.2, this association stems from Slovakia's own history of independence in the interwar years from Czechoslovakia where "autonomy" was claimed and granted as a stepping stone towards eventual secession. As such, "autonomy" is a term loaded with "historical dynamite". Consequently, Hungarian elites in Slovakia respond to this constraint in what I have called

"word-play". "Autonomy" on its own is rarely claimed and the term "self-governance" (*önkormányzatiság)* is claimed instead. The terms, however, have the same meaning from the perspective of the elites (Chapter 5 Section 5.2.3).

There is also an element of path dependence which differently affects the autonomy claims in both countries by making certain discourses and ways of framing the autonomy issue particularly likely. In Romania, it is the different autonomy concepts of the early 1990s which frame and inform the autonomy debate and make it difficult for elites to disentangle themselves from the need to claim "autonomy". The 1995 Csapó *Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland* is embraced by SZNT and tabled three times in Parliament by 2018. The other conceptualisation – the Bakk-led *Autonomy Package* (2003)– has been taken up by EMNT and EMNP, with MPP also having a similar framework. A third example is Bakk's *Plan on Personal Self-Governments* (1995) which feeds into the 2004 EMNT's unsuccessfully tabled *Framework Law on Personal Autonomy* and *Statute of Personal Autonomy for the Hungarian Minority in Romania* (Salat, 2014, p. 138).[88] Moreover, the debates from the 1990s and the divisions between the inner autonomist RMDSZ circle of Reform Tömörülés (Reform Group) and RMDSZ "moderates" now lives on through the fault-line between SZNT and RMDSZ. Importantly, the aura that "autonomy" has for the electorate and its capability to mobilise (as discussed above) makes it difficult for RMDSZ to abandon the term. Using other terms such as "decentralisation" in its discourse towards its voters has less mobilisation potential (Interview I. G. Székely, 2017).

In Slovakia, one key event is the failed 1994 Komárom meeting which fundamentally changes the way "autonomy" is claimed in Slovakia by replacing it with the word-play to "self-governance" (Chapter 4 Section 4.2.4.1). Since then, any attempt at bringing back

[88] Although outside the time period of study, the same bills are claimed in Parliament in May 2020 (Rts.rs, 2020).

"autonomy" explicitly into the claiming discourse – such as by MKP leader Pál Csáky in 2008 or János Bósza's 2007 autonomy plan – is unsuccessful. Moreover, the post-EU accession period sees different political actors such as MKP, Most-Híd and the the Roundtable using the term "self-governance" in their manifestos and statements such as the joint *Minimum* statement (2012), MKP's *Plan on Economic Development* (its autonomy plan in practice) (2014) and Most-Híd's *Civic Vision* (2016b). "Self-governance" is now a sticky word which shapes the discourse of how political actors make their autonomy claims.

In sum, Hungarians elites in Transylvania have more historical material to utilise and activate to serve their autonomy claims. In this sense, the word-play used by Hungarian minority elites does not avoid "autonomy" as much since the word is not as "historical dynamite" as in the case of Slovakia where the word is very consciously avoided. Rather, in Romania, "autonomy" is more of a "dirty word" which is not liked by the Romanian side but is still not as volatile. Consequently, Hungarian minority elites in Romania have a wider range of concepts such as regionalism and decentralisation – in addition to autonomy – which they can use in their claiming strategies. Elites in both countries are also limited by an element of path dependence in the choice of their autonomy plans and understandings (Romania) and word-play decisions (Slovakia).

10.1.3 Legislative Framework

In addition to different demographic characteristics and historical legacies, the particular legislative frameworks in place by the post-EU accession period shape the starting points for claim-making. In Romania, by the post-accession period and especially after the 2011 *Law on Education*, minority provisions are relatively minority-friendly on paper. The 2011 *Law* provides the right to be educated in one's mother tongue and allows for cases where the minimum pupil size for a class does not have to be followed. Moreover, three multi-lingual universities are provided the right to institutionalise education in the mother-

tongue. Overall, the education framework is relatively loose and allows for Hungarians to organise their education. The *Law No.215-2001 on Public Administration* ensures the usage of the minority language in oral and written communication if Hungarians number over 20% in a municipality and also applies to bilingual signs (Csata and Marácz, 2018, pp. 399–408).

Within these parameters, the main issue in Romania is over implementation of the existing legislation (Toró, 2020). This is seen in the controversies highlighted in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.3 of minority language signs, for example, and of the absence of a Hungarian-language track in the University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Marosvásárhely. Legal provisions are in place for bilingual signs as well as for the Hungarian language track in Marosvásárhely; but it is implementation which is lacking. It is into this vacuum that civil society advocacy organisations like CEMO and AGFI step in and start the strategy of litigation. Demonstrating how the state is not implementing minority legislation plays a facilitating role in claims to autonomy. Local Kolozsvár deputy mayor and EMNP politician Ernő Fancsali would wager that if the Romanians would implement the legislation linked to minorities, then the Hungarians would probably not even ask for autonomy (Interview Fancsali, 2017).

In terms of administrative structures, Transylvania itself already has two counties – Harghita and Covasna – in which Hungarians form a majority. As such, with a favourable starting point, the politics around administrative reform is often of a reactive nature on the part of RMDSZ, since altering the status quo can undermine its Hungarian majority. As detailed in Chapter 6 Section 6.2.1.1, in 2011 there were serious talks about administrative reforms by RMDSZ's coalition partner, PDL. However, RMDSZ refused to support the new administrative system because it would dilute the Hungarian-dominated Szeklerland and put Hungarians at a disadvantage. The status quo was preferred. Further administrative reforms are also complicated by the fact that the Romanian state does not recognise the presence of

the historic Szeklerland in any of its documents (Csata and Marácz, 2018, p. 397). Departing from the current county administrative system needs to be to the advantage of the Hungarian community and not dilute its concentrations.

As the Chapter 7 on Slovakia demonstrated, the issues in Slovakia involve a battle for better legislative provisions at the national level across different autonomy-related policy fields such as education, language and culture. For the latter, The *Cultural Fund Act* (2017) was seen as a victory by Most-Híd. However, it was long in the making since its first appearance in MKP's 2002 election manifesto. Equally, one cannot argue that it is a strong example of cultural autonomy: the amount of funding is still low and the board making decisions still has government (non-minority) officials. Regarding language usage, there are legal inconsistencies between the 1999 *Minority Language Law* and the 1995 (and 2009 amended) *Slovak State Language Law*. Implementation of minority language signs has therefore suffered, which is most clearly seen in the very delayed process of putting up bilingual railroad signs as detailed in Chapter 7 Section 7.2. Regarding education, education in the minority language is a right for primary and secondary levels. However, in practice there are issues linked to class sizes and the curriculum, which led to the 2016 joint declaration of Most-Híd and MKP calling for the removal of the minimum class size requirement and increased funding (Dunaszerdahelyi.sk, 2016).

Regarding administration, the main administrative reform battle comes in 1996 and 2001 with negative consequences for the Hungarian minority. The failed administrative reforms of 2001 enshrined the regional divisions in Slovakia which are not favourable to any kind of minority region. In the post-EU accession period administrative reform is not seriously on the bargaining table. At the same time, Hungarian elites have less to lose by proposing alternative structures. MKP – and eventually Most-Híd in 2016 – suggest the formation of "natural regions" coinciding with the geographic, historic and cultural contours

of Slovakia . Such revisions, however, would entail a large revision of the current system (MKP, 2010c, 2012, 2014; Most-Híd, 2016b).

Local level analysis highlights how claims by local level actors are often in reaction to blockages or difficulties at the national level (as shown in Chapters 8 and 9), especially in the fields of language and education. While claims can then target the national level, it is not the only arena claimed to. Claiming is creative and targets the local, kin-state and European arenas to try to advance claims to autonomy. This is well illustrated in the work of Pons Danubii which makes many claims to regional development and cross-border cooperation, as well as different civil society actors who appeal to the kin-state and European Union for additional funding to enable their claims for cultural and educational autonomy.

These "starting point" parameters – territorial concentration, historical legacies and legislative frameworks – differ more between Romania and Slovakia than one might expect at first glance. Consequently, the path that claim-making takes varies since the two countries have different constraints and opportunities to harness. Hungarians in Romania have more room for creativity and more "raw material" to utilise given their historical legacy of autonomy, different population concentrations and better policy provisions. Hungarians in Slovakia have more constraints – particularly the strong negative connotation of the term "autonomy"– and face a steeper uphill struggle in reforms in administration, education, language and culture. There is less room to manoeuvre at the national level and change is slow. This has, consequently, arguably led to creativity at the local level through a diversified strategy of claiming to different arenas by a range of actors to advance *de facto* autonomy.

10.2 Minority Actors: Intra-Group Competition

The focus of this thesis is on *claims* to autonomy which then are traced back to the actors making the claims. The main claimants are elite actors, whether this be political

parties as a whole, government officials, political party members, civil society activists or indeed even business associations as local level Chapters 8 and 9 highlighted. This project has found that claim-making related to autonomy is indeed an elite-led rather than bottom-up process in both countries. Most cases of mass mobilisation – such as the Dunaszerdahely protest in Slovakia for language rights (Chapter 7 Section 7.2) or Szekler rallies for autonomy (Chapter 6 Section 6.2.2) – are through the initiative of elites. Exceptions are the Musai-muszáj movement in Cluj-Napoca and the Bilingual Slovakia movement which are grassroots movements frustrated with slow progress on linguistic rights and bilingual signs. Elites make claims within certain set parameters (as outlined above), but elites also compete with each other which affects the nature of claims. The changes in the trajectories of autonomy claims are influenced by (1) intra-group party competition and coalition belonging, (2) differences of elite bargaining strategies and (3) by the nature of the relationship between civil society and political parties.

Both Romania and Slovakia have well-organised ethnic Hungarian parties; however, a closer examination reveals important differences between the two countries. In Romania, the different Hungarian political parties and movements have their own plan on autonomy. The issue of autonomy is organised under valence competition (Green, 2007; Székely, 2014) where the autonomy issue is not organised on a spectrum of more-or-less autonomy. Instead, every actor accepts autonomy as desirable and competition surrounds who the "true autonomist" is. In Slovakia, however, the autonomy issue as a whole does not emerge as a valence issue but rather its sub-components of cultural and educational "self-governance". Both MKP and Most-Híd want to be seen as the party which best advances cultural and educational self-governance. The fact that they both agree on the importance of cultural and educational self-governance is seen in the 2012 *Minimum Statement* as well as the 2016 *Joint Declaration on Hungarian Education*. Other dimensions of autonomy, particularly the

territorial dimension expressed through demands for administrative reform, are less of a valence issue and lie rather on a continuum. MKP differentiates itself from Most-Híd as a clearer "autonomist" party – in the territorial autonomy sense – through its 2014 autonomy plan which advances administrative reform.

One aspect both countries have in common is the constraining effect of coalition belonging on autonomy claiming. For both RMDSZ and MKP, coalition belonging means reneging on strong claims to autonomy. This is mentioned in the literature (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a) and was also mentioned unprompted in elite interviews (Farkas, 2017; Fiala-Butora, 2017a; I. Székely, 2017; Kelemen, 2018). Whilst a constraint on explicit claiming for autonomy, it can also be used as an opportunity to reach smaller achievements such as decentralisation reform or laws on minority education. One difference which emerges between Romania and Slovakia is that RMDSZ has consistently been the political party at the national level bargaining for Hungarian interests whereas in Slovakia the main ethnic political party shifted from MKP (in coalition 1998-2006) to Most-Híd in 2010 who was subsequently in coalition from 2010-2012 and 2016-2020.[89] From 2010 onwards, the more moderate party in both countries dominates the national scene.

In Slovakia, the newly formed and more moderate Most-Híd overtakes MKP in 2010, while in Romania the more moderate RMDSZ remains the main political party and is not overtaken by its more explicitly autonomist EMNP and MPP challengers. Yet, even with moderate parties in power, RMDSZ still comes up with its own territorial autonomy plan for the Szeklerland, while Most-Híd does not elaborate its own administrative reform plan to combat MKP's. Two reasons for this difference are valence competition, as mentioned above, and the other is electoral logic. For the former, in Romania where claiming "autonomy" is not as taboo as in Slovakia, every party has to show itself to be an autonomist.

[89] In the 2020 elections, neither party passed the threshold to make it into Parliament.

RMDSZ has to contend with SZNT and EMNP who have strong calls for autonomy and it is in response to this that RMDSZ comes forward with its 2014 *Autonomy Statute for Romania's Szeklerland*.

Regarding electoral logic, the Hungarian electorate is much more split in Slovakia – as seen in election turnout and voting where MKP just narrowly misses the 5% threshold – than in Romania where RMDSZ is not significantly challenged by EMNP nor MPP. Moreover, Most-Híd is an inter-ethnic party (although its own members prefer to call it a Hungarian party (Interview Ravasz, 2017) and in the literature it is considered a minority party (Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a; Székely, 2014; Nedelcu and Debardeleben, 2016). As such it has an added incentive to not claim autonomy since it also relies on Slovak votes to get into Parliament. Rather than ethnic outbidding, the Slovak case has shown ethnic underbidding (Interview I. G. Székely, 2017) whereby the political party that is less confrontational on autonomy claims is representing the Hungarian minority in Parliament. In contrast, RMDSZ is not significantly challenged by EMNP nor MPP. There is no "ethnic outbidding" but more of an equalising process when RMDSZ comes up with its own 2014 autonomy plan for the Szeklerland.

In Slovakia and Romania, a split occurs between Hungarian political elites in their bargaining strategy to claiming autonomy. The more moderate parties – RMDSZ and Most-Híd – take a strategy of "small steps" whereas those outside of national political power such as MKP and actors like SZNT and EMNP prefer a strategy of strong claiming. The argument for the politics of small steps is that given the hostility towards autonomy, small and incremental changes over the long run will provide the Hungarian minority with what they need to prosper. For example, in Romania, ex-RMDSZ member Péter Kovács (Interview, 2017) made the point that over the past 30 years much has been achieved for the Hungarian minority – especially in decentralisation and education – and that the overall trajectory is

good. On the other hand, actors with stronger autonomist stances like MKP and SZNT argue for stronger claims to autonomy to remedy the situation of the minority. To them, the "small steps" approach moves too slowly. Without autonomy, the Hungarian community is at risk. As Roundtable expert Ákos Horony puts it (Interview, 2017), "…in order for small steps to ensure that we can remain, by that point we won't be here."

In addition to this disagreement in strategy, Hungarian elites in Romania have an extra element to their "big step" bargaining which is that of symbolism. Claiming "autonomy" triggers historical references to the past of the Szeklerland and also of Transylvania. The past can be activated and can also mobilise people to demand autonomy, as seen in the 2013 Marosvásárhely rally. With such a rich history, for SZNT, one can never get tired of asking for autonomy of the Szeklerland. SZNT President Balázs Izsák (Interview, 2018) argues one cannot become fatigued of claiming autonomy and points to the example of the Scots who had to wait 300 years for their own parliament.

> *"What does it mean to be tired? After 10 years people have become tired? You cannot become tired out! People have a culture, an identity, and in this you cannot become tired. We are Szeklers."*

As discussed in Section 6.3.1 of Chapter 6, some elites such as MPP and SZNT see the tabling of the SZNT plan as a necessary symbolic act to remind the Romanians of the issue. On the other hand, RMDSZ argues that "autonomy" claiming is not the solution but rather needs to be tactically pursued. RMDSZ politician Székely argues (Interview, 2017),

> *"The simple Szekler politician drinks his coffee in the morning and looks at the Official Gazette and establishes that autonomy was not declared today, therefore he does not have to work. So the politicians as well (think) – when we have autonomy then everything will be solved, let's not look for alternative solutions to the problem because we are struggling for autonomy."*

This highlights a further distinction between the elites in Romania which is that of the modern autonomists and the historic autonomists (Section 6.4). The former – mainly comprised of RMDSZ – seek to use modern means to claim autonomy, whether this be

through further decentralisation reforms, a strategy of word-play or claiming of "autonomy" when strategic and realistic to do so (as seen in the tabling of the *Cultural Autonomy Bill* in 2017). In comparison, historic autonomists such as SZNT claim explicit autonomy, appealing to the historical Szeklerland and the natural right of self-determination of the Szekler people. Such distinctions between "modernists" and "historic" autonomists does not play out in the case of Slovakia where there is much less historical capital to draw on. Rather, in Slovakia it is primarily a distinction between a "small steps" or "big leap" approach.

Finally, the primary nexus of intra-group competition in Slovakia is between MKP and Most-Híd, two political parties. In Romania, on the other hand, the primary nexus of intra-group competition is between RMDSZ and splinter organisations such as SZNT, EMNT and smaller civil society advocacy organisations. There is less open conflict between civil society actors in Slovakia than in Romania. The main civil society organisation in Slovakia that advocates for minority issues – the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia – can be considered a more "neutral" actor than other civil society organisations in Romania like SZNT and EMNT. The Roundtable tries to encourage collaboration between MKP and Most-Híd, as seen in its 2012 *Minimum Statement* and other activities. There have been accusations that it favours MKP over Most-Híd (one of its members ran of MKP's electoral list in 2016), nevertheless on the whole it tries to maintain a neutral stance.

Moreover, the local level analyses in Chapter 8 and 9 show that civil society organisations comprise about 20% of claims to autonomy in the policy areas of education, culture and language (ECL) in both *Komáromi Lapok* and *Gömöri Hírlap* (Figure 12 p.243). They are less active in regional development, comprising 6% of claims in Komárom and 14% of claims in Rimaszombat (Figure 22 p.278). In the cases in the ECL fields, civil society complements the activities of political actors and also is able to solely lodge claims to the kin-state for particular funding opportunities (discussed below). In addition, civil society

mobilises when there are constraints at the national level, as was the case with the language laws and lack of bilingual signs. This is seen not just in Slovakia at the local level and with *Bilingual Slovakia* but also in Romania with the work of the Musai-muszáj movement (Chapter 6 Section 6.2.3).

In Romania, part of the tension between civil society and RMDSZ arguably arises from RMDSZ's initial inception as both a civil society organisation and a political one (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 117–118). As time progresses and RMDSZ serves in coalition and establishes itself as a mainstream political party from the mid-1990s, splinter organisations form to advocate more radical autonomy claims like SZNT and EMNT who believe RMDSZ reneged on its commitment to autonomy. Meanwhile, because of RMDSZ's close connections to civil society which function through patronage networks (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, p. 117), some civil society organisations like CEMO and AGFI form to be completely independent of the political scene. They aim to keep political parties accountable, as well as the state, in the implementation of minority provisions. This logic feeds into CEMO and AGFI's strategy of lawsuits and shadow-reporting to international organisations. However, with RMDSZ also submitting shadow reports, there can occasionally be conflicts between the organisations. Previous RMDSZ managing director Péter Kovács (Interview, 2017) recounts the case when CEMO recommended that RMDSZ not make public its shadow report because it would give the Romanians an opportunity to start to formulate its response. RMDSZ, however, did not take the advice. CEMO then publicly argued that RMDSZ should not be submitting shadow reports in the first place.

The characteristics of intra-group competition, therefore, vary in Slovakia and Romania. One important difference is in the nature of civil society-political party relations, with it being more strained in Romania. In both countries there is a divide between those who argue for a strategy of "small steps" in autonomy claim-making (RMDSZ, Most-Híd)

whilst others argue that strong claims and big changes are needed (SZNT, MKP). At the same time, autonomy claiming occurs through valence competition in Romania, where all actors need to show they are the "true autonomists" and is the main reason behind RMDSZ's 2014 *Autonomy Statute of the Szeklerland*. In Slovakia valence competition only occurs in the sub-areas of educational and cultural self-governance. In the field of administrative reform, MKP places a stronger claim than Most-Híd.

10.3 Arenas for Claiming: The Domestic, Kin-State and European Arenas

One contribution of this thesis is to think differently about the role actors – such as the kin-state and European institutions – have on autonomy claim-making. Traditionally in the ethnic conflict literature, their influence has been studied as the "triadic nexus" (Brubaker, 2006) or "quadratic nexus" (Smith, 2002). These models, however, focus on the behaviour and influence of these actors in the domestic arena of "nationalising states" (Brubaker, 2006). However, their influence is not limited to the domestic arena. These actors themselves serve as arenas where actors can lodge claims. This is elaborated in Csergő and Regelmann (2017) and Waterbury (2017) who argue that the European level is an arena to which minority actors mobilise to lodge different claims. Extending this logic, there can be complex reality of autonomy claim-making where claims are lodged to the domestic arena, kin-state arena and European arena (see Figure 1 p.21 in Chapter 2). As best epitomised by my interview with local RMDSZ mayor Áprád Antal (Interview, 2018),

> *"I always say that I want to solve my problems in Bucharest. If in Bucharest they reject me, then no one should expect me to abandon my needs, obviously the first thing I will do is go to the kin-state, go to Brussels, go to Washington…to discuss my needs and ask for help."*

10.3.1 The Domestic Arena

The section above discussed the dynamics between actors who mainly compete with each other in the domestic arena. This arena – more specifically the Slovak national arena and the Romanian national arena – is the main arena for claim-making by ethnic Hungarian minority elites. This is not surprising, given that fundamentally the national level is where key decisions are made linked to the life of the minority. Autonomy plans are drawn up targeting the national level by actors across the political spectrum. However, these plans are more prominent and numerous in Romania than in Slovakia, partly due to Romania's valence competition as explained above and also a stronger historical legacy of autonomy to draw upon. Explicit "autonomy" claiming is the case in Romania, alongside other terms such as "decentralisation" and "regionalisation", whilst in Slovakia the claims are made in terms of "self-governance".

