



**Does Regional Development Matter in
Minority Politics?
Regional Development in the Recent
Electoral Activity of Three National
Minorities.**

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DOES REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT MATTER IN MINORITY POLITICS? REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RECENT ELECTORAL ACTIVITY OF THREE NATIONAL MINORITIES.

The aim of the present Working Paper is to draw attention to the political activity of three national minorities (German in Denmark, Danish in Germany and German in Poland) concerning regional development. The analysis is focused upon electoral manifestos/political programmes produced by three political actors - that is the Schleswig Party (representing German minority in Denmark), the South Schleswig Voters' Association (representing Danish and Frisian minorities in Germany) and the German Minority Electoral Committee (representing German minority in Poland's Opole Voivodeship) - in connection with the recent regional and local elections held in the areas inhabited by the aforementioned minority groups. The conducted research leads to the following main conclusions: (1) regional development features prominently in the analysed documents; (2) each political actor offers nuanced conceptualizations of regional development; (3) influences of sustainable approaches to development are noticeable, as well as perceptions of development not limited to a narrowly defined economic output; (4) all actors are pragmatic when it comes to the potential political alliances necessary for the achievement of their regional development goals.

Keywords: *electoral manifestos; political programmes; regional development; Danish minority in Germany; German minority in Denmark; German minority in Poland; The Schleswig Party (SP); The South Schleswig Voters' Association (SSW); The German Minority Electoral Committee (GMEC).*

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1. Introduction

Over the last three years, in three European countries – Denmark, Germany and Poland - local and regional elections were held, in which political parties and electoral committees representing national minorities participated. These national minorities are the German minority in Denmark, the Danish and Frisian minorities in Germany and the German minority in Poland, politically represented by - respectively - Schleswigsche Partei/Slesvigsk Parti (in English: The Schleswig Party; further in the text: SP), Sydslesvigsk Vælgerforening/Südschleswigsche Wählerverband/Söödschlaswiksche Wäälferbånd (in English: The South Schleswig Voters' Association; further in the text: SSW) and Wahlkomitee Deutsche Minderheit/Komitet Wyborczy Wyborców Mniejszość Niemiecka (in English: The German Minority Electoral Committee; further in the text: GMEC).

The aim of the present Working Paper is to look at the aforementioned electoral contests through the prism of the electoral manifestos or political programmes, made public around that time by each of the political actors representing a given national minority. The focus is put on their content related to the question of regional development. In other words, this topical analysis of issues currently important for national minorities within electoral contexts, aims to examine to what degree national minorities are focusing on topics not necessarily belonging to the catalogue of 'classical' minority issues (for example related to education, language rights, consultative mechanisms). As a result, this concise analysis attempts to provide answers to the following main research questions:

- (1) How – if at all – do political parties/electoral committees of national minorities conceptualize local and regional development?
- (2) How prominently does the question of local and regional development feature among other elements included in the analysed electoral manifestos/political programmes?
- (3) What effects does it have on the political/ideological profiles of the analysed political actors?

The method used in the present text is a straightforward one. First, the three central research categories used in the text are defined; region, development and regional development. Afterwards,



brief organizational and ideological profiles of political parties/electoral committees representing national minorities discussed in the text are sketched. The two following sections constitute a central analytical part of the present Working Paper and discuss regional development-related content of political programmes/electoral manifestos produced by actors representing the three considered national minorities. In the final part, due to the fact that since recently the nexus between national minorities and regional development features prominently among the ECMI's research priorities, besides answers to the research questions formulated above, a concise research agenda built around a set of follow-up research questions is formulated.

2. Theoretical Framework

When it comes to the theoretical framework of the present Working Paper, it is composed of three central analytical categories, that is: (1) region, (2) development and (3) regional development (the last two notions can be described as primary theoretical tools in the context of present considerations). This section of the Working Paper briefly outlines, how the above enlisted concepts are perceived by the author, thus making them operational within the context of research questions formulated in the preceding part.

2.1. What is a Region?

According to Bickerton (2012, p. 116), in a most basic sense a region can be defined as a territorial unit different from both local and national levels. At the same time, it is a distinct economic, political, administrative and cultural area. Similarly, Keating (1998, pp. 8-10) emphasizes the intermediary character of regions by characterizing them as positioned “between the state and the locality”, while also noticing their distinct cultural, economic, environmental, institutional and social features. Schmitt-Egner (2002), on the other hand, and in reaction to limitations of available conceptualizations identified by him, attempts to coin an interdisciplinary understanding of a region through such “core features” (pp. 181-182) as space (usually regions have clearly defined borders), function (regions function as an intermediary between larger and smaller units in a given polity), scale (the middle-size of regions in both legal and administrative senses indicates the existence of something both larger and smaller) and subject matter (regions are historical products of social and political interactions). What is important, due to the cultural aspect, is that regions are frequently associated also with specific identities, due to their particular history and ethnic



and/or linguistic composition. Of course, the strength of such identity varies from case to case (Keating & Wilson, 2014).

Notwithstanding differences between the aforementioned conceptualizations of the category of a region, in many ways they also noticeably overlap. As a result, it can be safely assumed that each of the regions which are subjects of approaches to regional development analysed in the present text meet these broad criteria of “regionality”. Certainly, they constitute distinct administrative areas with clearly delimited boundaries, as each of them belongs to the highest-level of administrative subdivision in a respective country: the Region Syddanmark is one of five Danish regions, Schleswig-Holstein is one of sixteen *Länder* of Germany and the Opole Voivodeship one of Poland’s sixteen voivodeships. Due to the functions performed by them, all constitute distinct political and administrative areas (albeit the scope of their competencies is different due to varying levels of decentralization/regionalization in each country), while at the same time they occupy a middle position within their respective wider polities. It can be argued that also in socio-cultural terms they are distinct, due to – among other factors - the presence of minority communities within their administrative boundaries: Schleswig-Holstein hosts three such communities (Danish, Frisian and Sinti and Roma), which in demographic terms are primarily concentrated in the northern part of the region and on the North Sea Coast; four local authorities in the southern part of the Region Syddanmark (Haderslev, Sønderborg, Tønder and Aabenraa) constitute an area inhabited by the German minority; the Opole Voivodeship is the region with the highest number of persons self-identifying as members of the German minority in Poland. Moreover, in historical and geographical terms, all the regions considered are also characterized by features contributing to their certain uniqueness. Referring back to the conceptualization of a region proposed by Keating and Wilson, it has to be added that in all three cases, due to - among others – the aforementioned demographic reality, the strength of such regional identity might be classified as medium or low (for the sake of clarity it is important to mention that according to these authors such regions as Catalonia, Flanders and Scotland can be described as possessing a high degree of regional identity [p. 843]).



2.2 What is Development?

As with the notion of region, development is also a complex phenomenon characterized by numerous definitions and theoretical approaches. This conceptual richness famously provoked Wolfgang Sachs to remark that “[D]evelopment has become an amoeba-like concept, shapeless but ineradicable. Its contours are so blurred that it denotes nothing – while it spreads everywhere because it connotes the best intentions.” (W. Sachs, 2007, p. 4). At the same time, and despite that theoretical profligacy, certain aspects are noticeable in most of the approaches to development which, at least to a certain degree, add an ounce of coherence to them and enable classifications. As a consequence, according to Shamsul Haque (1999, p. 163) three traditional theoretical approaches to development can be distinguished: conservative, reformist and radical. The first of them can be characterized by such features as productivity, consumption, accumulation or entrepreneurship. The second focuses upon higher economic growth, relative redistribution and more balanced international trade relations, whereas the third tradition puts emphasis on classless society, overhaul of the relations of production, elimination of class exploitation etc.