Through a "creative policy game", elites have targeted policy area reforms at the national level to push forward *de facto* autonomy. This is a strategy common amongst political actors in Slovakia and also taken forward by RMDSZ in Romania. Both countries have used this "creative policy game" method of claiming autonomy at the national level and have attempted to further reforms in areas such as administration, education and culture. However, in the case of Romania, pursuing policy reforms by RMDSZ occurs in parallel to their explicit plans for autonomy. Their autonomy plans are claimed less frequently in Parliament than smaller actors' plans such as SZNT's Csapó Plan (2003) which was claimed three times until 2018. Smaller actors like SZNT are not focusing on policy reforms but rather on explicit claims to autonomy. In comparison, in Slovakia explicit plans for "autonomy" do not exist given the strong negative historical connotation of the term "autonomy". Policy reforms are pursued at the national level in culture, education and administrative reform through the terminology of "self-governance". The focus on regional

development also surfaces in the mid-late 2000s by MKP and forms the basis behind their 2014 *Baross Gábor Plan*.

The local perspective arguably fits into the politics of "small steps" approach, where different elites – economic elites such as Pons Danubii, civil society elites like the Roundtable representatives, and others – make claims across a range of autonomy-related policy areas. The national level is frequently claimed to, but not exclusively, with different actors making usage of local, kin-state and European arenas as well. What also unfolds is that in the policy area of regional development, claims are made by not just clearly identifiable ethnic Hungarian elites but also by elites acting in a civic capacity – such as local government representatives (often Slovak) and mayors. In this sense, the ethnic Hungarian minorities also have *allies* (Waterbury, 2017) with whom they can collaborate for better regional development measures which benefit not just the Hungarian minorities but the general population as a whole.

Autonomy claim-making by Hungarian minority elites can also be influenced by the kin-state and European institutions who can exert pressure in the domestic arena. The kin-state's influence in the domestic arena depends on the Hungarian minority actors involved. The Fidesz government in Hungary has generally supported the autonomist factions within Slovakia (MKP over Most-Híd) and EMNP and SZNT over RMDSZ in Romania, or the radical factions within RMDSZ prior to the emergence of EMNP and MPP. In Slovakia, Fidesz does not recognise Most-Híd as a legitimate representative of the ethnic Hungarian minority. The effect on the Hungarian minority communities – at least politically – in Romania and Slovakia has not been positive. Schöpflin (2015) argues the policy has not had much success since the titular majority still views the Hungarian minority with suspicion. Moreover, it leads to a "double minority" trap where the Hungarian minority is not just viewed as inferior from the titular majority but also from Budapest. However, Hungarian

minority voters have gone for the less radical parties with Most-Híd and RMDSZ winning on the national level (Kulcsár and Bradatan, 2007; Pogonyi, 2017). After realising that it cannot contend with RMDSZ's consistent support by voters, Fidesz shifts its policy in 2014 to cooperating with RMDSZ (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 131–133).

The clear support of the Hungarian government to the Hungarian minority actors affects their negotiating power on the domestic level. Looking to the kin-state for support weakens the leverage that the Hungarian minority has in its own domestic sphere of bargaining (Pogonyi, 2017, pp. 251–252). Minority actors are seen as potentially taking directions from Budapest. If one adds the dual citizenship opportunity which Fidesz passes in 2011 (Chapter 7 Section 7.3.2) and the high rates of acquisition in Translyvania (dual citizenship was banned in Slovakia), one can also see how the titular majority may start to question the loyalty of the ethnic Hungarians living in the country. This, arguably, undermines the negotiating power RMDSZ has at the national level.

Kin-state support not only undermines the Hungarian minority actors' negotiating power with the titular majority, but can also increase ethnic stratification and competition within its own community (Waterbury, 2017). This played itself out with Fidesz' support for the autonomist faction with RMDSZ in Romania in the early 2000s and in its support for MKP in Slovakia over Most-Híd. It is also seen in the divisive responses to dual citizenship by ethnic minority parties in Romania and Slovakia (Kulcsár and Bradatan, 2007; Pogonyi, 2017; Waterbury, 2017).

Ethnic stratification within the Hungarian minority community also occurs after RMDSZ hesitantly embraces the support of the kin-state after 2014. The acceptance of support is partly due to the rise of Romania's anti-corruption agency DNA which makes domestic funding harder for RMDSZ to disperse. However, the complex and decentralised network of kin-state funding mechanisms to civil society organisations also undermines

RMDSZ's privileged relationship with different civil society organisations (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 113–126). With approximately 30 kin-state institutional channels for funding, the loyalty of civil society organisations is reoriented towards the kin-state. This challenges the dominant position of RMDSZ in its relationship with civil society organisations, which has been strong due to its earlier history as both as a civil society organisation and political institution (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 134–135).

Regarding the role of European actors in the domestic arena, European institutions are more influential in the pre-accession period, as accounted for elsewhere in the literature (see, for example, Vachudova, 2005). Institutions such as the OSCE, Council of Europe and European Union wanted to be sure that the minority question was being addressed before the countries entered the Western institutions. During the period of analysis (post-accession to 2018), however, the lack of influence from European institutions was one surprising finding from the study (Sections 6.3.3 and 7.3.3 in Chapters 6 and 7, respectively). The role of the EU as well as the Council of Europe is weak since actions by Romania or Slovakia – whether that be lack of implementation or unfavourable minority legislation – do not have significant consequences. The argument by different elites interviewed across the political spectrum was that these European actors were not helping the minority. Some elites interviewed (Interviews Antal, 2018; Biró, 2018) argue that since there is little risk of ethnic violence, the autonomy issue does not garner the attention from European institutions.

An important difference emerges between the two countries in the role of an additional external actor in the domestic arena – that of the United States. Romania's geostrategic location – in contrast to Slovakia – is one of significance: bordering the former Yugoslavia, fears of unrest during the Yugoslav crisis makes the ethnic question significant from the eyes of the Americans. This plays into the Neptun I meeting in 1993 (Section 6.2.1.2). More than a decade later, with the conflict in Ukraine, the annexation of Crimea

and Romania's prime location along the Black Sea, the ethnic question resurfaces. Out of interests of security, the Neptun II negotiations are called and chaired. However, interest wanes and RMDSZ elites argue that with the lack of geopolitical interest by the United States in the minority issue, there is less pressure on Romania to provide for its minorities (Interviews with Antal, 2018; Kelemen, 2018; Kovács, 2017).

The domestic arena, therefore, is the primary arena where claims to autonomy are lodged by different Hungarian minority elite actors. Minority actors can explicitly claim autonomy (particularly in Romania) and can also operate through a "creative policy game" tactic of claiming by focusing on policy reforms. Claims in the domestic arena are further impacted by the influence of external actors such as the kin-state or European institutions, or in the case of Romania, also of the United States. However, the role of the kin-state on influencing autonomy claims is arguably one which undermines the negotiating power of Hungarian actors such as RMDSZ in the domestic arena as it can be seen as less independent and loyal. European institutions are found to have weak domestic impact on claims.

10.3.2 The Kin-State Arena

The kin-state can act as an arena to which different Hungarian minority actors make claims for support of autonomy measures. Minority elites can claim support in the rhetorical sense or in the financial sense. The analysis of the previous chapters has shown the extent to which the kin-state acts as a financial enabler in the claiming of autonomy. This financial enabling occurs particularly with the arrival of the Fidesz government in 2010 onwards. Providing a platform for financial support is one of its strategies for helping its neighbouring Hungarian minorities.

The Fidesz government develops a strategy for its kin abroad: *Policy for Hungarian Communities Abroad: Strategic Framework for Hungarian Communities Abroad* (2011) along with an *Action Plan* (2013). The *Strategy* recognises that autonomy – whether

territorial or cultural – has been difficult to implement in neighbouring countries. It further argues that political and institutional requirements for the Hungarian communities to prosper has not been achieved. Outlining various difficulties such as population decline, assimilation and the lack of favourable administrative units and territorial autonomy, the document puts forward the objective of creating prosperous Hungarian communities. This is done primarily through establishing institutions for Hungarians abroad so that Hungarians can become self-sufficient. The document supports territorial and personal autonomy – as defined and agreed by the Hungarian communities abroad – as well as regionalism and local governance (2011, pp. 7–17). In essence, in the long-term the document desires autonomy but in the short-term this can be achieved through society-building and supporting institutions (Kántor, 2014b, p. 25).

There are different offices and programmes which provide funding to the kin communities. Aid policy for Hungarians abroad includes the *Bethlen Gábor Fund* (which was preceded by the *Szülőföld Alap*, or Motherland Fund). This includes a project for educational aid *Szülőföldön Magyarul* (Using Hungarian in the Motherland) to help Hungarian children study in their mother tongue (Kántor, 2014b, pp. 29–31). Other projects exist, many of which focus on educational and cultural institutions. Funding cannot be given to political parties as such, but is given to different organisations – such as educational institutions or churches – which may or may not have connections to political parties. Such funding is important for Hungarian minorities, and elite interviews confirmed the importance of kin-state funding. For example, in Slovakia the Hungarian minority still relies on the help of the kin-state for the upkeep of its institutions (Interviews Farkas, 2017; Horony, 2017).

Funding given to ethnic kin has significantly increased since 2014 as the Fidesz government moved from its unsuccessful policy of ethnic outbidding (where it hoped EMNP

and MPP could dominate over RMDSZ and MKP over Most-Híd, see Chapter 6 Section 6.3.2) to material outbidding (Kiss, Toró and Székely, 2018, pp. 133–135). Subsidies are decentralised and difficult to trace since the organisational structure is complex within the different Hungarian bodies. That said, work done by Zoltán Sipos (2017a) and Barna Bányai (2019) on funding from kin-state bodies traces the different funding provided to ethnic kin in the region. Sipos' work spans 2010-2015 and shows how over time, the Ministry of Justice's funding decreased as percentage of the total as funding from other bodies such as the *Bethlen Gábor Fund* increased. Different institutions give funding over the years such as the National Cultural Fund, Ministry of the Interior, Prime Minister's Office and the Human Resources Ministry, and others (Sipos, 2017a). By 2017, the *Bethlen Gábor Fund* provides 61% of the total funding of $453.5 million, followed far behind by the Foreign Ministry at 16% of total funding (Bányai, 2019, pp. 32, 43).

This funding dimension of the usage of the kin-state as an arena appears most clearly in the local-level chapters on autonomy claiming in Slovakia. Hungary has different funding plans available such as the *Bethlen Gábor Fund*, to which minority institutions and civil society organisations can apply. Through this funding mechanism – as well as others –actors receive funding for their own activities in the field of culture and education. When looking at claims lodged to the kin-state for education, culture and language (Figure 13 p.244) by local level actors only, the kin-state arena is the second-most common arena for education claims comprising 26% of claims (but only 4% of claims to culture and none in language) in Komárom. The kin-state received the second-highest proportion of claims in culture in Rimaszombat at 19% of claims lodged (with no claims lodged in education nor language). Therefore, it can be a significant actor. However, when one zooms out to examine all actors (including regional and national-level actors) making claims, the kin-state attracts only 9% and 8% of total claims in Rimaszombat and Komárom, respectively. This is relatively on

par with claims lodged to the European Union and Slovak local levels. It is important to note that financial support is applied to primarily by civil society organisations, not political parties.

Consequently, with Fidesz in power during most of the post-EU accession period, the kin-state offers its rhetorical support for autonomy as well as financial support. The kin-state serves as an arena to apply to for funding, particularly in the fields of education and culture for civil society organisations. At the same time, by serving as an alternative arena for claiming, there are arguably knock-on effects which can undermine the bargaining position of Hungarian minority elite actors in the domestic arena and can divide the Hungarian political elites.

10.3.3 The European Arena

The third arena where autonomy claims are lodged by Hungarian minority elites is the European arena. These claims target both the European Union as well as the Council of Europe. The EU is not significant in terms of being a normative or legal arena to promote autonomy, which is not surprising since it does not have strong competencies to do so. The European Union has weak provisions in place to support minority autonomy and is therefore a weak arena to appeal to for support. However, through the Minority SafePack Initiative, there are calls for the EU to have better provisions in place for its historical minorities. This is spearheaded by the activity of FUEN (Federal Union of European Nationalities), headed by RMDSZ member Loránt Vincze. The initiative garners over 1 million signatures and will be considered by the European Commission. These claims are made by ethnic minorities to strengthen the role of the EU so that it can eventually exert pressure in the Slovak and Romanian domestic arenas (Chapter 6 Section 6.3.3.2).

Regarding the Council of Europe, it is targeted mainly by Hungarian civil society activists in Romania – such as CEMO and AGFI – who write shadow reports linked to the

European conventions of the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (FCNM) and the *European Charter on Regional or Minority Languages* (ECRML). RMDSZ also puts in shadow reports, but arguably it does not take up such a large focus of its activities compared to the domestic arena. The Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia also puts in shadow reports to the Council of Europe for the *FCNM* in 2014 and the *ECRML* in 2019 (Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia, 2019).

The local level chapters on Slovakia also highlight the role of the European Union as an arena to be applied to for financial support to advance autonomy claims. In this sense, the EU acts as a financial enabler. Different elite actors – whether it be economic elites such as Pons Danubii or local governments – apply to the EU for funding to attain their goals. This includes areas such as cultural renovations and is especially the case in claims for regional development. For some of these claims, moreover, particularly the cross-border claims for regional development and cultural projects, the claims are jointly made between the kin-state actors and local actors in Slovakia to better exploit EU financial opportunities. Given Komárom's favourable location along the Slovak-Hungarian border, it is not surprising that 31% of its claims by local level actors for regional development are lodged to the European Union compared to only 14% of those in Rimaszombat (Figure 23 p.279). The EU is less active in ECL areas than in regional development, but still garners 12% of total claims to ECL areas in Komárom and 9% in Rimaszombat (Figure 11 p.241). A breakdown by policy area shows that a large proportion of education-related claims by local level actors are made to the European Union, with 32% in Komárom and 35% in Rimaszombat. Most of these claims are for school building renovations (Figure 13 p.244).

Through these financial provisions, the EU provides the minority community with opportunities and new institutional structures of cooperation to pursue greater control over its future, which feeds into the minority elites' tactics of advancing regional development

and ECL policies as an alternative way to achieve *de facto* autonomy. This – as well as the abovementioned shadow reports and Minority SafePack Initiative – tie back to what Csergő & Regelmann (2017) argue that elite minority actors find new ways to use Europeanisation opportunity structures to further their claims.

The above discussion of different arenas of bargaining provides additional insights to the literature on claim-making and the traditional "triadic nexus" (Brubaker, 1996) and "quadratic nexus" (Smith, 2002). Whilst the primary arena of bargaining is the domestic level – usually the national but also the local – the kin-state and European institutions also serve as arenas of claiming for autonomy. Civil society in Slovakia are significant actors in their claims lodged to the kin-state arena, particularly in the fields of culture and education. Smaller players, like civil society activists CEMO and AGFI in Romania, also appeal to the European arenas through their shadow reporting. There is a broader collaboration between actors in claiming to the European Union through the Minority SafePack.

My research also finds there is a division between actors and their preferred bargaining arenas. For the political parties in power – namely RMDSZ and Most-Híd – the domestic arena is their main focus. Other additional arenas such as the kin-state and the European are secondary and not the main focus of their efforts. Smaller actors who either prefer a strategy of strong direct claiming of autonomy – such as SZNT – or of a strategy of "big steps" like MKP – split their efforts among different arenas. This may be because they do not have such easy access to the domestic arena as those Hungarian actors in Parliament. The smaller actors, therefore, have a more diversified claiming strategy. This diversified strategy is also seen in actors on the local level in Slovakia, moreover, who take advantage of the different arenas to push forward their claims.

10.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored the factors behind the different trajectory of autonomy claims in Romania and Slovakia. I demonstrated how the dynamics of each country's claiming trajectory is partly accounted for by the different starting parameters which are more enabling in the case of Romania and more constraining in Slovakia. Moreover, the nature of intra-group competition varies. RMDSZ neutralises the pro-autonomist challengers by adopting an autonomy plan for the Szeklerland. The primary nexus of competition is between civil society and RMDSZ. In Slovakia, the major civil society organisation – the Roundtable of Hungarians in Slovakia – is more of a neutral organisation. The primary nexus is competition between Most-Híd and MKP but where Most-Híd does not adopt an automonist stance. When examining the different claiming arenas, the domestic arena remains the key bargaining arena for autonomy claims in both countries. However, the local level analysis in Slovakia shows how civil society actors and economic elites in particular lodge claims for autonomy through financial claims to both the kin-state and European Union. In Romania, smaller civil society organisations have one of their main activities appealing to the European arenas to better support autonomy claims.

With these factors taken into consideration, the factor of primary importance is the constraining or enabling role of historical legacies linked to autonomy which then shapes the playing field and strategies of elite actors. It shapes the "word-play" tactic as well as the ability to mobilise and garner support for autonomy. Arguably because of previous experiences with "autonomy", the word resonates more in Romania and acts as a mobilising force. Intra-group competition then further adds to the different trajectory of autonomy claiming by influencing the bargaining strategies of elites. Elites are divided between preferring strong claims or a strategy of small steps. These dynamics then shape the way that autonomy claims are lodged and the choice of arenas to target. Those without access to

the domestic bargaining arena generally prefer strong and explicit claims to autonomy and pursue a diversified claiming strategy to different political arenas. Those actors with direct access to national level politics focus more on the domestic arena and pursue a small steps approach, using the alternative arenas as a secondary strategy.

The lack of unity within the Hungarian political sphere in both countries fundamentally highlights the confusion around what the overall purpose of claiming autonomy is,

> *"It is not even sure that we need to yell these slogans in Hungarian. Who do we want autonomy from, ourselves? Are we yelling for ourselves or to the Romanians? Who are we yelling to? Do we want to yell or do we want to make ourselves understood? If we had real claims to autonomy…then we would try to create dialogue with the Romanian people and within Romanian society"* (Interview Portik, 2018).

It seems, rather, that the "creative policy game" and modernist tactics have more traction in achieving *de facto* autonomy than the possibility of the passage of an autonomy plan. This is the case in the chapter on regional development where there is inter-ethnic collaboration to further claims for regional development to benefit not just the Hungarians but the Slovak and Roma populations as well. It is therefore not just the explicit claiming of autonomy that matters, but also how it is claimed creatively and strategically and in dialogue with the titular majority. This further demonstrates the normalised dynamics of autonomy claiming which form part of a moderate spectrum of claims.

11 Conclusion

> *"…strong decentralisation and strong language rights or law, as in the Welsh sense, is it equal to autonomy or not?"* (Interview Toró, 2017)

This thesis started with the overarching question "What accounts for the different trajectories of "autonomy" claim-making by Hungarian minority elites in Romania and Slovakia since EU accession?" This question was then broken down into two sub-components: (a) How have autonomy claims by the Hungarian minority elites evolved over time since EU accession? (b) How have elites claimed autonomy in response to different opportunities and constraints faced at the local, national and international levels?

The combined usage of discourse and content analysis to examine claim-making through elite interviews, political party documents and newspaper archives (mostly in Hungarian) demonstrated the rather complex and nuanced picture of autonomy claim-making that has not been adequately unpacked in the scholarly literature neither empirically nor conceptually. Conceptually speaking, elites in this study do not have clear-cut consistent definitions of autonomy, nor do they differentiate clearly between autonomy and other institutional solutions such as decentralisation or self-government. The terms are used interchangeably either out of their own confusion or for strategic claiming purposes. This ties into the empirical findings which highlight how autonomy claim-making is best understood as a creative policy game where the explicit claiming of "autonomy" is not the only claim-making game in town. Rather, autonomy claim-making can occur through a "word-play" where other terms such as decentralisation and self-governance are seen as equivalent to claiming autonomy. Moreover, elites also pursue reforms across different policy areas linked to autonomy such as regional development, education and culture as ways through which the minority can gain more control over its own affairs. After all, "autonomy is institutions" (Interview Ravasz, 2017) and the ability to "make various

decisions for the community as a whole" (Interview Tokár, 2017). Good policy provisions in the above areas are also seen as providing autonomy.

I will underline here the main findings – conceptual and empirical – from the research project and highlight how they contribute to the academic study of autonomy. I then suggest potential paths for future research.

11.1 Conceptual Findings and Contributions: What is Autonomy?

One central argument of this thesis is that "autonomy" as understood by political elites is a more flexible concept than theorised in the scholarly literature. Moreover, the understanding and usage of the term is historically embedded and context-dependent. Therefore, this thesis highlights the disconnect between the way autonomy is studied in the literature and the way ethnic minority elites think about the term.

In Chapter 2's literature review Section 2.1, I highlighted the two key dimensions along which scholars conceptualise autonomy: territorial autonomy and non-territorial (or cultural) autonomy. Moreover, these concepts are distinct from other terms such as decentralisation, self-governance and federalism. Scholars may disagree on exactly how these latter concepts relate to autonomy, but there is consensus that the terms signify something different to each other. A second important aspect about the study of autonomy is how *claims* to autonomy have been studied empirically in the literature (Section 2.3). The typical subdivision between territorial and cultural autonomy is used (Jenne, 2007; Bochsler and Szöcsik, 2013a) and "autonomy" is seen as along a spectrum of claims with more modest claims such as affirmative action to strong claims of secession. The primary concern is over the escalation of claims to ethnic violence.

Through my interviews with elites and examination of policy documents, "autonomy" is claimed interchangeably with other terms such as "decentralisation", "regionalisation" and "self-governance". In the literature, however, these are different concepts and fall

differently along the spectrum of claims. In the literature, if one elite claims "decentralisation" this is conceptually different and empirically is seen as less radical than "territorial autonomy". Yet, my research has shown that for many elites, the terms are interchangeable and they may mean the same thing. The shift in discourse is often tactical rather than semantic. For example, in the case of Slovakia, "autonomy" brings with it a negative historical connotation of independence and therefore Hungarian minority elites substitute "self-governance" for "autonomy." This is important because in some studies – like the Minorities at Risk dataset – newspaper articles are mainly in English and can overlook the tactical "word-play" strategy that elites use to claim "autonomy."