Somewhere at the intersection of the reformist and radical approaches, one can probably locate the concept of sustainable development (or, as Soubottina alternatively proposes, “equitable and balanced” development [2004, p. 9]), which theoretically orientates the present considerations (Adams, 2001; Hopwood, Mellor & O’Brien, 2005; Clifton 2010). Perhaps its most influential conceptualization was formulated in “Our Common Future”, a report drafted by the World Commission on Environment and Development (the report is also known as the Brundtland Report, referring to the Commission’s chairperson – former Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland). According to the concluding paragraph of its sub-section introducing the concept, “sustainable development is a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development and institutional change are all in harmony and enhance both current and future potential to meet human needs and aspirations.” (United Nations, 1987, p. 57). It is clear that such an approach to development is reaching way beyond the boundaries of the conservative approaches indicated above, as it contains evident references not only to economic, but also environmental and social aspects of development (Elliott, 2006, p. 11). Consequently, economic growth is not disregarded but it must not be achieved through the unchecked exploitation of resources, as the availability of them must be



guaranteed for future generations as well. At the same time, the implementation of pro-development policies must not lead to the disruption of ecological and life-supporting processes. The socio-cultural dimension of sustainable development, on the other hand, is primarily concerned with the elimination of poverty on a global scale, while simultaneously bringing to the fore such factors as real income, level of education, access to health care or quality of infrastructure (Rogers, Jalal & Boyd, 2008, pp. 42-44).

The above-presented considerations provoke another research question of a secondary rank: to what degree (if at all) is a sustainable approach to development reflected in the political programmes/electoral manifestos of actors analysed in the present Working Paper?

2.3 What is Regional Development?

The shift in thinking about development briefly sketched above (see also: Pike, Rodríguez-Pose & Tomaney, 2017), besides its conceptual consequences, contributed to the creation of an additional challenge, this time of a practical nature: what indicators are needed as development measurement tools, since such indicators as, for example, Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in light of the new approach appear to be too limited to reflect trends related to environmental or social aspects of it (Robertson, 2005, pp. 91-92)?

Within the context of regional development, one of the most complex tools used for measurement is the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) Regional Well-Being index assessing the quality of life (i.e. the level of broadly defined development) in the regions of its member states. The reason behind its creation is clearly stated on the project's website: limitations of the traditional macro-economic data to depict in a sufficiently detailed way living conditions in the analysed areas. What is more, the argument for the necessity of credible and nuanced data on regional development was additionally substantiated by its significance for the future introduction of efficient and accountable public policies, as well as its meaning for the functioning of democracy ("Measuring well-being and progress", n.d.). It is important to add that, for the purpose of this particular tool, regions were defined as "the first administrative tier of sub-national government" ("OECD Regional Well-Being: a user's guide", 2018, p. 11). As a consequence, these are – for example – provinces in Canada, *comunidades autónomas* in Spain or states and the District of Columbia in the United States. With regard to the countries/regions on



which the present Working Papers is focused, the units analysed in Regional Well-Being are: five *regioner* in Denmark, sixteen *länder* in Germany and sixteen *województwa* in Poland.

The level of development in the afore-mentioned regions is measured through a complex set of eleven factors including (“OECD Regional Well-Being: a user’s guide”, 2018, pp. 13-14):

- (1) Within the area of material conditions: income (household disposable income per capita), jobs (employment and unemployment rates), housing (number of rooms per person);
- (2) Within the area of quality of life: health (life expectancy at birth, age-adjusted mortality rate), education (share of labour force with at least secondary education), environment (exposure to pollution), safety (homicide rate), civic engagement (voter turnout), accessibility of services (share of households with broadband access);
- (3) Within the area of subjective well-being: community (availability of friends or family members in situations of need), life satisfaction (self-evaluation).