In addition, one cannot assume that elites have the same understanding of what autonomy and its different sub-components mean (Chapter 5 Sections 5.1.1 and 5.2.1). For example, two Most-Híd representatives disagreed on whether or not the 2017 *Cultural Fund Act* was an example of cultural autonomy, and two other politicians in Slovakia disagreed over the relationship between educational autonomy and cultural autonomy. Comparing countries, territorial autonomy in Romania was argued along non-ethnic lines in elite interviews (Interviews Antal, 2018; Biró, 2018; Kelemen, 2018; Tőke, 2018) while those elites who mentioned it in Slovakia mentioned the ethnic, asymmetric element (Interviews Duray, 2017; Horony, 2017). Moreover, educational autonomy and cultural autonomy are distinctions used in the Slovak context, but the distinction between the two is not found in the Romanian context. There, Hungarian elites spoke mainly about territorial and cultural autonomy, with some confusion between cultural autonomy and personal autonomy. These differences arise arguably because the different conceptualisations in the 1990s in Romania were spearheaded by intellectuals who had to incorporate the different population concentrations in Romania which demanded different autonomy responses. In Slovakia, however, early on in 1994 there was already a difference between educational and cultural

autonomy (Magyar Kereszténydemokrata Mozgalom, 2005) which has travelled on into the post-accession era.

The implications of this is that one cannot assume that two elites claiming "autonomy" or "cultural autonomy" mean the same thing. This impacts the empirical study of autonomy claims and questions the validity of some cross-country large-N comparative research. It can also tie into the literature which has emerged over the past five years (Salat, Szekely and Osipov, 2014; Malloy, 2015a; Malloy, Osipov and Vizi, 2015) on cultural and non-territorial autonomy and examine the differences in understanding by elites of the sub-components of NTA arrangements. As my research demonstrates, in Slovakia the sub-components of autonomy are cultural autonomy, educational autonomy and linguistic rights whereas in Romania the usage of cultural autonomy more clearly maps onto the scholarly literature's conceptualisation.

By repackaging the actual content of autonomy to include the claiming of other terms such as decentralisation and self-governance, minority elite actors are engaging in a sort of conceptual stretching (Sartori, 1970). Autonomy is stretched to include a range of terminology and loses its particular meaning. In the reverse sense, some claims of RMDSZ – and at times MKP and Most-Híd – can conceptually fall under a sub-type of autonomy: functional autonomy. The pursuit of reforms in policy areas linked to autonomy ties into the idea of "functional autonomy" as thought of by Tkacik (2008) and discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.1.4. By promoting decentralisation of certain functional subjects such as education, Hungarian minority elite actors are in fact in possession of functional autonomy. At the same time, claiming "functional autonomy" would arguably be less of a rallying slogan than the easy-to-understand "autonomy". These findings have implications for the study of autonomy in both the comparative institutions and conflict studies literature with

the need for a more elaborate examination of the meaning and preferences behind elite claims.

11.2 Empirical Findings: Autonomy Claim-Making as a Creative Policy Game

The primary goal of this thesis was to examine the *claims* to autonomy of Hungarian minority elites, tracing them back to the actors making the claims and examining how these claims are made and change over time. The goal was to form case-specific insights rather generalisations to travel to other cases. I conducted over 30 elite interviews, analysed policy documents and party strategies, and conducted in-depth analysis of local level newspaper archives of two small towns in Slovakia. The initial observation that the "autonomy" claiming trajectory is different between Romania and Slovakia – whereby Romania had more claims to territorial autonomy and Slovakia hardly had any autonomy claims – led to a discovery of *how* autonomy claim-making is actually pursued, the usage of different political arenas and how claims differ between the two countries.

What emerges from the analysis is that autonomy claiming does not only occur through explicitly demanding "autonomy". Instead, it more often occurs through what I've called a "creative policy game". This encompasses a "word-play" tactic as well as a focus on policy area reforms as a means to claim "autonomy". Claiming autonomy therefore ensues within the context of normalised domestic politics, over issues such as regional development, education and language. Moreover, these claims are made not just to the national level, but can also be lodged to the kin-state and European arenas as well as to the local.

This framework enables me to account for the autonomy claiming trajectories in Romania and Slovakia. In Romania, "autonomy" claiming does occur explicitly – mainly through the tabling of the SZNT-favoured *Autonomy Statute for the Szeklerland* in 2004,

2005 and 2018 as well as the *Cultural Autonomy Bill* of RMDSZ in 2017. Elite actors also interchange their autonomy claims with other terms such as "decentralisation" and "regionalisation", but try to stay away from "self-determination" and "self-governance" for translation and historic reasons (Chapter 5 Section 5.1.3). Their word-play tactics have more room to manoeuvre, given Transylvania's and the Szeklerland's own experience with autonomy and the fact that "autonomy" is not as explosive a term in Romania than in Slovakia.

The autonomy issue in Romania is one which operates within a context of valence competition (Green, 2007; Székely, 2014) whereby the issue is not ordered along continuum of more or less autonomy because voters agree that autonomy is needed. Instead, elite actors need to show they are the "true" autonomists. It is in response to this that RMDSZ comes out in 2014 with its own territorial autonomy plan for the Szeklerland. With valence competition, all political players have their own autonomy plan, with variation in the details of each. This is in contrast to Slovakia where not all actors have a plan for autonomy.

At the same time, the *strategy* to claim autonomy is very different between Hungarian actors in Romania and accounts for the variation in claiming. The SZNT *Autonomy Statute for the Szeklerland* is tabled in Parliament out of symbolic importance rather than strategic bargaining. The latter is the logic behind RMDSZ's tabling of the *Cultural Autonomy Bill*. RMDSZ prefers a strategy of small steps and policy area reforms as a means to claim and to achieve autonomy, whereas for smaller actors like SZNT it is strong claims which are seen as necessary. There is a general divide between "modern" autonomists like RMDSZ who want to use tools such as regional reform and "historical" autonomists like SZNT who refer back to the natural right of the Szekler people to autonomy and the historical basis of the Szeklerland.

By post-accession, key policy reforms are in place to give more control over the minority's own issues (arguably *de facto* autonomy); however, there are issues of implementation. Civil society organisations form to ensure implementation and use strategies of litigation and shadow reporting, such as CEMO and AGFI. These strategies facilitate the claiming of autonomy by demonstrating the need for it through the lack of implementation (Interview Toró, 2017). In addition, with the advance of explicit "autonomy" stymied at the national level, SZNT uses a strategy of mass mobilisation to claim autonomy which, although mobilising people, also does not achieve results and peters out by the time of writing. Smaller elite actors use a strategy of diversified claiming to different arenas – the domestic and European and to some extent the kin-state[90] – whereas RMDSZ focuses primarily on the domestic arena where it has access to Parliament. It uses the kin-state and European arenas as secondary venues.

In comparison, autonomy-claiming in Slovakia transpires quite differently than in Romania. The word-play tactic is very clear across different elite actors where "autonomy" is not claimed but "self-governance" is. This is largely due to the negative historical legacy of the Slovak struggle for independence which equated claiming "autonomy" to eventual independence. Therefore, there are no demands explicitly to autonomy – with the exception of János Bósza who is dismissed as an eccentric – and the debate occurs using self-governance. Claiming self-governance occurs mainly through the creative policy game's focus on policy area reforms in the fields of education, culture, language and regional development. The latter comes to the focus in the late 2000's with MKP highlighting the issue, drawing on the example of South Tyrol which flourished economically after it was granted autonomy.

[90] The kin-state arena in Romania would arguably be claimed to by local civil society organisations since this is where kin-state funding goes to as the Chapter 10 Section 10.3.2 illustrated. However, I did not study the local level in Romania in depth to make a firm statement in this regard.

The main axis of intra-group competition is across parties in Slovakia whereas in Romania it is between civil society and RMDSZ. Within the sub-fields of autonomy, in Slovakia there is convergence over the course of the post-accession period where Most-Híd, MKP and the Roundtable claim educational self-governance and cultural self-governance. MKP – no longer in Parliament and needing to differentiate itself from Most-Híd – issues its own autonomy plan in 2014 which calls on administrative reform and minority self-governments. The plan, however, does not have a chance of being lodged in Parliament since MKP does not have any seats. This strong claim – relatively speaking – is seen as necessary from MKP's perspective who prefers a strategy of strong claiming compared to Most-Híd's strategy of small steps. Even so, progress on the national level in terms of policy area reforms is slow even with Most-Híd in coalition from 2010-2012 and 2016-2020. The difficulties are seen in the controversial 2015 Amendment to the *Education Law* and the debated 2017 *Cultural Fund Law*.

It is in this sense that the examination of the "bottom-up" perspective of the local level highlights a creative claiming strategy. A range of actors lodge claims across the different policy areas of education, culture, language and regional development to claim autonomy. This is done, moreover, using a range of political arenas. When the national level is blocked or restraining – such as with the 2009 amendment to the *Slovak Language Law* or the lack of investment in road infrastructure – local level actors mobilise and lodge claims. With difficulties accessing funding at the national level for education and culture, actors lodge claims to the kin-state and European arenas. They also take advantage of European funding structures – particularly Pons Danubii and Dunamente TDM – to encourage regional development. This shows the creativity of claiming and the usage of a range of arenas which can be used to claim autonomy.

Finally, to account for the reasons in the different autonomy claiming trajectories, in Chapter 10, I argued how key starting parameters – in particular historical legacies linked to autonomy – play a key role in widening or limiting the playing field of Hungarian minority elite actors. Intra-group competition also plays itself out differently in the two countries. In Romania, RMDSZ competes most with civil society splinter organisations and also adopts a territorial autonomy plan. In Slovakia, competition between Most-Híd and MKP does not result in valence competition for claims for administrative revisions (the Slovak version of *de facto* territorial autonomy). Finally, I analysed the different usage of bargaining arenas to demonstrate how major Hungarian minority actors focus on the domestic level whilst smaller actors and those outside of power target a range of arenas for their autonomy claims.

11.3 Methodological and Empirical Contributions

The methodological approach taken – combining qualitative content analysis (QCA) into a discourse analytic framework which takes into account power relations and the importance of context – can be extended to other cases as well. Conducting elite interviews especially (ideally in the native language of the elite) allows the researcher to gain insights into the discourse used and the elite-specific understanding of autonomy. The other novelty of this study was the collection and analysis of local newspaper archives to highlight the "bottom-up" perspective of claiming. The hybrid inductive-deductive method of arriving at a coding frame for QCA means that the researcher is flexible with the incorporation of perhaps other policy areas which are used to claim autonomy, specific to the country and town. This could have been the case within the "environment" category. In the Slovak case it did not show a connection to autonomy, but in other cases it may (for example, protecting forests or natural resources which the minority sees as necessary and tied to its own self-governance). Therefore, the different data sources and the method of analysis can be easily

extended to other minority groups claiming autonomy to gain the context-specific understanding of trajectories of claiming.

The key empirical contributions of this thesis are several. They include (1) highlighting how a range of elite actors are involved in claiming autonomy rather than only the leaders of political parties; (2) the importance of incorporating historical legacies and path dependency of autonomy claims; (3) incorporating the local perspective to the analysis; (4) uncovering that some claims to autonomy are not along the ethnic dimension; (5) unpacking how claims to cultural autonomy and territorial autonomy can compete with each other; (6) demonstrating how different political arenas can be used by a range of actors to lodge claims to autonomy; (7) extending the claims to autonomy well into the EU post-accession period; (8) establishing that claims to autonomy are part of normalised domestic politics and de-securitising the discussion; and finally, (9) encourages further reflection on the relationship between prescriptive and explanatory approaches to autonomy.

First, by tracing the *claims* to autonomy, I incorporated a range of understudied elite actors into the analysis of claims. Studies like Jenne (2007), and Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013a) and Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013b) focus on political parties and their leaders. I broadened the spectrum of analysis to see how other elites – political elites on the margins for example, or political elites at the local level, civil society activists or economic elites like Pons Danubii in Slovakia – lodge claims to autonomy. Adding these actors to the picture of autonomy claim-making provides a fuller picture of how autonomy claiming happens in practice.

Second, the in-depth case studies in the Hungarian language provide a rich contextualisation of the history of autonomy in both countries, the nuances of the term and how the "word-play" dynamic unfolds. Incorporating the role of the different historical legacies behind the term "autonomy" is a foundational parameter in influencing the way

autonomy is claimed. It is either "historical dynamite" in Slovakia and has to be substituted for "self-governance" or it is merely a "dirty word" from the perspective of the titular Romanians. In the case of the latter, "autonomy" can be used – and indeed has the power to mobilise – but it is also interchanged with others. In addition, the contextual analysis highlights the path dependent nature of autonomy claims whereby the early 1990s had given certain constraints to how the autonomy claims would unfold. This is seen in the recycling of autonomy plans in Romania throughout the post-EU accession period and the continuity of using the "self-governance" term in Slovakia following the 1994 Komárom meeting. Therefore, other autonomy movements outside of these cases will have their own unique history and set of legacies which can be activated to enable or constrain the strategies of autonomy claiming.

A third contribution is the incorporation of a "bottom up" local perspective to autonomy claim-making. The local level is not often analysed in the conflict studies literature with only recent studies incorporating the local perspective (Deets, 2019; Stroschein, 2019). Local analysis is often included in the multi-level governance literature, but the debate is framed in terms of how EU policy reforms impact different levels of government. As Chapters 8 and 9 showed, local level actors lodge a range of claims to different arenas – local, national, kin-state and European. Incorporating a within-case analysis of two towns in Slovakia highlights the different claiming arenas and the types of actors involved, arguably diverging due to geographic location and Hungarian concentration differences. For example, economic associations are more prominent in Komárom than in Rimaszombat due to the European funding opportunity structure promoting cross-border collaboration between Hungary and Slovakia.

Fourth, the findings in these chapters also demonstrate how not all claims to autonomy are divided along ethnic lines. Claims to regional development are lodged by actors in their

civic capacity (often by ethnic Slovaks) as well as by ethnic Hungarians. Moreover, the focus on the "South-Slovak" region (Dél-Szlovákia) by Most-Híd and MKP is made with reference not to an administrative regional unit but to a naturally defined region. The focus of administrative reforms in Slovakia has been on the return to "natural regions" which mirror the cultural, economic and geographical topography of Slovakia. The benefits – economic or infrastructural – of regional development are for everyone involved and do not have to be ethnicised in the same way as claims to education, culture and language (ECL) are inherently along ethnic lines. Using the language of Waterbury (2017), the focus on regional development and cross-ethnic partnerships tie into the ways that minority actors look for *allies* in their claims.

A similar dynamic occurs in Transylvania with the Transzylvanizmus Movement calling for recognition of the multicultural region of Transylvania (Chapter 6 Section 6.2.1.2). Its arguments are historic as well as economic. In this sense, autonomy on economic terms is more palatable on both the Slovak and Romanian side. It is a trade-off that must be considered: claiming autonomy on ethnic terms provides symbolic recognition to the community but will be opposed by the titular majority; couching it in a language of decentralisation, administrative reform or economic autonomy has more traction on the side of the majority but does not have the symbolic element for the minority (Székely, 2020). It would well be worth exploring in other contexts how claims to regional development can lead to collaboration between ethnic minorities and titular majorities and other ways autonomy claims can be lodged across ethnic lines.

Fifth, I traced how claiming cultural autonomy and territorial autonomy can potentially be competing projects. The different population concentrations in Transylvania and the focus of RMDSZ on inter-ethnic environments led to splinter groups such as SZNT arguing that RMDSZ had abandoned its claims to territorial autonomy of the Szeklerland.

Autonomy scholars, such as Lapidoth (1997) would argue that the two forms of autonomy can exist at the same time and complement each other. Whilst true in theory – and even in practice in the Åland Islands for example – the *claiming* of the two types of autonomy can compete or even undermine each other. Some experts interviewed – such as Bakk (Interview, 2017) – argued that they are competing projects whilst others such as RMDSZ President Hunor Kelemen (Interview, 2018) believed they are not. It has arguably divided the political elites in Romania. It would be interesting to trace out ways that the claiming of the two types of autonomy in other contexts can either complement or undermine one another.

A sixth contribution is to tease out how minority elites use different arenas in claim-making. In the literature, the primary arena for bargaining is the domestic arena. Much attention has been paid using the "quadratic" or "triadic nexus" models to study how claims at the domestic level are influenced by inter-party competition, the kin-state and the European Union (Brubaker, 1996; Smith, 2002; Jenne, 2007; Saideman and Ayres, 2008; Schulze, 2018). There has also been new research examining the role of the European Union as an *arena* itself where claims can be lodged (Csergő and Regelmann, 2017; Waterbury, 2017). I extended this work to examine several arenas of claim-making: the local, national, kin-state and European.

What emerges is that the kin-state and European arenas are used mainly as financial enablers in the claims to autonomy, particularly when the national level arena is not accessible to the actors or is blocked and unfavourable. The kin-state provides funding through its own complex funding structure (Section 10.3.2 Chapter 10) to a range of actors – mainly civil society – in the areas of education and culture. The European Union and Council of Europe are not significant as normative arenas to claim autonomy, although with the Minority SafePack Initiative minority elites are trying to increase the competencies of

the EU. However, the EU provides an arena to claim to for the financing of projects. Through these financial provisions, the EU provides the minority community with opportunities and new institutional structures of cooperation to pursue greater control over the community's future. Moreover, these arenas are used as part of a diversified effort of claiming by smaller actors – such as SZNT, CEMO, MKP or local level actors – who do not have direct access to the domestic bargaining arena. For actors who do have access to the domestic bargaining arena mainly through seats in Parliament – such as Most-Híd and RMDSZ – their primary focus is on domestic bargaining and how to creatively and strategically claim autonomy.

Seventh, I have extended the time period of analysis of previous studies (such as Csergő (2007), Székely (2014), Stroschein (2012), Bochsler and Szöcsik (2013a)) to incorporate more clearly the post-accession period until 2018. It is by doing so that my research justifies why we can take the study of autonomy claims out of the lens of security which becomes the eighth contribution. The study of ethnic Hungarian minority elites in the region of Central and Eastern Europe ties into the area studies literature and the conflict studies literature which has preoccupied itself with ways that autonomy claims can either lead to ethnic violence or prevent ethnic violence (Lijphart, 1977; Horowitz, 1985; Gurr, 1993b; Bermeo, 2002; Saideman *et al.*, 2002; Bunce, 2003; Hale, 2004; Jenne, 2007; Sorens, 2009; Wolff, 2011). However, this detailed study has shown that violence is not on the table of minority elites nor is secession. As MPP President Biró puts well,

> "*We want something peacefully, through negotiations and political instruments. No one listens, but where there is shooting, they listen. But we do not want to shoot, so then could we please be acknowledged" (*Interview Biró, 2018*).*

I have unpacked how autonomy claims happen as part and parcel of normalised domestic politics, thus responding most clearly to Csergő (2013)'s call for a study of *non-violent non-secessionist* claims. Rather than examining autonomy claims as on a spectrum of radicalisation (such as Jenne (2007)'s spectrum as shown on p.41), I have unpacked how

"autonomy" can be claimed along a more moderate spectrum. This entails explicit claims to "autonomy", an incorporation of word-play using different terminology and the inclusion of claims to different autonomy-related policy areas. The exact placement of these three elements on the continuum will depend on the country's context and characteristics.

Uncovering the usage of claims to policy areas as inclusive of elite tactics to claim autonomy also ties into already established research. For example, Dembinska et al. (2014) highlight the politics around the "threshold rule" linked to the population proportion of minorities in districts. Once the population surpasses a certain proportion, it has the right to certain minority rights such as language use in public administration. Csergő (2007) documents how language usage across the policy areas of public administration, education and territorial signs are key areas where the ethnic majority and Hungarian minority were at loggerheads in Romania and Slovakia given its tie to identity. Another shift has been to focus on decentralisation reforms to give more powers to ethnically concentrated districts, although with limited success given the centralised nature of CEE countries (Moore, 2008; Dembinska, Máracz and Tonk, 2014). The demonstrated de-securitised nature of claiming autonomy could further contribute to the work of international institutions such as the OSCE and EU by removing the discussion of autonomy from concerns over ethnic conflict.

Therefore, I have demonstrated that claims are lodged through a unique discourse in each country and tied to claiming across policy area reforms such as regional development, education and culture where there may also be the opportunity for inter-ethnic collaboration. Normalised politics can still be contentious – as is seen in potential administrative reforms in Romania in 2011 – but they are not violent. Moreover, questions arise over implementation of already existing provisions as well as issues of "threshold politics". I have unpacked how the reality of autonomy claim-making is context-dependent, includes a

range of actors who flexibly target different arenas and occurs within a context devoid of serious risks of ethnic conflict.

Finally, the thesis raises questions of how the prescriptive and empirical approaches to studying autonomy relate to each other. Empirically, the study of autonomy claim-making of Hungarian minority elites has been shown to be creative, non-violent and of a historical and context-dependent nature. Moreover, minority elites are appealing to a collective-rights view of minority rights and autonomy, which is in line with Kymlicka (1995)'s "self-government rights" framework. The research findings have also shown that elites are disenchanted with European institutions. This is not completely surprising, given that the legal and normative provisions in place (as elaborated in Chapter 2 Section 2.2.2) do not provide the strong support desired for collective rights nor autonomy; nor is there a codified legal definition of national minority and minority rights. Experience has shown that without international pressure the implementation of autonomy arrangements voluntarily by host governments is unlikely (Salat and Székely, 2014; Smith, 2014). Minority elites have responded by seeking reforms at the Council of Europe and European Union (particularly through the Minority SafePack Initiative) for collective rights and for support of autonomy.

11.4 Future Research

This study can be extended across several angles in future research. The first is that while I was clear (Methodology Chapter 3 Section 3.5) in what the research project is *not* doing – i.e. it is not examining the autonomy issue from the titular majority perspective – to gain a full picture of the Hungarian pursuit of autonomy one would need to better incorporate the view of the titular majority. It would be particularly interesting to trace which historical legacies are activated from the perspective of the titular majority. This could be, for example, Romania's own context of nation-building and the importance of the *1918 Alba Iulia Declaration* or the Slovak's history within Czechoslovakia and its own pursuit of autonomy.

Another extension of the project would be to examine local level claims by the Hungarian elites in Romania. I already collected the data from the newspapers of *Népújság* in Marosvásárhely (Hungarian minority population) and *Hargita Népe* in Csíkszereda (Hungarian majority population). This was not analysed due to lack of time and resources, but would certainly add an additional comparative dimension to the creativity of claiming. Such an extension would be able to see if my findings from Slovakia – that actors use alternative arenas when the national level is inaccessible or blocked – also apply to the Romanian context.

Whilst travelling in Transylvania, and in further discussions with elites and scholars, the important role of the churches in identity formation and in cultural reproduction was pointed out. A further examination of this dimension – and compared to Slovakia – could add more information on how these institutions pass on the certainty of cultural reproduction. There is already more social distance between ethnic Romanians and Hungarians due to the religious divide between Romanian Orthodox and Hungarian Catholics and Protestants (D. Kiss, 2018). There is less likely to be intermingling between the two ethnic groups. On the other hand, in Slovakia, both Hungarians and Slovaks are either Catholic or Protestant leading to less social distance and potentially less of a role of church organisations to act as institutions of cultural reproduction.

Finally, discussions with kin-state and European level elites would have added more context and precision to the inner workings of these two arenas. Future research can unpack how these actors understand the term "autonomy" and its relationship to other concepts such as regionalisation and decentralisation. It could also examine in depth the different financial mechanisms available to be utilised by minority elites and why the kin-state or European institution developed them in the first place. Moreover, a better understanding of the logic behind the kin-state's or European institution's support (or lack thereof) for autonomy

claims through a historical angle could further unpack how minority elites can target these arenas in their autonomy claims.

The chapter started with a quote asking if decentralisation and strong language rights constitutes autonomy. Conceptually, the literature would argue that it does not. Empirically, by examining the way that minority elites have claimed autonomy – through explicitly claiming "autonomy" and through the "creative policy game" – the above question can be answered in the affirmative. Outright demanding of "autonomy" is off the table completely in Slovakia while in Romania it no longer manages to have the same mobilising force for SZNT nor the electoral dividends for RMDSZ in the context of valence competition. Rather, creativity in claiming "autonomy" through word-play and policy area reform is the most realistic avenue for the Hungarian minority in Romania and Slovakia and leaves sufficient possibilities for future claims.

Methodological Appendices

Appendix A Elite Interview Questions

1. We hear the word autonomy used frequently. But what does autonomy mean for the Hungarians in Slovakia/Romania? What is its content?
2. Have the parties/political actors always wanted the same type of autonomy since the fall of communism, or were there different periods?
3. Since the fall of communism, have there been key moments in the quest for autonomy? What led to these moments? (or, why have there been ebbs and flows to strength of claims?)
4. Have there been any ”successful moments” in which autonomy was achieved? If so, how did this happen and what helped make it successful?
5. How will we know that autonomy has been achieved? What would it look like?
6. What are the biggest challenges facing the quest for autonomy?
7. What role do other actors play in pursuing autonomy? What is the relationship between political parties and civil society? Who are allies?
8. Is there an effect of the European Union or the kin-state? If so, what kind? Can international institutions also put pressure to help reach the goal of autonomy?

Additional dimensions/avenues to take depending on the interviewee
-What was the role of the EU pre-accession vs post-accession on the quest for autonomy?
-What do you make of the Citizen’s Initiative/Minority SafePack and its link to autonomy claims?
-Is there a link between claiming autonomy and the growing regionalisation and administrative reform pressures?
-Regarding the role of the kin-state, what is the effect of the dual citizenship issue on claims to autonomy and chances of it succeeding?

Romania:
-What is the effect of smaller rival parties (EMNP, MPP) on RMDSZ and quest for autonomy
-Why is there no inter-ethnic party like in Slovakia’s Most-Hid in Romania
--Why has the 2005 Minority Rights Law still not been approved (including Cultural Autonomy chapter). Why did this not get passed in 2017 June crisis?

Appendix B List of Interviewees

Interviewee (Slovakia)	Affiliation	Location	Interview Date
Janos Fiala-Butora	Roundtable Member; Human Rights Lawyer	Budapest, Hungary	18 May 2017
László Öllös	President of Forum Minority Institute	Somorja, Slovakia	7 June 2017
Attila Simon	Director of Forum Minority Institute	Somorja, Slovakia	7 June 2017
Géza Tokár	Spokesman of Roundtable	Somorja, Slovakia	8 June 2017
Ildikó Kőrösi	MKP Vice-President of Local Government and Public Administration	Bratislava, Slovakia	12 June 2017
Péter Őry	Vice-President of MKP, Mayor of Csallóközcsütörtök, main author of MKP's Autonomy Concept 2014	Bratislava, Slovakia	12 June 2017
Miklós Duray	Previous MKP President and well-known autonomy politician	Bratislava, Slovakia	13 June 2017
Ábel Ravasz	Most-Híd MP, *Civic Vision* author, and Commissioner for Roma Affairs	Bratislava, Slovakia	13 June 2017
László Bukovszky	Most-Híd, Plenipotentiary for National Minority Affairs	Bratislava, Slovakia	14 June 2017
Iván Farkas	MKP Vice President for Regional and Economic Development, mayor of Muzsla	Muzsla, Slovakia	15 June 2017
Ákos Horony	Legal Expert, Roundtable	Somorja, Slovakia	16 June 2017
Interviewee (Romania)	**Affiliation**	**Location**	**Interview Date**
István Horváth	Chair of the Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	21 June 2017
Tamás Kiss	Sociologist Researcher at Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	21 June 2017
István Gergő Székely	Political Researcher at Romanian Institute for Research on National Minorities	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	21 June 2017
Levente Salat	Professor and Associate Dean, Babes Bolyai University	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	22 June 2017
Tibor Toró	Adjunct Professor, Sapientia University	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	22 June 2017
Zoltán Sipos	Journalist	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	26 June 2017
István Székely	Long-time RMDSZ member, involved in autonomy plans, currently Deputy President	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	27 June 2017

András Bethlendi	Lawyer for AGFI – Advocacy Group for Freedom of Identity	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	28 June 2017
Péter Kovács	RMDSZ managing director, defected from party.	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	28 June 2017
Ernő Fancsali	EMNP Cluj President	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	29 June 2017
Miklós Bakk	Lecturer Sapientia University and drafter of previous autonomy plans	Cluj-Napoca, Romania	29 June 2017
Loránt Vincze	Head of FUEN – Federal Union of European Nationalities – and RMDSZ Foreign secretary	Skype, Brussels	30 June 2017
Balázs Izsák	Head of SZNT (Szekler National Council)	Marosvásárhely, Romania	11 Sept 2018
Zsolt Biró	Head of MPP	Marosvásárhely, Romania	13 Sept 2018
Vilmos Portik	Previous member of EMNP	Marosvásárhely, Romania	13 Sept 2018
Zoltán Csaba Novák	RMDSZ Senator	Marosvásárhely and Bucharest, Romania	14 Sept and 25 Sept 2018
Enikő Szigeti	Head of CEMO – Civic Engagement Movement, Marosvásárhely	Skype, Budapest	17 Sept 2018
Ervin Tőke	EMNP member, Csíkszék President	Csíkszereda, Romania	17 Sept 2018
Árpád Antal	Mayor and RMDSZ President for Sepsiszentgyörgy	Sepsiszentgyörgy, Romania	22 Sept 2018
Erika Benkő	RMDSZ MP	Bucharest, Romania	25 Sept 2018
Árpád Márton	RMDSZ MP, lead author of 2014 RMDSZ Autonomy Plan	Bucharest, Romania	25 Sept 2018
Hunor Kelemen	RMDSZ President	Bucharest, Romania	26 Sept 2018

Appendix C Coding Frames for Elite Interviews

Table 11 Coding Frame for Interviews of Hungarian Minority Elites in Slovakia

Code	Files	References
01. Meaning of Autonomy – This was based on the interview question: What does the Hungarian quest for autonomy mean, what does the word autonomy mean? I am categorising according to the terms the speaker used, NOT the terms in the literature		
1.1 Definitions	0	0
1.1.01 Collective right-right of a community	3	4
1.1.02 Ethnic basis - included or not	3	3
1.1.03 Cultural Autonomy	8	13
1.1.04 Personal autonomy	2	5
1.1.05 Linguistic autonomy	4	5
1.1.06 Educational autonomy	5	9
1.1.07 Link to Administration - közigazgatás; önkormányzat	4	6
1.1.08 Institutions and decision-making ability	5	13
1.1.09 Representation	2	3
1.1.10 Territorial autonomy	4	7
1.1.10.1 Symmetrical	1	4
1.1.10.10 not necessary	0	0
1.1.10.11 Other	1	3
1.1.10.2 Asymmetrical - including for ethnic reasons	2	3
1.1.10.3 In a federal system	1	1
1.1.10.4 Overlap with Admin aspect	0	0
1.1.10.5 Desirable	0	0
1.1.10.6 Not desirable	1	1
1.1.10.7 Possible	0	0
1.1.10.8 not possible	1	2
1.1.10.9 Necessary	1	1
1.1.11 Related to other words and concepts - word play – explicitly mentioned	0	0
1.1.11.1 Önkormányzatiság (self-gvmt, self-rule)	8	19
1.1.11.2 Önrendelkezés (self-determination)	2	4
1.1.11.3 Other	1	1
1.1.12 Economic dimension	4	8
1.1.13 Financing	1	2
1.1.14 Other - overlaps between concepts	4	5
1.2 Evaluations of Autonomy (general)	0	0
1.2.0 Overall evaluation of Autonomy	0	0
1.2.0.1 Not necessary	1	1
1.2.0.2 Should exist	3	3
1.2.0.3 Won't solve anything on its own	1	1
1.2.0.4 Is achievable	1	1
1.2.0.5 Good for everyone and country	1	1
1.2.1 Elites - not defined, confusion, no discourse (Actors themselves do not know what they want, nor what autonomy means, there is no debate for clarity (willingly or unwillingly)	4	10

1.2.2 Differences amongst actors	1	3
1.2.3 Changes across time	0	0
1.2.4 Historical connotation (majority)	0	0
1.2.4.1 Positive	0	0
1.2.4.2 Negative	7	10
1.2.5 Response to threat-to sustain-to survive (minority view)	6	12
1.2.6 Autonomy as a step to secession (majority's view)	7	17
1.2.7 As a panacea, to solve all problems	2	2
1.2.8 Masses - taboo, ignorance and no debate	4	11
1.2.9 Other	1	1
02. Societal Context - Challenges and Causes for Autonomy – Here I am coding for societal aspects mentioned by the interviewees		
2.1 Cultural Norms and Conceptions	0	0
2.1.1 Of Slovak Majority	4	12
2.1.2 Of Hungarian minority	7	13
2.2 Demographic characteristics and issues	7	28
2.2.1 Population Concentration	6	10
2.2.2 Census Numbers	2	2
2.2.3 Assimilation	3	5
2.2.4 Declining Population	4	4
2.2.5 Emigration	3	5
2.2.6 Slovak migration to Hungarian settlements	2	2
2.3 Economic development-Unemployment	5	7
2.4 Religion	1	1
2.5 Recognition	0	0
2.6 Representation	1	1
2.7 Other	3	4
03. Historical and Cross-Country References		
3.1. History up to and inc WWI	0	0
3.1.1 Previous autonomy of minority group	0	0
3.1.2 Previous autonomy goals of majority group	3	3
3.1.3 Nation-building experiences	2	3
3.1.4 Historical event not linked to autonomy	1	2
3.1.5 Other	1	2
3.2 Interwar up to and inc WWII	0	0
3.2.1 Previous autonomy of minority group	0	0
3.2.2 Previous autonomy of majority group	5	5
3.2.3 Nation-building experiences	1	1
3.2.4 Historical event not linked to autonomy	2	2
3.2.5 Other	2	3
3.3 Communism	0	0
3.3.1 Previous autonomy of minority group	0	0
3.3.2 Autonomy of majority group	0	0
3.3.3 Nation-building experiences	1	1
3.3.4 Historical event not linked to autonomy	0	0
3.3.5 Other	1	1
3.4 After Communism - Slovakia 1993	3	3

3.5 Other	1	2
3.6 European Examples	3	4
3.6.1 Spain	1	1
3.6.2 South Tyrol	3	4
3.6.3 Switzerland	1	1
3.6.4 Sweden	1	1
3.6.5 Hungary	4	6
3.6.6 Finland	1	1
04. Key Moments – These are mentioned by the interviewees as key moments of the struggle for autonomy. General information about the event was put here. If it overlapped with other aspects (such as inter-party competition) that particular section was placed in the sub-category in section 8.		
4.0 Comments on timeline of events	2	2
4.1 Komáromi Meeting	4	6
4.2 Coalition MKP 1998	1	1
4.3 Administrative Reforms	0	0
4.3.1 1996	0	0
4.3.2 2001	4	7
4.4.A 1999 Constitutional Reform	1	1
4.4.B 2001 Constitutional reform	1	1
4.5 2001-2009 Unified Era	1	2
4.6 2009 Amendment Slovak language law	1	1
4.7 Party split	1	1
4.8 Dual Citizenship	1	1
4.9 Window of Opportunity	5	7
4.10 Silence	3	8
4.11 Turning Point - shift	5	14
4.12 TA pushed for until 1998 coalition	2	3
4.13 Friendship Treaty 1996	1	1
05. Autonomy Claims		
5.1 Autonomy Claims documents mentioned (full text of transcript here, sub-contents to different relevant fields)	0	0
5.1.1 Komáromi Document-Meeting	6	7
5.1.2 MKP Autonomy Concept 2014	6	15
5.1.3 Roundtable Document - Minimum	4	4
5.1.4 Civic Vision 2016	1	1
5.1.5 Fiala Document	1	2
5.2 Personal Autonomy	5	10
5.3 Cultural Autonomy	5	10
5.4 Education Autonomy	6	8
5.4.1 Komárom University	2	3
5.5 Language Rights	3	6
5.5.1 Railway signs and schedules	5	7
5.6. Territorial Autonomy	7	17
5.7 Economic and Regional Development	3	4
5.8 Admin Reform	5	12
5.8.1 Admin Border revisions	7	13

5.8.2 Content revision - Decentralisation	1	1
5.9 Other	3	5
5.10 Absence of claim noticeable	4	6
06. Policy Areas - Previous Reforms, Future reforms, Current background. Information was coded here when it referenced current policy provisions in place, events that happened linked to a policy provision and background information. The distinction between **05** and **06** is that information is coded to **05** sub-categories when they were phrased as *claims* (a need, a lack, a demand, etc) and coded to **06** when it is informative and providing context about the policy area.		
6.0A International provisions	3	4
6.0B Domestic Legal Provisions	6	6
6.1 Policy documents mentioned	0	0
6.1.1 Coalition Gvmt Statement 2016	2	2
6.1.2 Civic Vision	6	7
6.1.3 Baross Gabor Plan	1	1
6.1.4 Language Study Bukovszky and Action Plan	1	3
6.2 Cross-Border Regional reforms	1	1
6.3 Admin reforms	3	5
6.3.1 1996 Reforms	2	3
6.3.2 2001 Reforms	7	13
6.3.3 Public opinion	3	3
6.3.4 Issues linked to decentralisation	1	1
6.4 Constitutional reforms	0	0
6.4.0 1999 reforms	1	2
6.4.1 2001 NATO-EU	0	0
6.5 Language usage	2	2
2009 SK language law changes	2	2
6.5.0 Language Policy Background	4	7
6.5.1 Railroads and place signs	3	4
6.5.2 Language Law changes 2011	3	3
6.5.3 1999 Min Language Law	1	1
6.5.5 Language % Usage	1	3
6.6 Education	2	2
6.6.0 Education Policy background-Provisions	2	3
6.6.1 Komarom University	4	4
6.7 Culture	0	0
6.7.1 Cultural Fund 2017	6	10
07. Domestic Actors – Information – This is where information went regarding the important domestic actors, usually important background information and history		
7.1 Political Parties - and leaders	0	0
7.1.1 MKP	4	7
7.1.1.1.1 Pál Csáky	1	1
7.1.2 Most-Híd	7	12
7.1.3 Együttélés and pre-1998	2	2
7.1.4 Other	3	3
7.2 Civil Society	7	8
7.3 Other Individuals - perhaps not in Slovakia but important	2	2

08. Domestic Politics – This captured elements of domestic politics linked to actors and strategies for claiming		
8.1 Different Governments' Priorities	0	0
8.1.1 2017 Coalition	1	2
8.1.2 Dzurinda	0	0
8.1.3 2006 Fico	1	1
8.2 Coalition Belonging and Claims impact	1	1
8.2.1 MKP 1998-2006	8	17
8.2.1.B 2006 Not in coalition	1	1
8.2.2 Most-Hid	3	5
8.2.3 Not in Government effect	1	1
8.3 Elections and Electoral Politics	0	0
8.3.1 Point of view of voter	5	10
8.3.2 Parties' incentives to get votes	4	6
8.3.3 Role played by Autonomy in elections and party's policies	1	1
8.3.3.1 Election rhetoric	3	5
8.3.3.2 Symbolic	2	2
8.3.4 Elections Other	2	2
8.4 Electoral law and impact (threshold ex)	0	0
8.4.1 Electoral rules positive	0	0
8.4.2 electoral rules negative	3	6
8.4.3 Other	0	0
8.4.3. Gerrymandering	1	1
8.5 Inter-party (MKP-Most-Híd) relations	1	1
8.5.1 Positive-Collaboration	4	6
8.5.2 Inter-party Competition	5	7
8.5.3 Inter-Party disagreement	2	4
8.6 Intra-Party Dynamics	0	0
8.6.1 Intra-party leadership competition	2	2
8.6.2 Intra-party question about direction	4	8
8.6.3 Other	0	0
8.7 Tactics to achieve autonomy	0	0
8.7.1 Big claims	0	0
8.7.1 Big claims necessary	0	0
8.7.2 Big claims unnecessary-not helpful	1	1
8.7.2 Politics of small steps	4	4
8.7.2.1 Small steps the way to go	3	5
8.7.2.2 Small steps unhelpful	1	3
8.7.3 Getting partners and work in sphere of influence	0	0
8.7.4 Use EU-NATO pressure	2	3
8.7.5 Other	0	0
8.8 Role of Ideology and Personal Interests	4	11
8.9 Slovak Majority party relations and tactic	2	5
8.9.1 Collaboration	1	1
8.9.2 Opposition	3	10
8.9.2.1 Admin reforms	5	6
8.10 Domestic Politics - other	3	3

09. European and International Actors Influence – This captured evaluations and information regarding the role of outside actors on claims to autonomy and on the political playing field (top level is general information, i.e 9.2.2 is general information on the EU pre-accession and 9.3 is general information on FUEN)		
9.1 Council of Europe	0	0
9.1.1 Shadow reporting	0	0
9.1.2 CoE Positive	1	1
9.1.3 CoE Negative	0	0
9.1.4 CoE No effect	2	3
9.2 European Union	0	0
9.2.1 EU General	0	0
9.2.1.1 EU general Positive	1	1
9.2.1.2 EU general Negative	1	1
9.2.1.3 EU general No effect	5	7
9.2.2 EU Pre-Accession	1	1
9.2.2.1 pre-Accession Positive	4	6
9.2.2.2 pre-Accession negative	1	1
9.2.2.3 pre-Accession No effect	2	4
9.2.3 EU Post-Accession	1	1
9.2.3.1 Post-Accession Positive	1	2
9.2.3.2 Post-Accession Negative	1	3
9.2.3.3 post-Accession No effect	4	5
9.2.4 EU Regionalisation pressure	1	1
9.2.4.1 EU Regionalisation Positive	0	0
9.2.4.2 EU regionalisation Negative	0	0
9.2.4.3 EU regionalisation no effect	1	2
9.2.5 Minority SafePack	1	2
9.2.5.1 Minority SafePack Positive	1	1
9.2.5.2 Minority SafePack Negative	0	0
9.2.5.3 Minority Safepack No effect	0	0
9.2.6 EU - Other -	0	0
9.3 FUEN	1	1
9.3.1 FUEN Positive	1	1
9.3.2 FUEN Negative	0	0
9.3.3 FUEN No effect	0	0
9.4 KMAT	1	1
9.4.1 KMAT Positive	0	0
9.4.2 KMAT Negative	0	0
9.4.2 KMAT No effect	0	0
9.5 NATO	0	0
9.5.1 NATO Positive	0	0
9.5.2 NATO Negative	0	0
9.5.3 NATO No effect	0	0
9.6 US	0	0
9.6.1 US Positive	0	0
9.6.2 US Negative	0	0
9.6.3 US No effect	0	0