For the sake of present considerations, it might be useful to note that, in terms of positions occupied by the regions analysed in the present Working Paper in Regional Well-Being index, the results are as follows (“OECD Regional Well-Being”, n.d.):

Region	Average ranking position among given country’s regions	Areas with particularly high score	Areas with particularly low score	Commentary
Opole	9,0/16	Housing (1) Safety (4)	Civic engagement (15) Environment (15) Community (14)	Level of development below Poland’s average
Schleswig-Holstein	5,81/16	Community (1) Environment (1) Life satisfaction (2) Safety (3)	Access to services (12)	Level of development higher than Germany’s average
Syddanmark	3,18/5	Housing (1) Access to services (2) Civic engagement (2) Health (2)	Jobs (5) Safety (5)	Level of development below Denmark’s average

In the broadest sense, regional development can be defined as a set of actions aiming “to build the capacity of a defined area to improve its economic future and the quality of life for inhabitants”



(“Reviews on Delivering”, n.d.). At the same time, such actions can be placed within the earlier discussed context of sustainability, as, according to Chilla, Kühne & Neufeld (2016), in a normative sense the notion of regional development can be defined as an attempt to improve the social, economic and environmental condition of a given region. In other words, a contemporary understanding of regional development answers the following question: how can a region develop in a sustainable way? It is of course necessary to use a complex set of indicators - similar to the ones briefly outlined above - in order to measure and grasp the complexity of regional development within the context of present-day economic, social and environmental challenges. Such perception of both regional development and factors contributing to its actual level are guiding the considerations offered in the present text. It can also inspire another research question of a secondary rank: to what extent do the conceptualizations of regional development formulated by actors examined in this study, reflect the complexity of contemporary debates concerning regional development?

3. Actors

3.1 Schleswig Party (SP)

Since its establishment in 1920, the SP has continuously represented interests of the German minority in Denmark, which, according to current estimates numbers c. 15,000 people (“Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger”, n.d.). When it comes to the number of party members, this figure currently stands between 2,500 – 3,000. All members of Bund Deutscher Nordschleswiger (in English: The Alliance of German People in North Schleswig), that is the umbrella organization of the German minority in Denmark, are automatically members of the SP (“Geschäftsbericht 2017”, p. 5; “The Schleswig Party”, n.d., p.1). In terms of the territorial scope of its activities, the party is primarily focusing on the municipalities of Haderslev, Sønderborg, Tønder and Aabenraa, which are the areas where most members of the minority live.

It is important to emphasize that due to the local government reform introduced in 2007, a special set of electoral rules was introduced in response to the concerns expressed by the German minority. This pointed out that due to the changing context the minority may lose political representation in the newly established *kommuner*, larger both territorially and demographically than the previously existing administrative units. As a result, each of the aforementioned *kommuner* needs to have no



less than 31 councilors, in order to make it mathematically possible for the German minority, which is demographically underrepresented in each of them, to elect a councilor from the SP list. At the same time, two alternative participatory mechanisms at the local level were provided (depending on the number of votes received), concerning elections with weak performance of the political party of the German minority, resulting in a lack of representation at the council level: a delegated representative participating in the works of the *kommune* without the right to vote or a special advisory committee for the matters concerning German minority in a given *kommune* (“Third Report Submitted by Denmark”, 2010, pp. 11-12; “The Schleswig Party”, n.d., p. 4).

With regard to the ideological profile, the SP presents itself as an independent, moderate and pragmatic party of the political middle. In addition, the party’s website describes it as free of ideological limitations and burdensome loyalties to wider political currents. As a consequence, the party is open to constructive cooperation at the municipal level. Among its priorities, the most important ones are close cooperation between local municipalities in favour of regional development in Nordschleswig/Sønderjylland (the subregion within the Region Syddanmark inhabited by German minority and consisting of municipalities mentioned above), protection of cultural diversity in the region, strengthening of European integration and intense cross-border cooperation with German partners (“Politik”, n.d.).

Since the introduction of the aforementioned local government reform, the SP achieved the following number of mandates in each electoral cycle (“Minderheitenbericht 2017”, p. 36, “Konstituering”, n.d.):

Municipality (kommune)	2006 - 2009	2010 - 2013	2014 - 2017	2018 - 2021
Haderslev	One delegated representative	1	1	1
Sønderborg	1	1	2	5
Tønder	1	2	3	2
Aabenraa	2	2	2	2

The party is represented neither at the regional nor central levels. Regarding the former, in 2017, the SP unsuccessfully tried to obtain a mandate at the regional assembly in Vejle. In the latter case,



the SP is not contesting elections to *Folketinget*, however the German minority is represented in Copenhagen through special institutional arrangements.