Other	1	1
10. Kin State		
10.01 Type of party in power impacts policy	1	2
10.02 Influence on Hungarian minority party	3	4
10.03 Recognition of Hungarian minority party	3	3
10.04 Dual citizenship law	0	0
10.4.1 Dual citizenship - Positive	0	0
10.4.2 Dual citizenship - Negative	2	2
10.4.3 - Dual citizenship - no effect	0	0
10.4.4 Dual citizenship other	1	3
10.05 Election interference	0	0
10.5.1 Election interference Positive	0	0
10.5.2 Election interference Negative	0	0
10.5.3 Election interference no effect	0	0
10.5.4 Election interference - other	0	0
10.06 Financing	0	0
10.6.1 Financing - Positive	4	5
10.6.2 Financing - Negative	0	0
10.6.3 Financing - Other	0	0
10.07 Friendship Treaty	1	1
10.7.1 Friendship treaty - Positive	0	0
10.7.2 Friendship treaty Negative	0	0
10.7.3 Friendship treaty - no effect	0	0
10.08 General impact	0	0
10.8.1 General impact Positive	3	3
10.8.2 General impact Negative	1	3
10.8.3 General impact no effect	2	2
10.09 Motivations	0	0
10.9.1 Motivations - Foreign policy	0	0
10.9.2 Motivations -Domestic electorate	0	0
10.10 Status Law	0	0
10.10.1 Status law -Positive	0	0
10.10.2 Status law -Negative	0	0
10.10.3 - Status law no effect	0	0
10.10.4 Status law - other	0	0
10.11 Relations with ethnic Slovak parties	1	2
10.12 Other	1	2
11. Challenges – either taken from the interviewee's direct response to my question on challenges or brought up unprompted during the interview		
11.1 Civil Society	0	0
11.2 Implementation	2	3
11.3 Socio-Economic context	1	1
11.4 International context	0	0
11.5 Political parties	1	2
11.6 Norms of minority rights losing pull	0	0
11.7 Institutional issues	3	4

12. Successes – either taken from the interviewee's direct response to my question on challenges or brought up unprompted during the interview		
12.1 Yes Successes	6	7
12.2 No successes	6	6
13. Cross-Country references of Hungarians	**7**	**11**
99. Quotes	**9**	**35**
1000 Extra information	**2**	**3**
admin vocab	2	2
Roma	2	2
1001 other people to contact - things to look up	**10**	**24**

Table 12 Coding Frame for Interviews of Hungarian Minority Elites in Romania

Name	Files	References
01. Meaning of Autonomy – This was based on the interview question: What does the Hungarian quest for autonomy mean, what does the word autonomy mean? I am categorising according to the terms the speaker used, NOT the terms in the literature		
1.1 Definitions	0	0
1.1.01 Collective right-right of a community	6	8
1.1.02 Ethnic basis	3	3
1.1.03 Cultural Autonomy	16	35
1.1.04 Personal autonomy	3	5
1.1.05 Linguistic autonomy (note in Romania this is often talked about within cultural autonomy)	2	3
1.1.06 Educational autonomy	1	1
1.1.06.1 University Autonomy	2	2
1.1.07 Form of administration	6	7
1.1.08 Institutions and decision-making ability	15	27
1.1.09 Representation	3	3
1.1.10 Territorial autonomy	15	20
1.1.10.1 Symmetrical	1	1
1.1.10.10 not necessary	0	0
1.1.10.10 Szövetségek -local alliances	2	2
1.1.10.11 Other	0	0
1.1.10.2 Asymmetrical - inc for ethnic reasons	2	2
1.1.10.3 In a federal system	0	0
1.1.10.4 Overlap with Admin aspect-helyi autonómia, közigazgatási autonómia	4	5
1.1.10.5 Desirable	1	1
1.1.10.6 Not desirable	0	0
1.1.10.7 Possible	0	0
1.1.10.8 not possible	3	3
1.1.10.9 Necessary	0	0
1.1.11 Related to other words and concepts – (word play) explicitly mentioned	3	4
1.1.11.1 Önkormányzatiság (self-gvmt)	4	11
1.1.11.1.1Translation Issues	3	4
1.1.11.2 Önrendelkezés (self-determination)	7	9
1.1.11.3 Other	2	2
1.1.11.4 autonomy on ethnic terms	1	1
1.1.11.5 consociational democracy	1	2
1.1.11.6 Decentralisation and subsidiarity	12	18
1.1.11.7 Devolution	1	2
1.1.11.8 power sharing	2	3
1.1.11.9 region and regionalisation	7	10
1.1.12 Needed to Sustain the community - see 1.2.05	0	0
1.1.13 Economic dimension-Fiscal Autonomy	5	7
1.1.14 Other	3	3
1.1.15 Public law aspect	3	3
1.1.16 Symbolic element	3	5

1.1.17 Functional Autonomy (theory)	1	2
1.1.18 Property ownership (közbirtokság, tulajdonjog)	2	2
1.1.19 Legislative competence	2	2
1.1.20 NOT socio-health policy	1	1
1.1.21 Religious Autonomy	1	1
1.1.22 Szerződés.Contract and loyalty-integration	4	8
1.1.23 Comes with pressure from outsider	1	2
1.2 Evaluations of Autonomy (general)	0	0
1.2.0 Overall evaluation of Autonomy	0	0
1.2.0.1 Árnyékboxolás - shadow boxing	1	1
1.2.0.2 Does not exist	1	2
1.2.0.3 Not necessary	3	3
1.2.0.4 Not possible	3	6
1.2.0.5 Possible	5	5
1.2.0.6 Should exist	2	2
1.2.0.7 Won't solve anything on its own	0	0
1.2.01 Confusion in discourse, no dialogue, no consensus (Actors themselves do not know what they want, nor what autonomy means, there is no debate for clarity (willingly or unwillingly)	7	12
1.2.02 Differences between Hungarian and Romanian understanding	3	3
1.2.03 Changes across time	1	1
1.2.04 Historical connotation (majority) and general connotation	0	0
1.2.4.1 Positive	0	0
1.2.4.2 Negative	10	15
1.2.05 Needed to keep minority's identity and well-being-survival	8	9
1.2.06 Autonomy, secession, irredentism (view of majority or min)	10	17
1.2.07 As a panacea, to solve all problems	7	8
1.2.08 Masses and elites - superficially for it but practically ignorant	8	11
1.2.09 Other	0	0
1.2.10 Relationship between cultural and territorial autonomy	4	5
1.2.11 de facto autonomy	1	1
1.2.12 In everyone's interest-HU and RO and security	2	5
1.2.13 Ki van fulladva – is dead	7	11
1.2.14 Many definitions	6	7
1.2.15 No real content-buzzword-strategy by elites	11	22
1.2.16 We don't know what population think	1	1
02. Societal Context - Challenges and Causes for Autonomy – Here I am coding for societal aspects mentioned by the interviewees		
2.1 Cultural Norms and Conceptions	0	0
2.1.1 Of Romanian Majority	2	2
2.1.1.1 Anti-Hungarianness or fear	4	6
2.1.2 Of Hungarian minority	1	1
2.1.2.1 Identity weakened	1	4
2.1.2.2 Support for Orbán	1	1
2.1.3 Social distance	2	2
2.2 Demographic characteristics and issues	0	0

2.2.1 Population Concentration, different needs conflict (Included here are not just about the population concentrations, but also different tensions that can arise between the Székely interests and the rest of the Hungarians in Transylvania)	12	15
2.2.2 Census Numbers	0	0
2.2.3 Assimilation	5	5
2.2.4 Declining Population	4	4
2.2.5 Emigration	3	4
2.2.6 Romanian Population moving in-transfer	2	3
2.2.7 People coming back from abroad	1	1
2.3 Economic development-Unemployment	7	11
2.4 Religion	0	0
2.5 Recognition	1	1
2.6 Representation	0	0
2.7 Other	0	0
2.8 Media	2	4
2.8.1 2000s	1	1
2.8.2 Currently no political Left	1	2
2.8.3 RMDSZ Fidesz in the media	1	1
2.9 Hungarian usage of Romanian in interactions	3	4
03. Historical and Cross-Country References		
3.1. History up to and inc WWI	0	0
3.1.1 Previous autonomy of minority group	3	4
3.1.2 Previous autonomy of majority group	0	0
3.1.3 Nation-building experiences	5	10
3.1.4 Historical event not linked to autonomy	0	0
3.1.5 Other	1	1
3.2 Interwar up to and inc WWII	0	0
3.2.1 Previous autonomy of minority group	0	0
3.2.2 Previous autonomy of majority group	0	0
3.2.3 Nation-building experiences	1	2
3.2.4 Historical event not linked to autonomy	0	0
3.2.5 Other - Transylvanism, Gyulafehervar, other info	5	6
3.3 Post WWII - Communism	0	0
3.3.1 Previous autonomy of minority group	6	10
3.3.2 Autonomy of majority group	0	0
3.3.3 Nation-building experiences	1	1
3.3.4 Historical event not linked to autonomy	2	5
3.3.5 Other	5	6
3.4 After Communism	1	1
3.5 Other	0	0
04. Key Moments – These are mentioned by the interviewees as key moments of the struggle for autonomy. General information about the event was put here. If it overlapped with other aspects (such as inter-party competition) that particular section was placed in the sub-category in section 8.		
4.1 1940	1	1
4.2 1946-7 Nationalities Statute	2	2
4.3 1996-2003	2	4
4.4 1996-2004 RMDSZ Strategy	1	1

4.5 2000s local alliances	1	2
4.5.1 2009 virtual autonomy similar	2	3
4.6 2003+ intra-ethnic competition	1	1
4.7 2003-2005	4	8
4.8 2004+ after interethnic split	1	1
4.9 2004-2008 government puts in minority rights bill	1	2
4.10 2010 Regression and Negative implementation	3	3
4.11 2010+ Regionalism priority	1	1
4.12 2014 Statute RMDSZ	3	4
4.13 Accession	1	1
4.14 early 90s before coalition	7	11
4.15 early 90s-2002 Decentralisation	2	6
4.16 EMNP 2004 plan	1	1
4.17 Gross Report and Kalmar Report	2	3
4.18 Gyulafehérvár-Alba Iulia	3	3
4.19 Hungarian Autonomous region	2	2
4.20 June 2017 government crisis	6	10
4.21 Kolozsvári Declaration	1	1
4.22 Marosvásárhely Catholic school	1	1
4.23 Marosvasarhely pogrom 1990	2	2
4.24 Missed opportunity	0	0
4.24.1 2016 missed opportunity for 2014 Statute	1	1
4.24.2 missed opportunity early 1990s	1	1
4.25 pre-accession claim by SZNT for TA	1	1
4.26 Recomm 1201 and Memorandum	3	3
4.27 Silence	2	2
4.28 Tőkés goes to Romanian courts against RMDSZ	1	1
4.29 Town hall controversy	1	1
05. Autonomy Claims		
5.1 Autonomy Claims documents mentioned (full text of transcript here, sub-contents to different relevant fields)	0	0
5.1.1 2005 RMDSZ Minority Rights Bill	8	12
5.1.2 2014 RMDSZ Statutum	14	28
5.1.3 Bakk Miklos terv	1	2
5.1.4 Brasso congress	1	1
5.1.5 Csapo Jozsef	3	6
5.1.6 Csapo Jozsef 1993 3 tier aut RMDSZ	3	3
5.1.7 Csapo Jozsef SZNT version 2003	9	18
5.1.8 Csapó József TA RMDSZ version	1	1
5.1.9 Csapó József TA Toró Tibi version RMDSZ	1	1
5.1.10 EMNP Asymmetrical autonomy	1	1
5.1.11 EMNP Cultural Autonomy 2004	2	3
5.1.12 EMNP Federalism plan	1	1
5.1.13 EMNP Regionalisation plan-Asymm Regionalism-Kerettorveny a regiorol	2	6
5.1.13.1 EMNP Bakk Biklos regionalism...	1	3
5.1.14 Kolozsvári Declaration	1	1
5.1.15 MPP Asymmetrical regionalism	1	1

5.1.16 MPP Keretprogram	1	1
5.1.17 RMDSZ regional reform	2	2
5.1.18 Szilagyi Sandor terv	1	1
5.1.19 SZNT EU regions	1	1
5.2 Personal Autonomy	1	1
5.3 Cultural Autonomy	14	30
5.3.1 Flag usage	1	1
5.4 Education	1	3
5.4.1 art class	1	1
5.4.2 Babes Bolyai	2	2
5.4.3 Bernandi School naming	1	1
5.4.4 Education law	1	2
5.4.5 Hungarians not speaking Romanian in schools	1	1
5.4.6 Marosvásárhely Catholic school controversy	2	2
5.4.7 Marosvasarhely Medicine-Pharmacy University controversy	4	4
5.4.8 Sepsiszentgyőrgy Miko Kollegium	2	3
5.4.9 Teaching Romanian as mother tongue 2018	2	2
5.5 Language Usage and Signs	5	7
5.5.1 Bilingual signs in schools	1	1
5.5.2 Hungarian as regional language	2	2
5.5.3 Kolozsvár Sign	6	9
5.5.4 subtitles on films	1	1
5.5.5 Town hall controversy	1	2
5.6. Territorial Autonomy	16	32
5.7 Admin Reform and Regionalisation	6	9
5.7.1 1996 and 2002 legislation	1	1
5.7.2 5% threshold	1	1
5.7.3 Decentralisation- Wild bears	1	1
5.7.4 Decentralisation-airport	1	1
5.7.5 EMNP Regional Plan	2	7
5.7.6 EU cultural regions	2	2
5.7.7 kodul administrativ roman	1	1
5.7.8 Linked to Regional reforms	5	8
5.7.9 local alliances- szövetségek	2	4
5.7.10 MPP Assymetrical regionalism	1	1
5.7.11 Önkormányzatisag claims	1	1
5.7.12 Szekler flag on inst buildings	1	1
5.7.13 SZNT EU regions	1	1
5.8 Economic and Regional Development	1	1
5.9 Federalisation	3	3
5.10 Fiscal autonomy	4	4
5.11 Regional Autonomy	1	1
5.12 Property law and restitution	3	3
5.13 Other	1	1

06. Policy Areas - Previous Reforms, Future reforms, Current background. Information was coded here when it referenced current policy provisions in place, events that happened linked to a policy provision and background information. The distinction

between **05** and **06** is that information is coded to **05** sub-categories when they were phrased as *claims* (a need, a lack, a demand, etc) and coded to **06** when it is informative and providing context about the policy area.		
6.0 International provisions	5	8
6.1 Policy documents mentioned	0	0
6.2 Regional reforms	0	0
6.3 Admin reforms	3	4
6.3.1 2001 admin reform 215	4	6
6.3.2 2002 önkormányzat reform	1	1
6.3.3 Const Court ruling on decentralisation	1	1
6.3.4 Decentralisation reforms	4	9
6.3.5 Historical regions	2	2
6.3.6 Language use in public administration 2001	4	6
6.3.7 Recentralisation	1	2
6.3.8 Regional reform and EU regions	15	19
6.4 Constitutional reforms	3	3
6.4.1 2003 reform	1	1
6.4.2 2013 reform	1	1
6.5 Language usage	5	5
6.6 Education	6	10
6.6.1 200X educ law	1	1
6.6.2 2010 Education law 2010	3	3
6.7 Cultural Autonomy	3	3
6.8 Church based local autonomy	1	1
6.9 Restoration and communal forests	2	2
07. Domestic Actors – Information – This is where information went regarding the important domestic actors, usually important background information and history		
7.1 Political Parties - and leaders	0	0
7.1.1 RMDSZ - evaluations and trends	10	14
7.1.1.1 Kelemen Hunor	4	4
7.1.1.2 Markó Béla	8	11
7.1.1.3 Negative	4	9
7.1.2 Opposition parties - general	3	3
7.1.2.1 EMNP	9	15
7.1.2.2 MPP	7	10
Szász Jenő	1	2
7.1.2.3 POL	2	2
7.1.2.4 Sabin Gherman party- Erdelyiek és Bánság party	1	1
7.1.3 Other	0	0
7.2 Civil Society	7	10
7.2.1 AGFI	3	4
7.2.10 SZNT	7	15
7.2.2 CEMO	6	6
Szigeti Enikő self introduction	1	1
7.2.3 EMNP EMNT competition	1	1
7.2.4 EMNT	5	6
Tőkés	7	13

7.2.5 EMNT SZNT Competition	1	4
7.2.6 Liga Transilvania Demokrata	2	3
7.2.7 Lundman es Muszalj muszalj	2	2
7.2.8 Partium Autonomia Tanacs	1	1
7.2.9 Provincia Csoport	1	1
7.3 Other Individuals -	0	0
08. Domestic Politics – This captured elements of domestic politics linked to actors and strategies for claiming		
8.00 Centre-Periphery Relations (Encompasses local-regional vs Bucharest dynamics, such as Romanians and opposition to decentralisation)	5	8
8.01 Different Governments' Priorities	0	0
8.02 Coalition Belonging and Claims impact	3	4
8.02.1 2000-2004	2	3
8.02.2 2014 Coalition	2	2
8.02.3 1996-2000	6	8
8.02.4 2004-2008	4	5
8.02.5 Coalitions unstable	2	2
8.02.6 General - do not claim in coalition	4	5
8.03 Elections and Electoral Politics	0	0
8.3.1 Point of view of voter	0	0
8.3.2 Parties' incentives to get votes	0	0
8.3.3 Role played by Autonomy in elections and party's policies	0	0
8.3.3.1 Election rhetoric	8	21
8.3.3.2 Symbolic	0	0
8.04 Electoral law and impact (threshold ex)	1	2
8.4.1 Electoral rules positive	0	0
8.4.2 electoral rules negative	3	3
8.4.3 Other	0	0
8.05 Inter-party relations	0	0
8.5.1 Positive or Collaboration	6	10
8.5.2 Inter-party Competition	5	11
8.5.2.1 Valence Competition and rhetoric	9	19
Charismatic leadership	1	1
Dual Discourse and ethnic tribune party	1	4
8.5.3 Inter-ethnic parties damaging to cause	1	2
8.06 Intra-Party Dynamics	0	0
8.6.1 Intra-party leadership competition	0	0
8.6.2 Intra-party question about direction	10	24
8.6.2.1 Szekler point of view	2	2
8.6.2.2 EMNP issues	1	1
8.07 Tactics to achieve autonomy	0	0
8.7.0 is realpolitik	6	6
8.7.01 Big claims	0	0
8.7.1 Big claims necessary	0	0
8.7.2 Big claims unncessary-not helpful	0	0
8.7.02 Politics of small steps	0	0
8.7.2.0 focus on önkormányzatiság-collaboration	2	5

8.7.2.1 Small steps necessary	4	5
8.7.2.2 Small steps unhelpful	1	1
8.7.03 Getting partners and work in sphere of influence	0	0
8.7.04 Use EU-NATO pressure	0	0
8.7.05 Modern tools-Updated tactics-peaceful	7	12
8.7.06 Litigation-Lawsuits	8	16
8.7.07 Forms of Mobilisation and Symbolism	10	20
8.7.07.1 Beer	1	1
8.7.07.2 Elite led	2	3
8.7.07.3 Procession	1	1
8.7.07.4 Symbolic-Székely flag	7	9
8.7.07.5 Székely Szabadság napja - Freedom day	2	4
8.7.07.6 Translyvanism	3	3
8.7.08 Dialogue with RO society	1	2
8.7.09 Advocacy	1	2
8.7.10 Change wording - dual discourse Neptun ex	3	4
8.7.11 Strategic bargaining in Parliament-or with others-neptun	14	37
8.7.12 Other	3	3
8.08 Clientelism-Patronage networks	4	12
8.09 Romania Majority party relations and RO tactics	2	2
8.9.1 Supportive	2	3
8.9.2 Opposition	6	9
8.9.3 DNA anticorruption	2	4
8.9.4 Constitutional Court	1	1
8.9.5 Keep RMDSZ on leash	1	1
8.9.6 Anti-Hungarian sentiment	12	16
8.9.6.1 Prime Minister resignation	1	1
8.9.6.2 Security Threat	5	8
8.9.7 Negative implementation	1	1
8.10 Hungarian relationship with other minorities in Romania	3	4
8.11 Pol Party and Civil Society Relations	8	12
09. European and International Actors Influence – This captured evaluations and information regarding the role of outside actors on claims to autonomy and on the political playing field. (top level is general information, i.e 9.2.2 is general information on the EU pre-accession and 9.3 is general information on FUEN)		
09. International and Geopolitical Context	14	28
09.European and International Actors	0	0
9.1 Council of Europe	5	7
9.1.1 National-shadow reports	4	5
9.1.2 CoE Positive	5	7
9.1.3 CoE Negative	2	2
9.1.4 CoE No effect or pointless	3	3
9.2 European Union	0	0
9.2.1 EU General	2	3
9.2.1.1 EU general Positive	1	1
9.2.1.2 EU general Negative	3	3
9.2.1.3 EU general No effect-no support	11	12

East-West Europe and Sargentini	3	6
9.2.2 EU Pre-Accession	3	4
9.2.2.1 pre-Accession Positive	7	8
9.2.2.2 pre-Accession negative	0	0
9.2.2.3 pre-Accession No effect	5	5
Formed civic citizenship and belonging	1	2
9.2.3 EU Post-Accession	1	1
9.2.3.1 Post-Accession Positive	1	1
9.2.3.2 Post-Accession Negative	8	9
9.2.3.3 post-Accession No effect	3	3
9.2.4 EU Regionalisation pressure	4	5
9.2.4.1 EU Regionalisation Positive	0	0
9.2.4.2 EU regionalisation Negative	0	0
9.2.4.3 EU regionalisation no effect	0	0
9.2.5 Minority SafePack - a claim	6	7
9.2.5.1 Minority SafePack Positive	1	1
9.2.5.2 Minority SafePack Negative	0	0
9.2.5.3 Minority Safepack No effect	4	5
9.2.6 EU - Other -	0	0
9.3 FUEN	6	7
9.3.1 FUEN Positive	2	2
9.3.2 FUEN Negative	0	0
9.3.3 FUEN No effect	1	1
9.4 KMAT	0	0
9.4.1 KMAT Positive	0	0
9.4.2 KMAT Negative	0	0
9.4.2 KMAT No effect	1	1
9.5 NATO	0	0
9.5.1 NATO Positive	3	3
9.5.2 NATO Negative	0	0
9.5.3 NATO No effect	2	2
9.6 US	6	10
9.6.1 US Positive	3	3
9.6.2 US Negative	0	0
9.6.3 US No effect	3	4
9.7 As Opportunity Structure	10	20
9.8 Generally not supportive	3	5
10. Kin State		
10.01 Type of party in power impacts policy	6	10
10.02 Influence on Hungarian minority party	2	2
10.03 Recognition of Hungarian minority party	6	8
10.04 Dual citizenship law	1	1
10.4.1 Dual citizenship - Positive	1	1
10.4.2 Dual citizenship - Negative	10	16
10.4.3 - Dual citizenship - no effect	8	9
10.4.4 Dual citizenship other	0	0

10.05 Election interference	0	0
10.5.1 Election interference Positive	0	0
10.5.2 Election interference Negative	0	0
10.5.3 Election interference no effect	0	0
10.5.4 Election interference - other	0	0
10.06 Financing	4	6
10.6.1 Financing - Positive	2	3
10.6.2 Financing - Negative	6	10
10.6.3 Financing - Other	3	3
10.07 Friendship Treaty	1	1
10.7.1 Friendship treaty - Positive	0	0
10.7.2 Friendship treaty Negative	0	0
10.7.3 Friendship treaty - no effect	0	0
10.08 General impact	1	1
10.8.1 General impact Positive	4	4
10.8.2 General impact Negative	5	8
10.8.3 General impact no effect	0	0
10.8.4 General impact other	4	4
10.09 Motivations	0	0
10.9.1 Motivations - Foreign policy	4	4
10.9.2 Motivations -electorate	3	5
10.10 Status Law	0	0
10.10.1 Status law -Positive	0	0
10.10.2 Status law -Negative	0	0
10.10.3 - Status law no effect	0	0
10.10.4 Status law - other	0	0
10.11 Relations with Romanian majority party	1	1
1000 Extra information	0	0
1000.1 Roma	2	2
1001 other people to contact - things to look up	11	26
11. Challenges – either taken from the interviewee's direct response to my question on challenges or brought up unprompted during the interview		
11.01 Civil Society	4	5
11.02 Implementation	10	21
11.03 Socio-Economic context	0	0
11.04 International context	1	2
11.05 Political parties	0	0
11.06 No future-Jövökép	2	2
11.07 Institutional isues	1	1
11.08 Backsliding post 2010	1	1
11.09 Collaboration between actors	1	1
11.10 Content and Strategy clarity	10	12
11.11 Independence from HU	1	1
11.12 Institutions and political culture not ready	4	5
11.13 International actors	2	2
11.14 Need evidence to sue	1	2
11.15 Political Will from Romanian State	4	5

11.16 Problem with integration	1	1
11.17 Romanian society	3	3
12. Successes – either taken from the interviewee's direct response to my question on challenges or brought up unprompted during the interview		
12.1 Yes Successes	7	9
12.2 No successes	5	6
13. Cross-Country references – to Slovakia	**8**	**21**
99. Quotes	**22**	**159**

Appendix D Sample of Interview Transcript and Coding

Note: NVivo uses coding stripes on the side navigation but it is not possible to export this. As a result, I've tried to reconstruct as best possible a section of an English-language transcript with Géza Tokár (2017).

(First question on the meaning of autonomy)			
Reply:	Code (coding frame number from Slovak coding frame)		
Well, I think the most common phrase which is connected to autonomy and also it might help to explain it to someone, maybe it is self-governance or autonomy like independence in various decisions, in making various decisions, for a community as a whole. This is I think what autonomy means for me and I would say that even for most of intellectuals, but of course, they would have their own opinion.	1.1.08 Institutions / decision-making	1.1.01 Collective/ community	
Maybe I could add that for the community, when we are talking about autonomy, for some people there is also a hidden meaning which is not…sometimes it is emphasised and sometimes it is not… but it is self-sustainability, or a system which creates a sustainable communities or regions, which is I think not really the point of the autonomy but it is still very well connected with this principle.			1.2.5 Self-Sustainability of community
2:40 And self-sustainability – is that of the system itself that is set-up, or the self-sustainability of the minority community?			
Of the minority community. And partially the regions where the community lives, even the regions including the Slovak communities.			1.2.5
3:10 Would you say that this view of autonomy is one that has been seen this way since the fall of communism, have there been changes in the way that autonomy has been thought about?			
I believe so. There's some theories especially … it is a common Slovak theory that the Hungarians see autonomy as the first step towards independence or the first step towards dissolution of the state, but I believe or at least I think so because I was born in 1984, so that means I was 6 when the Velvet Revolution came, so I'm not exactly sure what was the common conception about this, but according to my readings and everything I know about this topic for the Hungarians autonomy never had this kind of meaning.	1.2.6 Link to secession		

And Hungarians were rather seeking maybe an institutional guarantee of their self-governance and maybe even self-sustainability, if it would be possible. Although they never achieved that and of course there were the Slovak fears that really this is the beginning of much bigger or much meaningful phenomenon.		1.1.08	1.2.5
4:36 And if we unpack that a bit, what would be certain policy areas to which the idea of self-sustainability would apply to?			
I believe that it was not clearly defined. So if we are talking about autonomy in general, most of the times it is only a common conception and nobody really defines or specifies what they really mean about it. But of course if we are thinking about the most important issues for the Hungarians in Slovakia, and I think it was sometimes declared and sometimes not, but it was given that if somebody for the Hungarian community is talking about autonomy, he expects that it will also deal with cultural and educational issues. And partially economical. When I was talking about self-sustainability, there was also a conception that Slovakia actually only takes from the Southern regions and doesn't give back anything in return. Or this is a very disproportional connection between Slovakia and the regions which are inhabited by the Hungarians. I think this aspect of autonomy rather came into play after 2006 or 2007 and the SMK (MKP) started to emphasise the importance of the autonomy again. At that time, they started talking about the economical dimensions of the autonomy, I believe it was not so important, rather the educational and cultural aspect, before this time.	1.2.1 Elites-Not Defined 1.1.03 Cultural Autonomy 1.1.12 Economic Dimension	1.1.06 Educational Autonomy 1.2.5 Self-sustainability 4.1.1 Turning Point	

Appendix E Definitions of Sub-Policy Areas for Coding Purposes of Newspaper Archives

Table 13 Sub-Policy Area Definitions

Type of Policy	Definition
Culture Policy	Encompasses venues such as museums and theatres, cultural monuments, and minority language use in the media
General Cultural Policy	Example, need to respect the Hungarian culture
Culture Media	Example, demand for the provision of newspaper in Hungarian language
Culture Religion	Example, lack of provision of services in Hungarian
Culture Monuments	Example, demand to put up a statue of a Hungarian poet in the town centre.
Culture Venues	Example, absence of language translations in a museum
Cross-Border Culture Claims	Example, both Hungary and Hungarians in Slovakia put a funding bid to the EU to fund Hungarian-language theatres
International Culture Claims	Example, Hungarians in Slovakia put in a bid with Transylvanian Hungarians for a cultural project.
Education Policy	Covers education in the mother tongue, need for school supplies, closing of schools etc.
General Education Policy	Example, demand to develop Hungarian-language schooling (level of education not specified)
Primary-Secondary Education	Example, demanding to use Hungarian-language textbooks and geographic names in books for school children
Tertiary Education	Example, applications for funding to further develop the Komarom University
Cross-Border Education Claims	Example, both Hungary and Hungarians in Slovakia put together a claim to the EU to fund a project supporting Hungarian language education
International Education Claims	Example, Hungarians in Slovakia team up with either Hungarians in Romania or others for European funding for Hungarian language textbooks
Language Policy	Addresses usage of language in areas such as public administration and signposting. Language usage in other areas like education and cultural venues are coded to those categories instead, NOT to language.
General language	Example, recognition of Hungarian as a regional language
Street Signs-Railroad Signs	Example, claim for bilingual signs on the streets
Regional Development	This is a big category comprising of several sub-categories: Economic development, infrastructure, and

	cross-border and international partnerships for regional development.
General Regional Development	General statements linked to the importance of regional development. Example, this region is poorly developed and we need to attract funding for it.
Economic Development	Includes different economic sectors like tourism, agriculture and covers the need for investment and job creation. Example, Komárom needs to attract investment to keep young people from migrating.
Infrastructure Development	Linked to roads, waterways, trains, as well as buildings. Example, demand for R2 motorway construction.
Cross-Border General Regional Development	Claims made linked to Hungary and general regional development. Example, bidding for EU money for a joint city-development plan between the two Komároms (in Hungary and Slovakia).
Cross-Border Economic Development	Collaboration linked to economic development with Hungary. Example, needing to make better links between Hungary and Slovakia for the tourism sector.
Cross-Border Infrastructure Development	Collaboration linked to infrastructure development with Hungary. Example, demand for better bus links between the two towns of Komárom.
International Economic Development	Two or more partners for collaboration for economic development in their countries, or collaboration with one other country that is not Hungary. Example, winning money from a Norwegian fund to develop tourism between the Hungarian region in Ukraine and that of Slovakia.
Administrative Reform	Example, the administrative system does not help the Hungarian minorities and needs to be reformed.
EU Regionalisation	Anything linked to the EU and demands for better EU regions and regional structures. In practice, no relevant material was found in the archives.
Environment	This was coded to in case something interesting would come up linked to caring for one's region and environmental concerns and autonomy. In practice, no relevant material was found
Territorial autonomy	Claims for territorial autonomy

Appendix F Coding Frame for Newspaper Archives

Table 14 Coding Frame for *Komáromi Lapok*

Name	Files	References
01. Summary-Context-Background article		
1.1 Weekly commentary	0	0
1.2 Background financial information of the town	13	19
1.3 Other	5	6
1.4 KL and Komarom History	5	6
02. Events		
2.1 Commemoration of National Holiday-Identity	0	0
1848-49	0	0
15 March 1848	8	8
Aradi martyrs and Komárom heros	6	7
20 August	4	4
Hungarian cultural day	6	7
Other	0	0
Post-WWII Deportation-Benes	6	7
Benes Intl Conference-Civil Society	5	6
Trianon 1920	4	5
WWI	1	1
2.2 Visits	0	0
2.2.1 Visit within or to Slovakia	0	0
Another country official	12	13
Domestic Hungarian official	5	5
Domestic Slovak official	11	13
Transylvanian visit	2	2
EU institution	0	0
Kin-State unofficial visit	3	3
Kin-State visit	8	9
Other	0	0
Other international institution's official	1	1
Religious leaders	3	3
2.2.2 Visits from Slovakia TO somewhere outside of Slovakia	1	1
2.2.2.1 By a Slovak Official	0	0
Elsewhere	0	0
To Brussels	0	0
To Hungary	0	0
2.2.2. By a Hungarian-Slovak official	1	1
Elsewhere	1	1
To Brussels	0	0
To Hungary	0	0
2.2.3 Other diaspora	1	1
2.3 Elections	0	0
2.3.1 National Parliamentary elections	0	0

National - Candidate statements	9	25
National - results and analyses	1	1
National Info-Background	4	5
Other National	0	0
2.3.2 National Presidential elections	0	0
National - Candidate statements	0	0
National - results and analyses	0	0
National Info- Background	3	4
Other National	0	0
2.3.2 Regional elections	0	0
Other regional	0	0
Regional - pre-statements	2	5
Regional - results and analyses	1	1
Regional- info	2	2
2.3.3 Local elections	0	0
Local - info	2	3
Local - other	0	0
Local - pre-statements	2	3
Local - results and analyses	2	2
2.3.4 European elections	0	0
European – pre-statements	1	2
European - info	2	2
European other	0	0
European results and analyses	1	1
2.3.5 Elections other	0	0
2.3.6 Census	1	2
2.3.7 Referendum	0	0
Referenda - background info	1	1
Referenda - results and analyses	0	0
Referenda - statements	0	0
2.4 Meetings and Political Appointments	0	0
2.4.1 Local Government Meetings and appointments (this is where all the information about Local Council meetings went)	51	68
2.4.2 Party Congresses and Party Appointments	0	0
MKP	1	1
Most-Hid	0	0
Other	0	0
2.4.3 Government Appointments	0	0
MKP	0	0
Most-Hid	0	0
Other	0	0
2.4.4 Civil Society Meetings	11	11
2.4.5 Other	5	5
2.4.6 Conference Meetings inc Academic	9	9
2.4.7 Hungarian minority and Slovak meeting	1	1
2.4.8 Hungary-Slovak Meetings (National level)	1	1
2.4.9 Meetings Hungarian minority and others - German	3	3

2.5 New law-Events-Controversies (this is where background information went, if there were claims involved this would then get coded to claims under section **05**)	0	0
2.5.1 Dual citizenship	0	0
Descriptive	3	3
Negative	0	0
Other dual citizenship	0	0
Positive	1	1
2.5.2 Cultural Fund	0	0
Descriptive	1	1
Negative	0	0
Other Cultural Fund	0	0
Positive	0	0
2.5.3 Education Law 2009	0	0
Descriptive	1	1
2.5.4 KomVak Controversy (Water)	0	0
Background-History	7	8
Events-Happenings	15	23
2.5.5 Local Council Controversy 2011	4	8
2.5.6 Social Services Reform	0	0
Happenings	2	2
Info-descriptive	0	0
2.6 Funerals	0	0
2.6.1 Political-State Officials	0	0
2.6.2 Figures of Political Influence	0	0
2.7 Other	1	1
03. Social-Economic issues		
3.1 Demographic challenges-Existential Threat	11	11
3.2 Economic difficulties	0	0
Businesses	0	0
Economic Crisis	5	6
Euro Introduction	0	0
Unemployment	2	2
3.3 violence to Hungarians	0	0
3.4 Discrimination-Legal Protections	3	4
3.5 Other	1	1
05. Interviews-Statements-Speeches Domestic Actors 5.1 and 5.2 collect the statements by individuals or parties. The whole text is coded to the code. The content of the text is then coded to other categories, as appropriate. NB there is no **04** category but due to numbering issues in NVivo the current numbering was kept.		
5.1 Interview – General	0	0
5.1.1 MKP Member	0	0
5.1.1.1 MKP Local-Regional Level	4	4
5.1.1.2 MKP National level	2	2
MKP European level	3	3
5.1.2 Most-Hid Member	0	0
5.1.2.1 Most-Hid local-regional level	0	0

5.1.2.2 Most-Hid National level	7	7
5.1.3 RoundTable	0	0
5.1.4 Other	1	1
5.1.5 Local Leader -Mayor etc	7	8
5.2 Party Statement-Civil Society statement	0	0
5.2.1 MKP	4	5
5.2.2 Most-Hid	4	4
5.2.3 Round table	2	2
5.2.4 Other	2	2
5.3 Framing of Autonomy	0	0
As due to special position with the country	0	0
As natural right	0	0
As necessary	1	1
As self-rule	0	0
As unhelpful	0	0
For historical reasons	0	0
For recognition	0	0
Found in other countries	0	0
Foundation EU-domestic law	0	0
Lead to federalism	0	0
Other	2	2
Power relations with Bratislava	0	0
5.4 Claim	0	0

Definitions for the policy area sub-categories are in Appendix E.
Regarding the categories below, the rule is:

Descriptive information – about the policies in place, or laws, etc.

Financial information – who funds it, how much funding it usually receives etc.

Happenings – could be a meeting linked to the policy area, or a general event linked to the policy area

Claim: a lack, demand for something, need for something

Claim Money: asking money for something-a project bid or application for example

Claim Successful: if the article mentions success for a claim, it is coded here

Claim Unsuccessful: if the claim was unsuccessful (ex project money not granted, or demand for reform of language law not granted, etc)

5.4.0 General claim to autonomy	1	1
5.4.1 Culture	0	0
5.4.1.0 Culture General	0	0
Culture General Descriptive	2	3
Finance information (who spends what amount)	3	3
Other Cultural General	0	0
General Culture CLAIM	2	2
General Culture CLAIM MONEY	2	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	6	6
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
General Culture Event	0	0
5.4.1.1 Culture Media	0	0

Media Descriptive	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other Culture Media	0	0
Media CLAIM	1	1
MEDIA CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	2	2
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Media Event-Happening	2	2
5.4.1.2 Culture Religion	0	0
Religion general information	0	0
Financing	1	2
Other Culture Religion	0	0
Religion CLAIM	0	0
Religion CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Religion Event-Happening	14	15
5.4.1.3 Culture - street names, signs and statues	0	0
5.4.1.3.0 General Statues	0	0
Financing	1	1
General Happenings Controv	2	2
Cyril and Method statues	3	4
Other	1	1
Statues CLAIM	3	3
CLAIM FINANCE	11	11
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	11	11
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
5.4.1.3.2 Other Statues	0	0
5.4.1.4 Cultural Venues - museums, theatre	0	0
General Cultural venues	0	0
Language Usage	0	0
Duna Menti Muzeum	2	3
Financing	0	0
Other Cultural Venues	0	0
Culture Venues CLAIM	2	3
Culture Venues CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Venues events-Happenings	2	2
5.4.1.5 Cross-Border Cultural Dvpt	0	0
General Cross Border Cult HU-SK	0	0
CLAIM	6	6
CLAIM MONEY	3	3
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	4	4
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	10	11

Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.1.7 Other	0	0
5.4.2 Education	0	0
5.4.2.0 Education - General	0	0
Descriptive-Background	1	1
Education Events-Happenings	1	1
Finance	1	1
Educ CLAIM	0	0
Educ CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
5.4.2.1 Primary-secondary	0	0
General-Background-Descriptive	6	12
Education Events-Happenings	8	8
Financing	0	0
Educ CLAIM	10	11
Educ CLAIM MONEY	5	5
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	7	8
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	3	3
Other	2	2
5.4.2.2 University	0	0
Education Events-Happenings	3	3
Financing	2	3
General-Background-Descriptive	5	5
Educ CLAIM	0	0
Educ CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	2	2
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2.3 Intl Educ	0	0
Intl Educ Devpt General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	2	2
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	7	7
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2.4 Educ Other	0	0
5.4.3 Language usage	0	0
5.4.3.0 Language Usage General	0	0
Financing	0	0
General-Background-Descr	0	0
Lang Usage CLAIM	5	6
Lang Usage CLAIM MONEY	0	0

CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	1	1
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Lang Usage Events-Happenings	1	1
Other	0	0
5.4.3.1 Language law controversy	0	0
Financing	0	0
General Lang Law Descriptive	2	3
Lang Law Events-Happenings	1	1
Other - opinion pieces etc	2	2
Lang Law CLAIM	4	5
Lang Law CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
5.4.3.2 Railroad and Street signs	0	0
General signs background	0	0
Financing	0	0
CLAIM	1	1
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	3	3
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	2	2
Events-Happenings	1	1
Other	0	0
5.4.3.3 Other Language	0	0
5.4.4 Administrative Reform	0	0
General Admin Reform	0	0
Financing	0	0
CLAIM	2	2
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	1	1
Other	0	0
5.4.5 Regional Development	0	0
5.4.5.1 General Regional development	0	0
Events-Happenings	2	2
Financing	3	4
Rgl Development Background	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	1	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
5.4.5.1 Economic Dvpt	0	0
5.4.5.1.0 General Economic Development	1	1
5.4.5.1.1 Financing	2	3
CLAIM	10	11
CLAIM MONEY	8	11

CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	3	5
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	20	26
Other	0	0
5.4.5.2 Infrastructure Development	0	0
5.4.5.2.0 General Infrastructure Development	1	1
CLAIM	3	3
CLAIM MONEY	4	4
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	10	10
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	11	11
Financing	24	26
Other Infrastructure Devpt	0	0
5.4.5.3 Cross-border HU-SK Coop	0	0
5.4.5.3.0 Cross Border General	0	0
CLAIM	1	1
CLAIM MONEY	2	2
Claim Success	2	2
Claim Unsuccessful	0	0
Cr-Border General Happenings	11	12
Financing	2	2
5.4.5.3.1 Cross Border Economic Dpt	0	0
General Eco HU-SK Coop	0	0
CLAIM	5	5
CLAIM MONEY	7	8
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	8	8
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	11	13
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.5.3.3 Cross Border Infrastructure	0	0
General HU-SK Cooperation information	0	0
CLAIM	12	19
CLAIM MONEY	3	3
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	3	3
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	13	16
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.5.4 Intl Development	0	0
5.4.5.4.0 Intl Cross Border General	0	0
5.4.5.4.1 Intl Econ-Infrastructure Devpt	0	0
Intl Eco General	0	0
CLAIM	2	2
CLAIM MONEY	2	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	1	1

CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	5	9
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.5.4.2 Intl Dvpt Other	0	0
5.4.5.5 other Regional Dvpt	1	1
5.4.6 EU Regionalisation	0	0
Regionalisation General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.7 Environment	0	0
Environment General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	1	1
Financing	1	1
Other	0	0
5.4.8 Territorial autonomy	0	0
5.4.8.0 Territorial Autonomy general	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.9Other	0	0
5.5 Other	0	0
06. Interviews-statements-Speeches – Kin-State (**06** and **07** follow the same outline as 05, but for the issue of space and because most categories were not coded to, I am only pasting the categories which had content coded to them.)		
6.1 Interview General	0	0
6.1.1 Fidesz	0	0
6.1.2 MSZP-Soc etc	0	0
6.1.3 Ambassador	1	1
6.1.4 Other	4	6
6.2 Framing of Autonomy	0	0
As due to special position with the country	0	0
As natural right	0	0

As necessary	0	0
As self-rule	0	0
As unhelpful	0	0
For historical reasons	0	0
For recognition	0	0
Found in other countries	0	0
Foundation EU-domestic law	0	0
Lead to federalism	0	0
Other	1	1
Power relations with Bratislava	0	0
(no other content is coded to other categories)		
07. Interview-Statements-Speeches -Eur-International Actors		
7.1 Interview General	0	0
7.1.1 EU	0	0
7.1.2 Foreign Country	2	2
7.1.3 Council of Europe	0	0
7.1.4 OSCE	0	0
7.1.5 Intl NGO	0	0
7.1.6 Other	0	0
7.2 Framing of Autonomy	0	0
As due to special position with the country	0	0
As natural right	0	0
As necessary	1	1
As self-rule	0	0
As unhelpful	0	0
For historical reasons	0	0
For recognition	0	0
Found in other countries	0	0
Foundation EU-domestic law	0	0
Lead to federalism	0	0
Other	3	3
Power relations with Bratislava	0	0
Reciprocity of Min treatment	1	1
7.3 Claim	0	0
7.3.0 General claim to autonomy (Categories skipped until…)	0	0
7.3.3 Language usage	0	0
7.3.3.0 Language Usage General	0	0
7.3.3.1 Language law controversy	0	0
CLAIM	1	1
Claim Money	0	0
Claim Success	0	0
Claim Unsuccessful	0	0
Financing	0	0
General Lang Law controversy	0	0
Other	0	0
(Categories skipped until…)		