3.2. The South Schleswig Voters' Association (SSW)

The SSW, founded in 1948, is a regional political party operating in the German federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. It represents both German and Frisian minorities living there. Currently it has around 3,600 members, which makes it the third largest political party in the region (“Kort om SSW”, n.d.). Due to the party’s special status, it is not required to reach the threshold of 5%, either in federal or in regional elections. In practice this provision matters only in the latter context, as the party is not participating in federal elections. Another crucial exception regards its finances: the SSW is allowed to receive substantial funding from the Danish government (“Minderheitenbericht 2017”, p. 27-28).

Although the SSW itself seems to try to avoid a clear ideological self-identification, the party’s position within the German political spectrum can be rather safely described as left of centre. On the other hand, it is not shying away from openly stating that its programme is inspired by political and social developments taking place in the Scandinavian countries (“Kort om SSW”, n.d.), making it also electorally attractive to non-minority voters due to their positive associations related to the so-called Nordic model (Klatt, 2016, p. 65). As a result, the party is emphasizing such issues as: international cooperation, responsible economic development, broad access to well-funded social services, provision of accessible and high-standard education at all levels, protection of interests of the national minorities residing in the region, gender equality etc. (Klatt & Kühl, 2014, pp. 94-95). A consequence of the above is the SSW’s leaning towards left of centre parties when it comes to post-electoral cooperation and coalition building etc. At the same time, recently the party has voiced its pragmatic approach to future political alliances: as one of its core aspirations is the prosperity of Schleswig-Holstein, it is willing to work towards this end also alongside centrist and right of centre partners (Møllekær 2019, p. 19).

In terms of electoral performance, the SSW is a visible actor on both local and regional levels. The following table depicts its performance at the most recent local elections (May 2018) concerning district and city councils (“Kurz über den SSW”, n.d):



Area	Administrative level	Number of seats
Nordfriesland	District council	4
Rendsburg-Eckernförde	District council	2
Schleswig-Flensburg	District council	6
Flensburg	City council	8
Kiel	City council	2

In addition, the SSW also won 176 seats in different municipalities. Moreover, the party has been also continuously represented in the regional parliament, where in the most recent elections (May 2017) it won 3 mandates (Dietsche, 2018, p. 502). It is important to add that in the previous legislative term of the Schleswig-Holstein's Landtag (with the same number of mandates), for the first time the SSW was a junior partner in a governing coalition alongside Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschland (SPD, the Social Democratic Party of Germany) and Bündnis 90/Die Grünen (Greens), with its member Anke Spoorendonk serving as the minister for Justice, Culture and European Affairs in the state government.

3.3. German Minority Electoral Committee (GMEC)

The German minority in the Opole Voivodeship contests elections through its electoral committee, which functions as the political representation of the Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalne Niemców na Śląsku Opolskim/Sozial-Kulturelle Gesellschaft der Deutschen im Opperlner Schlesien (in English: the Social-Cultural Society of Germans in Opole Silesia); the largest organization of the German minority in both the Opole Voivodeship and Poland (Ganowicz 2013; 2016), with over 300 local branches in the Voivodeship (Rosenbaum, Janusz, Donath-Kasiura, Hassa, Cuber 2018, p. 65).

The GMEC can be classified as a political organization with centrist and right of centre characteristics, belonging to the Christian-democratic tradition. Among the core principles guiding its understanding of politics and the individual, the Committee mentions rule of law, democracy, individual dignity, freedom, justice and social solidarism. Its main political goals are the prosperity of the Opole Voivodeship as a whole and the well-being of all its inhabitants. Similar to the SP and the SSW, the GMEC pragmatically emphasizes the necessity for broad cooperation with different types of actors in order to achieve to aforementioned goals. Regional diversity and unique



identity constitute a possible source of regional prosperity and therefore need to be protected (“Program Wyborczy 2018”, Preambuła).