7.3.5.2 Infrastructure Development	0	0
7.3.5.2.0 General Infrastructure Development	0	0
CLAIM	3	3
Claim Money	0	0
Claim successful	0	0
Claim unsuccessful	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other Infrastructure Devpt	0	0
08. References-Evaluations		
8.1 Domestic leaders	0	0
8.1.1 Slovak	0	0
8.1.1.1 Meciar	0	0
General Meciar	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.1.1.3 Fico	0	0
General Fico	0	0
negative	2	2
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
8.1.1.4 Dzurinda	0	0
General Dzurinda	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.1.1.5 Iveta Radicova	0	0
Positive	2	3
Other	0	0
8.1.2 Hungarian (in Slovakia)	0	0
HU minority leaders - MKP	0	0
Csaky Pal	0	0
Info	1	1
General MKP leaders	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
HU minority leaders -Most Hid	0	0
General Hid leaders	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
Other	1	2
Coalition-Government	0	0
Funding given by	3	3
MKP in Coalition	0	0

Negative	1	1
Need to be in coalitoin	1	1
8.2 Domestic Parties	0	0
8.2.1 Slovak Parties	0	0
Negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
Slovak Parties - general-description	0	0
8.2.2 MKP	0	0
General MKP party description	0	0
Negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.2.3 Most-Hid	0	0
General Most-Hid party	1	1
Negative	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
8.2.4 Other	0	0
8.3 Civil Society actors	0	0
Descriptive Civil society actors	1	1
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
8.4 Kin state actors and leaders	0	0
8.4.1 General Kin-State	0	0
Descriptive Kin-State actors	0	0
Funding given by	11	11
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive - Cooperation	4	4
8.4.2 Kin-State Leaders	0	0
Gyurcsany	0	0
Gyurcsany - negative	1	1
Orban - General	0	0
Orban - Negative	0	0
Orban - Other	0	0
Orban - Positive	0	0
8.5 European-International Actors	0	0
8.5.1 Accession to NATO	0	0
8.5.1.0 General Accession	0	0
8.5.1.1 Positive NATO Accession	0	0
8.5.1.2 Negative	0	0
8.5.1.4 Other NATO	0	0
8.5.2 EU Accession	0	0
8.5.2.0 General EU Accession	0	0

negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.5.3 EU Actor	0	0
8.5.3.0 General EU	1	1
8.5.3.1 Positive EU	2	3
8.5.3.2 Negative EU	3	3
8.5.3.3 Financing EU	25	27
8.5.3.4 Other EU	0	0
EU - linked event	1	1
Financing	1	1
Reference to	1	1
8.6 Relations between actors	0	0
8.6.0 Inner party discord	0	0
Party-Split	1	2
Do not agree with it	1	1
Within MKP - Cirkusz -	1	1
Within MKP - KomVak	3	3
8.6.1 Between HU-minority political parties	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary to cooperate	1	1
Negative (criticism etc)	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	1	1
8.6.2 HU minority parties and Slovak parties	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	1	1
8.6.3 HU minority pol parties and civil society	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.4 HU minority parties and Hungary	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.5 HU minority parties and EU	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0

Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.6 HU minority parties and other international actors	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.7 Other relations	2	2
Hungarians(in SK) and Slovak Relations (people)	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	2	2
Hungary and Slovakia relations	0	0
Descriptive-Info	1	1
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	1	1
Negative (criticism etc)	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	1	1
Other	0	0
09.0 Other		
9.1 Education Relation	6	8
9.2 Employment related	0	0
9.3 Other	0	0
9.4 Csemadok	2	2
9.5 Hospitals	3	3
9.6 Roma	3	3
10. Quotes	**2**	**2**

Table 15 Coding Frame for *Gömöri Hírlap*.

Name	Files	References
01. Summary-Context-Background article		
1.1 Weekly Commentary or RV	62	62
1.2 Background financial information	17	21
1.2.1 Rimaszombat in Debt	6	8
1.3 Other	0	0
1.4 Newspaper's history	7	8
1.5 History Articles	12	12
1.6 Previous years' summary highlights	6	6
02. Events		
2.1 Commemoration of National Holiday-Identity	0	0
1848-9 Freedom fight	0	0
15 March 1848	12	18
1849 Dubicsanyi Csata	1	1
Arad Martyrs	8	11
20 August	3	3
60 years of Hungarian schools	2	2
Deportation - Malenkij Robot - Benes-Abafal	6	7
Hungarian cultural day	2	2
October 1956	4	4
Slovak constitution	1	1
Slovak National Awakening day	7	7
Trianon 1920	3	3
2.2 Visits	0	0
2.2.1 Visit within or to Slovakia	0	0
Another country official	4	4
Domestic Hungarian official	2	2
Domestic Slovak official	22	22
Transylvanian visit	1	1
EU institution	0	0
Kin-State Unofficial	0	0
Kin-State visit	8	9
Local visits	1	1
Other	0	0
Other intl inst official	0	0
Religious leader	1	1
2.2.2 Visits from Slovakia TO somewhere outside of Slovakia	0	0
2.2.2.1 By a Slovak Official	0	0
Elsewhere	0	0
To Brussels	0	0
To Hungary	0	0
2.2.2.2 By a Hungarian-Slovak official	0	0
Elsewhere	0	0
To Brussels	0	0

To Hungary	0	0
2.2.3 Other diaspora	1	1
2.3 Elections	0	0
2.3.0 Elections general and background crosscut	2	2
2.3.1 National Parl elections	0	0
National - info-background	16	19
National - Pre-statements	6	12
National - results and analyses	6	11
Other National	0	0
2.3.2 National Presidential	0	0
National - info-background	5	6
National - Pre-statements	0	0
National - results and analyses	6	6
Other National	0	0
2.3.2 Regional elections	0	0
Other regional	0	0
Regional - pre-statements	6	12
Regional - results and analyses	6	12
Regional info	12	19
2.3.3 Local elections	0	0
Local - info	11	13
Local - other	0	0
Local - pre-statements	3	6
Local - results and analyses	15	19
2.3.4 European elections	0	0
European - info	2	2
European - prestatements	0	0
European other	0	0
European results and analyses	1	1
2.3.5 Elections other	0	0
2.3.6 Referenda	0	0
Other Referenda	0	0
Referenda - info-background	5	5
Referenda - Pre-statements	0	0
Referenda- results and analyses	1	2
2.3.7 Census	3	4
2.4 Meetings and Political Appointments	0	0
2.4.1 Local Government Meetings and appts	65	82
2.4.2 Party Congresses and Party Appointments	0	0
Kereszteny Demokrata Mozgalom	1	1
MKP	15	15
Via Nova Meetings	13	13
Most-Hid	3	3
Other	0	0
2.4.3 Government Appointments	0	0
MKP	0	0

Most-Hid	4	4
Other	0	0
2.4.4 Civil Society Meetings	16	17
2.4.5 Other	2	2
2.4.6 Conference Meetings-and Academic-	9	9
2.4.7 Hungary Slovakia (National level) Meetings	2	2
2.4.8 Hung Minority and other country meetings	0	0
2.5 New law (this is where background information went, if there were claims involved this would then get coded to claims under section **05**)	0	0
2.5.1 Language Law and see CLAIMS section	0	0
Descriptive	0	0
Negative	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
2.5.2 Dual citizenship	0	0
claim to have	1	1
Descriptive	5	6
Negative	1	1
Other dual citizenship aspects	2	2
Positive	0	0
2.5.3 Patriotism Law	0	0
Info background	4	4
2.5.4 Hungarikum Law	1	1
2.6 Funerals	0	0
2.6.1 Political-State Officials	1	1
2.6.2 Figures of Political Influence	2	4
2.7 Other	1	1
03. Social-Economic issues		
3.1 Demographic challenges - inc emmigration	20	23
3.2 Economic issues	0	0
Businesses	1	1
Economic Crisis	15	16
Euro introduction	3	3
unemployment	10	10
3.3 violence to Hungarians	0	0
3.4 Discrimination and legal protections	5	5
3.5 Other-inc representation-identity	7	7
05. Interviews-Statements-Speeches Domestic Actors 5.1 and 5.2 collect the statements by individuals or parties. The whole text is coded to the code. The content of the text is then coded to other categories, as appropriate. NB there is no **04** category but due to numbering issues in NVivo the current numbering was kept.		
5.1 Interview - General	0	0
5.1.1 MKP	0	0
5.1.1.1 MKP Local-Regional Level	8	8
5.1.1.2 MKP National level	0	0

5.1.2 Most-Hid	0	0
5.1.2.1 Most-Hid local-regional level	2	2
5.1.2.2 Most-Hid National level	2	3
5.1.3 Civil Society	0	0
other Civil Society	4	4
Roundtable	1	1
5.1.4 Other	6	7
Local Council-Local Rgl Leaders	9	10
Mayor or Mayoral candidates or council candidates	24	36
5.2 Party Statement-Civil Society statement	0	0
5.2.1 MKP	7	7
5.2.2 Most-Hid	0	0
5.2.3 Round table	2	2
5.2.4 Other	1	1
5.3 Framing of Autonomy	0	0
As due to special position with the country	0	0
As natural right	0	0
As necessary	1	1
As self-rule	1	1
As unhelpful	0	0
For historical reasons	0	0
For recognition	0	0
Found in other countries	0	0
Foundation EU-domestic law	0	0
Lead to federalism	0	0
Other	0	0
Power relations with Bratislava	0	0
5.4 Claim		
Definitions for the policy area sub-categories are in Appendix E. Regarding the categories below, the rule is:		
Descriptive information – about the policies in place, or laws, etc.		
Financial information – who funds it, how much funding it usually receives etc.		
Happenings – could be a meeting linked to the policy area, or a general event linked to the policy area		
Claim: a lack, demand for something, need for something		
Claim Money: asking money for something-a project bid or application for example		
Claim Successful: if the article mentions success for a claim, it is coded here		
Claim Unsuccessful: if the claim was unsuccessful (ex project money not granted, or demand for reform of language law not granted, etc)		
5.4.0 General claim to autonomy-meaning	3	4
Historical article on Dunaszerdahely	1	1
5.4.1 Culture	0	0
5.4.1.0 Culture General	0	0
Culture General Descriptive	1	1
Finance	10	11

Other Cultural General	0	0
General Culture CLAIM	4	4
General Culture CLAIM MONEY	2	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	6	6
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	3	3
General Culture Event	9	9
5.4.1.1 Culture Media	0	0
Media Descriptive	1	1
Financing	0	0
Media CLAIM	7	7
MEDIA CLAIM MONEY	1	1
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	6	7
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Other Culture Media	0	0
Media Event-Happening	9	9
5.4.1.2 Culture Religion	0	0
Religion general	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other Religion	2	2
Religion CLAIM	1	1
Religion CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Relgn Event-Happening	11	12
5.4.1.3 Culture - street names, signs and statues	0	0
5.4.1.3.0 General Statues	0	0
Financing	1	1
General-Happenings-Controversies	8	8
Janko Jesensky	1	1
Szlovak Statues	1	1
Other	0	0
Statues CLAIM	6	6
Statues CLAIM FINANCE	1	1
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	5	5
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
5.4.1.4 Cultural Venues Events - museums, theatre	0	0
General Cultural venues	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other Cultural Venues	0	0
Culture Venues CLAIM	2	2
Culture Venues CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Venues events-Happenings	1	1
5.4.1.5 Other	0	0
5.41.6 Cross-Border Cult Dvpt	0	0

General Cross Border Cult HU-SK	0	0
CLAIM	1	1
CLAIM MONEY	2	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	1	1
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	5	5
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.1.7 Intl Cult Development	0	0
Intl Cultural General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	10	10
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2 Education	0	0
5.4.2.0 Education - General	0	0
Educ CLAIM	3	3
Educ CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Education Events-Happenings	1	1
Financing	0	0
General-Background-Description	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2.1 Primary-secondary	0	0
Educ CLAIM	16	20
Educ CLAIM MONEY	2	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	3	3
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	5	5
Education Events-Happenings	14	16
Financing	3	3
General-Background-Descriptive	9	10
Other	2	2
5.4.2.2 University	0	0
Educ CLAIM	0	0
Educ CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Education Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
General-Background-Descr	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2.3 Cross-Border Educ Dvpt	0	0

General Cross Border Educ HU-SK	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2.4 Intl Educ Development	0	0
Intl Educ General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	1	1
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	6	6
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.2.5 Educ Other	0	0
5.4.3 Language usage	0	0
5.4.3.0 Language Usage General	0	0
Financing	0	0
General-Background-Descr	1	1
Lang Usage CLAIM	7	7
Lang Usage CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Lang Usage Events-Happenings	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.3.1 Language law controversy	0	0
Financing	0	0
General Lang Law Descriptive	2	2
Lang Law CLAIM	10	11
Lang Law CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Lang Law Events-Happenings	9	11
Other	0	0
5.4.3.2 Railroad and Street signs	0	0
General information	0	0
CLAIM	3	3
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	2	3
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	2	2
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0

5.4.3.3 Other Language	0	0
5.4.4 Administrative Reform	0	0
General Admin Reform	0	0
Financing	0	0
CLAIM	3	3
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Descriptive-Background-Admin system	2	2
Events-Happenings	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.5 Regional Development -	0	0
5.4.5.0 General Regional development	0	0
CLAIM	8	8
CLAIM MONEY	5	5
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	2	2
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	13	15
Financing	0	0
Rgl Development Background	1	1
5.4.5.1 Economic Dvpt	0	0
General Economic Development	0	0
Financing	2	2
CLAIM	26	42
CLAIM MONEY	4	4
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	4	6
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	4	4
Events-Happenings	38	43
Kurinc-Strands	15	15
Nograd Geopark	1	1
Other inc kin state conferences	8	8
Tourism - Cyling	2	2
Yura	3	3
ZTS	7	8
Other	0	0
5.4.5.2 Infrastructure Development	0	0
General Infrastructure Development	1	1
CLAIM	38	53
R2	5	5
CLAIM MONEY	14	14
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	5	5
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	5	5
Events-Happenings	16	17
RRD closing down	8	8
Financing	20	22
Other Infrastructure Devpt	0	0

5.4.5.3 Cross-border HU-SK Coop	0	0
5.4.5.3.0 Cross-Border General	0	0
Cr-Border General Events-Happenings	5	5
Cross-Border Gen CLAIM MONEY	5	5
Cross-Border General CLAIM	3	4
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	1	1
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Financing	0	0
General-Background-Description	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.5.3.1 Cross Border Economic Dvpt	0	0
General Eco HU-SK Coop	0	0
CLAIM	1	1
CLAIM MONEY	2	2
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	2	2
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	12	14
Geopark	6	6
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.5.3.2 Cross-Border Infrastructure	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	1	1
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Cross Border Infrastr CLAIM	1	1
Cross-Border Infrast Background Info	0	0
Cross-Border Infrast Event-Happenings	1	1
Cross-Border Infrastr CLAIM MONEY	0	0
Cross-Border Infrastr Financing	0	0
Other Cross-Border INfrastructure	0	0
5.4.5.4 Intl Cross-Border Dvpt	0	0
5.4.5.4.0 Intl Cross Border General	0	0
Intl Cr-Border General CLAIM	0	0
Intl Cr-Border CLAIM MONEY	0	0
Intl Cr-Border CLAIM SUCCESS	0	0
Intl Cr-Border CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Intl Cr-Border Financing	0	0
Intl Cr-Border Other	0	0
Intl Cross Border General Event-Happening	0	0
5.4.5.4.1 Intl Econ Devpt	0	0
Intl Eco General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	1	1
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0

OTher	0	0
5.4.5.4.3 Intl Dvpt Other	0	0
5.4.5.5 other Regional Dvpt	0	0
5.4.6 EU Regionalisation	0	0
5.4.6.0 EU Regionalisation General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.7 Environment	0	0
5.4.7.0 Environment General	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.8 Territorial autonomy	0	0
5.4.8.0 Territorial Autonomy general	0	0
CLAIM	0	0
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Events-Happenings	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
5.4.9Other	0	0
5.5 Other	0	0
06. Interviews-statements-Speeches – KinState (**06** and **07** follow the same outline as 05, but for the issue of space and because most categories were not coded to, I am only pasting the categories which had content coded to them.)		
6.1 Interview General	0	0
6.1.1 Orban	1	1
6.1.2 MSZP-Soc etc	0	0
6.1.3 Ambassador	1	1
6.1.4 Other	2	2
6.2 Framing of Autonomy	0	0
As due to special position with the country	0	0
As natural right	0	0
As necessary	0	0
As self-rule	0	0
As unhelpful	0	0

For historical reasons	0	0
For recognition	0	0
Found in other countries	0	0
Foundation EU-domestic law	0	0
Lead to federalism	0	0
Other	0	0
Power relations with Bratislava	0	0
6.3 Claim	0	0
6.3.0 General claim to autonomy	2	2
6.3.1 Culture	0	0
6.3.1.0 Culture General	0	0
Culture General Descriptive	0	0
Finance	0	0
Claim	1	1
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Other Cultural General	0	0
(Categories skipped until…)		
6.3.2 Education	0	0
6.3.2.1 Education – Primary-Secondary	0	0
Claim	2	2
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Financing	0	0
General	0	0
Other	0	0
(Categories skipped until…)		
6.3.8 Territorial autonomy	0	0
Territorial Autonomy general	0	0
Claim	1	1
CLAIM MONEY	0	0
CLAIM SUCCESSFUL	0	0
CLAIM UNSUCCESSFUL	0	0
Financing	0	0
Other	0	0
07. Interview-Statements-Speeches -Eur.Intnl		
(Whole category empty).		
08. References-Evaluations		
8.1 Domestic leaders-Coalitions	0	0
8.1.1 Slovak	0	0
8.1.1.1 Meciar	0	0
General Meciar	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.1.1.2 Fico	0	0

General Fico	1	1
negative	19	21
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.1.1.3 Dzurinda	0	0
General Dzurinda	0	0
negative	3	3
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
8.1.1.4 Gasparovic	1	1
Other	0	0
8.1.1.5 Radicova -	1	1
8.1.2 Hungarian Minority	0	0
HU minority leaders - MKP	0	0
General MKP leaders	0	0
negative	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
HU minority leaders -Most Hid	0	0
General Hid leaders	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
Other	0	0
Sk Government coalitions-Evaluations General	0	0
2006 SMER-HZDS-SNP	1	1
2009+ whoever is in gvmt...	0	0
Negative	9	9
Funding given by	7	8
8.2 Domestic Parties	0	0
8.2.1 Slovak Parties	0	0
HZD new party	2	2
Negative	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
Slovak Parties - general-description	0	0
8.2.2 MKP	0	0
General MKP party	0	0
Negative	4	4
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
Via Nova MKP	0	0
Eval - negative	0	0
Eval- positive	0	0
General Info	1	1
8.2.3 Most-Hid	0	0