In the most recent local and regional elections (October-November 2018) the GMEC achieved the following results at the regional level (“5 Mandatów”, 2018):

Regional legislative body	Votes in 2018	% of total	# of Mandates in a given body
Opole Voivodeship Regional Assembly	52,431	14.64	5/30

In the current legislative term of the Opole Voivodeship Regional Assembly, representatives of the GMEC, Rafał Bartek and Roman Kolek, perform respectively the functions of its chairperson and vice-marshal of the voivodeship’s executive board (Rosenbaum, Janusz, Donath-Kasiura, Hassa, Cuber, 2018, p. 93).

When it comes to the councils of *powiats* (the second-tier unit of local government in Poland; they can be described – however somewhat imperfectly - as sub-regions within voivodeships), the most recent electoral performance of the GMEC is presented in the following table (“Wyniki do Rad”, 2018):

Sub-region (powiat)	Votes in 2018	% of total	# of Mandates in a given council
Strzelce Opolskie	9,200	38.13%	9/19
Opole	15,871	37.10%	12/23
Krapkowice	7,272	33.59%	7/19
Kedzierzyn-Kozle	7,420	22.87%	6/21
Olesno	4,379	18.36%	6/19
Prudnik	3,788	18.04%	5/18

At the municipal level (*gmina*), the GMEC was able to win 207 mandates and 13 mayoral posts. In addition, 5 mayoral posts were won by candidates supported by GMEC, albeit not running from its lists (“Lista wójtów i burmistrzów”, 2018).

Unlike the SP and the SSW, the GMEC is participating also in general elections, and since 1991 it has been continuously represented in Poland’s parliament. Currently it has one representative in the lower chamber. According to Poland’s electoral code, electoral committees constituted by national minorities are not required to reach the threshold of 5% in general elections (Rosenbaum, Janusz, Donath-Kasiura, Hassa & Cuber, 2018, pp. 94-96).



4. Regional Development in the Political Activity of National Minorities

4.1 The SP and Regional Development

Interestingly and symbolically enough, the question of regional development is mentioned on the first pages of the current programme of the SP (“Slesvigske Parti. Program 2018+”, n.d.), as one of its opening chapters is stressing the need for intense cross-border cooperation between Denmark and Germany (Ibid, pp. 6-7). Within this context, the idea of a cross-border information centre focusing on economic activity is mentioned. The role of such a centre should include information services, networking activities and advisory services offered to entrepreneurs interested in cross-border economic activities. In addition to that, other issues influencing local and regional economies are mentioned: for example, transport infrastructure effectively connecting both sides of the border; exchange of information and coordination of planning activities by the authorities from both Denmark and Germany (especially with regard to a large-size infrastructure projects, such as building of hospitals, harbours, railway stations or airports); availability of governmental funding covering cross-border cooperation in the amount similar to that available for Danish-Swedish cross-border cooperation initiatives taking place in the Øresundsregionen/Öresundsregionen. In general, cross-border cooperation is perceived by the SP as a tool necessary to unlock the economic potential of the Danish-German borderland (both are peripheral regions within their respective countries), which should function as a natural meeting point between the North, South and Centre of Europe.

In the section of the programme titled ‘Erhverv og arbejdsmarked’ (English: ‘Business and labour market’; Ibid., pp. 16-18) numerous goals related to regional development are presented in a more detailed, however still rather concise, way. What is important is that all four municipalities inhabited by the German minority are treated as a common economic and labour market area. Among the aforementioned goals, the following ones can be mentioned:

- (1) More effective cooperation between business and technology sectors, combined with broader policies within the areas of education and the labour market;
- (2) More efficient allocation of funds provided by the Danish state for research and development in the region;



- (3) Sustainable agriculture combined with a comprehensive environmental strategy (it is crucially important in the region with a significant agricultural sector; similar topics – e.g. clean energy – are discussed also in the section of the programme focused exclusively on environmental issues);
- (4) More effective management of retail-trade (also cross-border), combined with actions concerning revitalization of town-centres and provision of basic shopping opportunities for rural areas;
- (5) Tourism as one of the priority branches of regional economy.