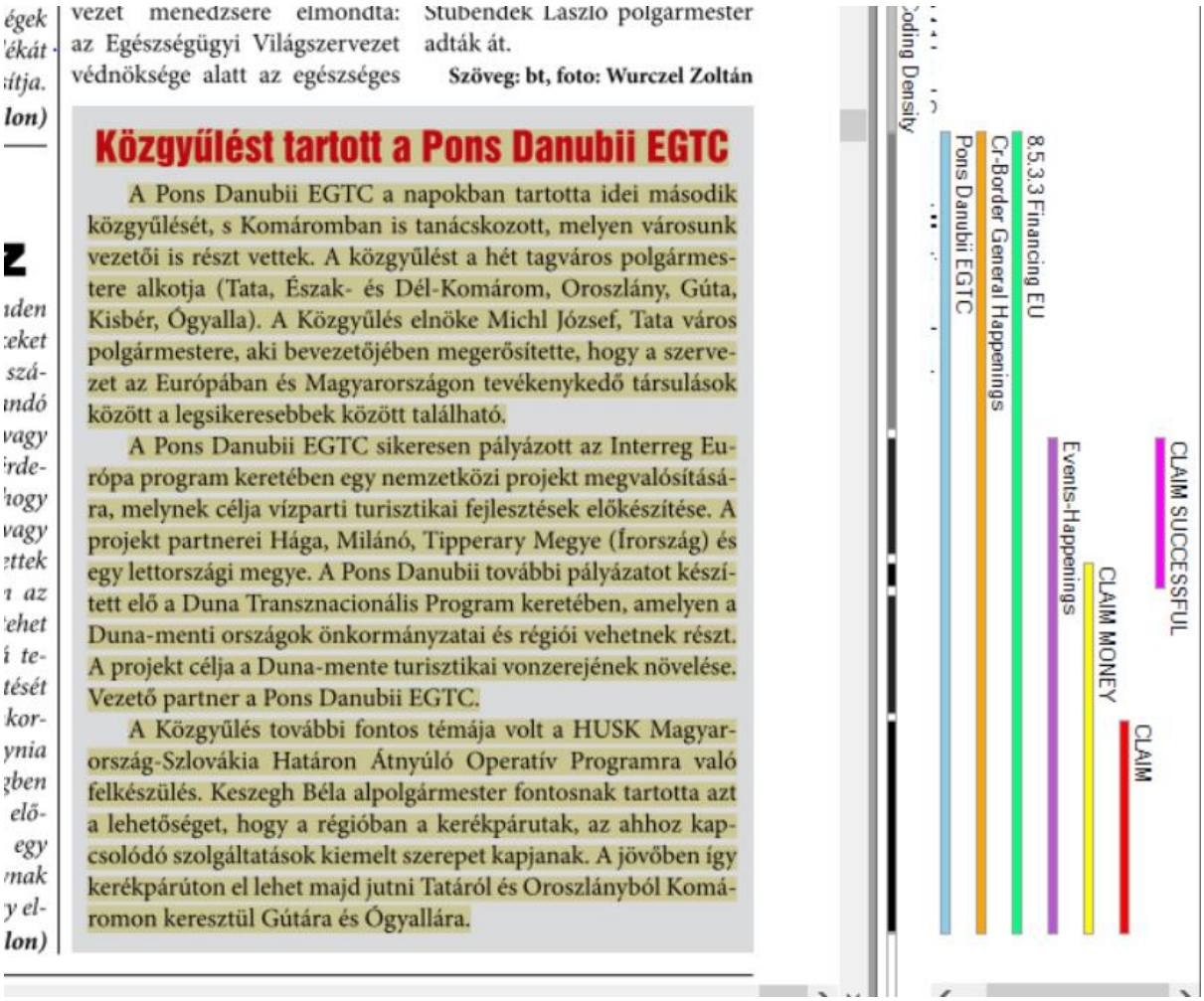
General Most-Hid party	1	1
Negative	6	7
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
8.2.4 Other	0	0
8.3 Civil Society actors	0	0
Descriptive Civil society actors	1	1
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	1	1
8.4 Kin state actors and leaders	0	0
8.4.1 General Kin-State	0	0
Descriptive Kin-State actors	2	2
Funding given by	24	31
negative	1	1
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.4.2 Kin-State Leaders	0	0
Gyurcsany-MSZP government	0	0
Negative	1	1
Orban - General	0	0
Orban - Negative	6	6
Orban - Other	0	0
Orban - Positive	0	0
8.5 European-International Actors	0	0
8.5.1 Accession to NATO	0	0
8.5.1.0 General Accession	0	0
8.5.1.1 Positive NATO Accession	0	0
8.5.1.2 Negative	0	0
8.5.1.4 Other NATO	0	0
8.5.2 EU Accession	0	0
8.5.2.0 General EU Accession	0	0
negative	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive	0	0
8.5.3 EU Actor	0	0
8.5.3.0 General EU	0	0
8.5.3.1 Positive EU	4	5
8.5.3.2 Negative EU	3	3
8.5.3.3 Financing EU	24	25
8.5.3.4 Other EU	0	0
Other International Actor	0	0
Funding given by	2	2
8.6 Relations between actors	0	0
8.6.0 Inner Party discord	0	0
8.6.0 Party split	9	10

opinion piece	1	1
within Most-Hid	2	2
8.6.1 Between HU-minority political parties	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	3	3
Other inc for elections cooperation	7	8
Positive (cooperation etc)	3	4
8.6.2 HU minority parties and Slovak parties	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.3 HU minority pol parties and civil society	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	1	1
8.6.4 HU minority parties and Hungary	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.5 HU minority parties and EU	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.6 HU minority parties and other intl actors	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	0	0
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	0	0
8.6.7 Other relations	0	0
8.6.8 Centre-Local	5	5
8.6.9 Hungarians(SK) and Slovak Relations	0	0
Difficult	0	0
Necessary	3	3
Negative (criticism etc)	0	0
Other	0	0
Positive (cooperation etc)	5	5

8.6.10 Hungary and Slovakia (National) Relations	1	1
Negative	1	3
Positive-Important	2	2
8.6.11 Local Level - or local-regional - local collaboration	0	0
Negative	5	6
Positive-or needs to be Positive	7	9
8.7 Other	0	0
Local media	1	1
US – Money	1	1
09.0 Other		
Education related	10	10
Csemadok	18	18
Environment	20	22
Hospitals	5	6
Roma	37	44
Social policy -children and	5	5
10. Quotes	**6**	**7**

Appendix G Sample of Coding for Newspaper Archives

Coding was done all in NVivo. It is not possible to export the articles with the coding stripes on the right, but below is a print-screen image of an example. To further illustrate the coding, the article was then copy-pasted below in a table and the codes placed in (using the coding frame from Appendix F for Komáromi Lapok). A translation of the article is also provided.
From *Komáromi Lapok* No. 13 from 13 July, 2016 p.1



vezet menedzsere elmondta: az Egészségügyi Világszervezet védnöksége alatt az egészséges

Stubendek László polgármester adták át.

Szöveg: bt, foto: Wurczel Zoltán

Közgyűlést tartott a Pons Danubii EGTC

A Pons Danubii EGTC a napokban tartotta idei második közgyűlését, s Komáromban is tanácskozott, melyen városunk vezetői is részt vettek. A közgyűlést a hét tagváros polgármestere alkotja (Tata, Észak- és Dél-Komárom, Oroszlány, Gúta, Kisbér, Ógyalla). A Közgyűlés elnöke Michl József, Tata város polgármestere, aki bevezetőjében megerősítette, hogy a szervezet az Európában és Magyarországon tevékenykedő társulások között a legsikeresebbek között található.

A Pons Danubii EGTC sikeresen pályázott az Interreg Európa program keretében egy nemzetközi projekt megvalósítására, melynek célja vízparti turisztikai fejlesztések előkészítése. A projekt partnerei Hága, Milánó, Tipperary Megye (Írország) és egy lettországi megye. A Pons Danubii további pályázatot készített elő a Duna Transznacionális Program keretében, amelyen a Duna-menti országok önkormányzatai és régiói vehetnek részt. A projekt célja a Duna-mente turisztikai vonzerejének növelése. Vezető partner a Pons Danubii EGTC.

A Közgyűlés további fontos témája volt a HUSK Magyarország-Szlovákia Határon Átnyúló Operatív Programra való felkészülés. Keszegh Béla alpolgármester fontosnak tartotta azt a lehetőséget, hogy a régióban a kerékpárutak, az ahhoz kapcsolódó szolgáltatások kiemelt szerepet kapjanak. A jövőben így kerékpárúton el lehet majd jutni Tatáról és Oroszlányból Komáromon keresztül Gútára és Ógyallára.

Közgyűlést tartott a Pons Danubii EGTC	Code (coding frame number from Komáromi Lapok coding frame)				
Közgyűlést tartott a Pons Danubii EGTC A Pons Danubii EGTC a napokban tartotta idei második közgyűlését, s Komáromban is tanácskozott, melyen városunk vezetői is részt vettek. A közgyűlést a hét tagváros polgármestere alkotja (Tata, Észak- és Dél-Komárom, Oroszlány, Gúta, Kisbér, Ógyalla). A Közgyűlés elnöke Michl József, Tata város polgármestere, aki bevezetőjében megerősítette, hogy a szervezet az Európában és Magyarországon tevékenykedő társulások között a legsikeresebbek között található. A Pons Danubii EGTC sikeresen pályázott az Interreg Európa program keretében egy nemzetközi projekt megvalósítására, melynek célja vízparti turisztikai fejlesztések előkészítése. A projekt partnerei Hága, Milánó, Tipperary Megye (Írország) és egy lettországi megye. A Pons Danubii további pályázatot készített elő a Duna Transznacionális Program keretében, amelyen a Duna-menti országok önkormányzatai és régiói vehetnek részt. A projekt célja a Duna-mente turisztikai vonzerejének növelése. Vezető partner a Pons Danubii EGTC. A Közgyűlés további fontos témája volt a HUSK Magyarország-Szlovákia Határon Átnyúló Operatív Programra való felkészülés. Keszegh Béla alpolgármester fontosnak tartotta azt a lehetőséget, hogy a régióban a kerékpárutak, az ahhoz kapcsolódó szolgáltatások kiemelt szerepet kapjanak. A jövőben így kerékpárúton el lehet majd jutni Tatáról és Oroszlányból Komáromon keresztül Gútára és Ógyallára.	5.4.5.4.1 Happenings	8.5.3.3 EU Finance	5.4.5.4.1 Happenings	5.4.5.4.1 Claim Money	5.4.5.4.1 success 5.4.5.3.1 Claim

Translation (summary)

Pons Danubii is one of the most successful associations in Europe and Hungary.
It was successful in its bid to the Interreg Europa program with an international project with the goal to further development water tourism. The project partners are Milan, Tipperary county and a county in Latvia.
Pons Danubii also put in a bid for the countries along the Danube within the Duna Transnational Program. The project's goal is to increase tourism along the Danube.
The local council also talked about the preparation for the HUSK Hungary-Slovakia Cross-Border Operational Program. The Deputy Mayor thought it was important for the region to have bicycle paths and other related services so that in the future one could cycle from Oroszlány or Tata (in Hungary) through Komárom to Gúta and Ógyalla (in Slovakia).

Example 2: From *Komáromi Lapok* No. 13 from 9 July, 2010 p.4



4 KOMÁROMI LAPOK Önkormányzat

Elutasító válasz a helységnév-táblák ügyében

Az egyes komáromi városrészek magyar megnevezésének ügyében, vagyis hogy a város két nyelven, a szlovák mellett magyarul is feltüntethesse az egyes külterületek nevét, nem történt előrelépés, pedig a lakosság jelentős része is támogatta ezt – mondotta sajtótájékoztatóján Kovács Péter, a városi hivatal elöljárója. A város kezdeményezésére rendre nemleges válasz érkezett.

A közlekedési hatóság arra hivatkozott, hogy a táblákat nem helyezheti el az egyes külterületeken, mivel ezt minisztériumi rendelet szabályozza pontosan.

A belügyminisztérium – melytől az említett rendelet módosítását remélte a városi hivatal, az állami rendőrségnek utalta át a kérést, amely szintén elutasította azt: arra hivatkozva, hogy a kisebbségekről szóló jogszabály nem szabályozza a kétnyelvű táblák ügyét. Komárom városa ezután minden szóban forgó városrész ügyében, külön-külön fordult az illetékes hivatalokhoz, ám Kovács Péter hivatalvezető tájékoztatása szerint mindenünnen elutasító válasz érkezett. Elmondta, hogy Bastrnák Tibor polgármester parlamenti képviselőként szorgalmazni fogja a jogszabály módosítását, de a városvezetés egyéb, törvényes, hivatalos megoldásra is igyekszik rálelni.

Így például, ha lesznek olyan polgárok, akik beleegyezésüket adják, hogy a tulajdonukat képező területükön helyezzék el a táblákat, akkor a város ezt a kezdeményezni fogja.

Elutasító válasz a helységnév-táblák ügyében	Code (coding frame number from Komáromi Lapok coding frame)		
Az egyes komáromi városrészek magyar megnevezésének ügyében, vagyis hogy a város két nyelven, a szlovák mellett magyarul is feltüntethesse az egyes külterületek nevét, nem történt előrelépés, pedig a lakosság jelentős része is támogatta ezt – mondotta sajtótájékoztatóján Kovács Péter, a városi hivatal elöljárója. A város kezdeményezésére rendre nemleges válasz érkezett. A közlekedési hatóság arra hivatkozott, hogy a táblákat nem helyezheti el az egyes külterületeken mivel ezt minisztériumi rendelet szabályozza pontosan. A belügyminisztérium – melytől az említett rendelet módosítását remélte a városi hivatal, az állami rendőrségnek utalta át a kérést, amely szintén elutasította azt: arra hivatkozva, hogy a kisebbségekről szóló jogszabály nem szabályozza a kétnyelvű táblák ügyét. Komárom városa ezután minden szóban forgó városrész ügyében, külön-külön fordult az illetékes hivatalokhoz, ám Kovács Péter hivatalvezető tájékoztatása szerint mindenünnen elutasító válasz érkezett.	5.4.3.2 Events	5.4.3.2 Unsuccessful	
Elmondta, hogy Bastrnák Tibor polgármester parlamenti képviselőként szorgalmazni fogja a jogszabály módosítását, de a városvezetés egyéb, törvényes, hivatalos megoldásra is igyekszik rálelni. Így például, ha lesznek olyan polgárok, akik beleegyezésüket adják, hogy a tulajdonukat képező területükön helyezzék el a táblákat, akkor a város ezt a kezdeményezni fogja.			5.4.3.2 Claim

Translation:

Despite a large proportion of resident's supporting the issue, there was no step forward in the provision of Hungarian-language signs, that is for the city's two languages to be put up – Hungarian alongside the Slovak – on signs in Komarom's outer areas. The city's demand received a final 'no'. The transportation authorities said that signs on the outskirts of Komarom cannot be put up because only Ministerial orders can regulate these types of signs. The Interior Ministry – from where the city council was hoping for a reform – passed the question to the state police who also turned down the request arguing that the Law on Minority Languages does not regulate bilingual signs. The city council then turned again to all the above-mentioned offices but Kovacs Peter said his query was rejected from all the offices.
He said that the town's mayor, Bastrnak Tibor, as a member of parliament, will work for the modification of the law, but the city's leadership is looking for other legal options as well. In this vein, if there will be citizens who agree to putting up bilingual signs on their private property, then the city council will support such a measure.

Appendix H Categories for Local Level Dataset

Table 16 Coding Categories for Dataset on Autonomy Claims from the Local Archives

Category	Definition/Specification as Necessary
Claim Type[a]	All of these are counted as claims; but they are broken down for more information
Claim	A need, a lack, a demand, or a goal to achieve something
Claim Money	Claim for money
Successful	Result reported of the claim
Unsuccessful	Result reported of the claim
Claiming Actor Level	
Local	Local actor making a claim
Local Cross-Border	Local level actors from Hungary and Slovakia making a claim
Regional	
Hungary Local	A local actor in Hungary making a claim
Hungary National	A national actor in Hungary making a claim
National	National Slovak
National Cross-Border	National actors in Slovakia and Hungary making a claim
European	European actor making a claim
Individual or Joint Claim	One person/unit (Local Council) or joint as between individuals, political parties, different actors
Claiming Actor Affiliation	If political party, state it
Claiming Actor Type	
Association	Dunamente or Pons Danubii; they are not businesses but rather are organisations that groups together businesses
Government	Includes local councils, local assemblies, local representatives
Mayor or Deputy Mayor	
Civil Society Actors	
Business	
Experts	Such as a water expert, a culture expert like head of a museum, or a journalist
Cultural Institution	Like a theatre
School	
Agency	An institution like Career Centre
Ethnicity[b]	
Hungarian	If it is *clearly* a Hungarian actor. Pons Danubii and Dunamente fall under this category, for example, or an MKP politician.
Other	If it is *not specified*, or involves several actors including but not only Hungarians (like a Local Council), members which are

	half Hungarian/half Slovak, or organisations operating for civic reasons rather than ethnic ones.
Level Claimed To	
General	Instances when an arena or actor is not explicitly targeted in the newspaper article. Example: A statement by MKP saying that Hungarians need more investment to keep young people in the region. This statement does not specify who MKP is targeting but it is still placing a demand.
Local	Slovak local level
Regional	Slovak regional level
Hungary	Hungary (country) level
National	Slovak national level
European	European level
External	Cited as an 'external' actor, but not specified

a. Note on counting claims: Several "claims" can be related to the same topic. For example, claims for the construction of the Elisabeth bridge were made on several occasions and coded separately.

b. Note on ethnicity: While on the national level it is more clear when claims come from ethnic Hungarian elite actors – such as political parties MKP and Most-Híd – the distinction is harder to enforce on the local level. In general, for claims to regional development it became obvious that separating out the two categories of ethnicity would be impractical. For example, there are Hungarians in the local council but the entire local council would classify under "other"; a mayor who is half-Hungarian and half-Slovak also fell under "other". Yet, in both instances, the claims could be in support of regional development benefitting the Hungarian minority as well as the Slovak population. Consequently, claims come from both the 'Hungarian' and 'Other' ethnicity category.

Table 17 Example of Dataset for Local Level Claims

01 Claim topic	02 Type of Claim	03 Claiming Actor Level	04 Individual-Joint	05 Claiming Actor Affiliation	06 Claiming Actor Type	07 Ethnicity	08 Claim By	09 Claim To
1. Infrastructure-R2	Claim	Local	Individual	Independent	Mayor	Other	Šimko József	Ján Figel Transport Minister
2. Komáromi Bridge	Claim Money	National CrossBorder	Joint	NA	Government	Other	Hungary-Slovakia	CEF, EU's Connecting Europe Facility
10 Level Claimed To	**11 Type of Actor Claimed To**	**12 Content**	**13 Amount**	**14 Other links**	**15 Newspaper**	**16 Year**	**17 Month**	**18 Reference**
1. (continued) National	Ministry	A talalkozó fő témája természetesen a hosszú évek óta elhanyagolt gömöri régió fejlesztési volt…szóba került az R2 gyorsforgalmi út kiépitése is[a]	NA	NA	*Gömöri Hírlap*	2011	Oct	GH2011no40p1
2. (continued) European	EU	hogy Szlovákia Magyarországgal közösen 2015 februárjában nyújtotta be támogatási igényét a CEF, vagyis az Európai Hálózatfejlesztési Eszköz uniós alaphoz. Jelenleg a pályázatok kiértékelése zajlik, és szeptemberben lesz ismert, hogy az új komáromi híd kap-e uniós támogatást.[b]	Not specified	CEF	*Komáromi Lapok*	2015	April	KL2015no6p2

a. *Translation: the subject of the meeting was development of the Gömör region which has been neglected for many years. The construction of the R2 road was also discussed.

b. Translation: Slovakia and Hungary submitted a join funding application in February 2015 to the EU's CEF fund. Currently the applications are being evaluated and results will be given in September for whether or not we'll have the EU funding for the Komárom bridge.

Appendix I Photo Appendix

Figure 25 2013 Marosvásárhely Székely Freedom Day March



(Supportszeklerland.hu, 2020)

Figure 26 2013 Székelyföld March



(origo.hu, 2013), photo Beliczay László

Figure 27 Central Square in Marosvásárhely without a Hungarian Translation



(author's photo).

Figure 28 Landmann's Sign



(Kiss, 2016)

Figure 29 Cluj's Multilingual Sign Appears



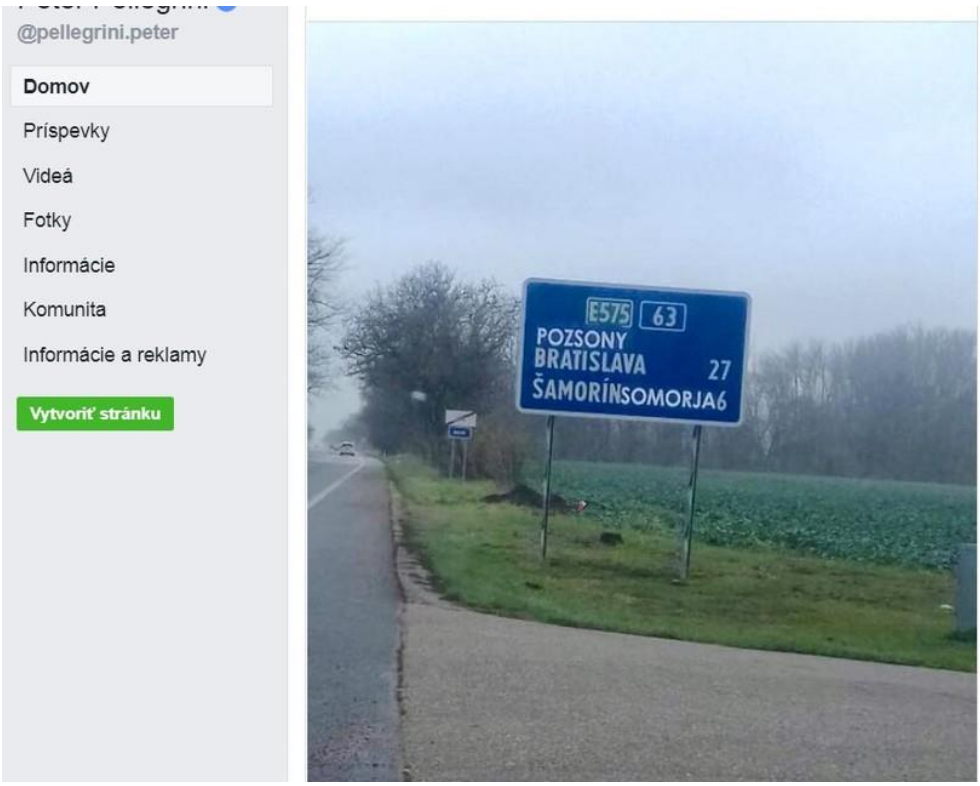
(Gyergyai, 2017)

Figure 30 Muszáj-Musai Movement



(Rostás, 2018a). Photo by Bethlendi Tamáas

Figure 31 Bilingual Slovakia's Campaign for Bilingual Signs



(Új Szó, 2018)

Figure 32 Bilingual Slovakia's Christmas Gift December 2012



(Új Szó, 2012)

Figure 33 Author's Photo in Muzsla (2017) of Bilingual Bus Stop Sign.



Figure 34 Long-Awaited Success of a Bilingual Sign Up at a Train Station in April 2017



A vasútállomáson kihelyezték a KOMÁROM táb

KOMÁRNO
KOMÁROM
ŽSR

Vasutak vezérigazgató
szólt, hogy a gazdaság
környezetvédelmi sz
tok mellett fontos az is
magyarajkú utasok ar
vén is megjelenjenek
tok. Szavai szerint ez
kellemesebbé teszik sz
az utazást, s reméli, mi
ben veszik igénybe sz
tásaikat.

Bugár Béla, a parla
elnöke úgy fogalmazot
tosítani kell a nemzeti
ségek gazdagítják az o
annak kultúráját, ezé
igényeiket is figyelem
venni. Fontos, hogy a

A múlt hét péntekétől a Stubendek László polgármes- Érsek Árpád közlekedésügyi kiai magyar közösség

(B, 2017)

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