Content related to regional development is clearly visible also in other parts of the SP's programme. For instance, the section focusing upon the party's support for effective integration policies concerning migrants settling in the region explicitly connects it to development opportunities. Diversity and expertise brought from the outside is clearly perceived as a factor providing additional entrepreneurship capacities and strengthening both local and regional job markets (Ibid., pp. 23-24). The section devoted to transport infrastructure, on the other hand, gives additional context to the aforementioned issue of effective connections between Denmark and Germany, as it is clear that the SP is simultaneously very much in favour of sustainable and environmentally friendly means of transport (Ibid., p. 15). In terms of education, the section extensively discussing this issue provides additional insights into the SP's conceptualizations of development. The education provided in the region needs to: be coordinated with the needs of the regional job market and currently existing profile of economic activity in the region; make most of cooperation opportunities with partners on the German side of the border; take into account the rapid development of information technologies (Ibid., pp. 19-20). It is important to add that references to development are also noticeable in the section of the programme discussing the SP's children, youth and family policies, which are notably inspired by the elements of social sustainability (Ibid., pp. 25-27).

In addition to the above, it is worth to mention that the SP is willing to initiate a broad debate regarding its proposals related to regional development. Its willingness to discuss development issues is mentioned in the context of cross-border cooperation, but in the opinion of the present author, it can be rather safely assumed that it covers all elements of its programme and stems from



its pragmatic approach to politics. Besides that, the party sees itself as an actor communicating/cooperating with a wide array of partners, for example: the EU's European Committee of the Regions; partners from Germany; partners from the Baltic Sea area; the four local municipalities mentioned above.

4.2 The SSW and Regional Development

In the SSW's electoral manifesto announced before the May 2017 elections to the Schleswig-Holstein Landtag ("Wahlprogramm des SSW", 2017), the issues related to regional development are mentioned already in the preface, where regional demographic trends (changing age structure and uneven density of population within the region) and changes entailed with digitalization are perceived as challenges facing the region, which at the same time might also contain elements of new economic opportunities (Ibid., p. 2). In the same part of the manifesto, however this time within a wider context of social justice (as it was already mentioned, the party in general supports a welfare-state model, offering universal access to a wide array of high quality social services and cares about social sustainability; with regard to that, the SSW is openly stating that it is inspired by the solutions typical for Nordic countries), the importance of economic development is mentioned once more, but this time alongside a reference to the necessity of politics and policies having all parts of the region in equal focus (Ibid.).

In further parts of the manifesto, the question of regional development is mentioned on numerous occasions. What is important, is that the SSW – although being a party rooted among Danish and Frisian minorities - clearly positions itself as a political organization having the whole of Schleswig-Holstein in focus, as well as all its inhabitants – no matter what their origins are. The party also mentions its full commitment to Schleswig-Holstein stemming from the fact that it operates exclusively in that region. Therefore, all the ideas presented in the manifesto are not only inspired by a nuanced knowledge of the region, but also are tailored for its unique needs (Ibid.).

Specific economic policies are discussed in the section of the manifesto titled "Unsere Wirtschaftspolitik: Starke Unternehmen für starke Regionen" (Ibid., pp. 30-34). First of all, however, unique qualities of the region are mentioned: the location on the cross-roads between northern and southern Europe; access to two coasts (Baltic Sea and North Sea); the proximity of Hamburg (i.e. a major European metropolis); minorities (due to their unique cultural and linguistic



competences). Small and medium-size enterprises dominating the economic landscape of Schleswig-Holstein, are described as flexible, innovative, highly specialized and internationally successful.

When it comes to specific goals, the following areas of action are proposed:

(1) Support for enterprises.

In this context, such actions are mentioned as (for example): creation of such economic and structural conditions, which would create the possibility of a fair competition for small and medium-sized enterprises functioning in the region; targeted support for particularly innovative companies; expansion of export opportunities through specific quality goals; establishment of close cooperation between research and business communities; support for the effective digital change of the economy of Schleswig-Holstein; strengthening of the economic cooperation with Denmark and other Nordic countries; drafting of a sustainable industrial strategy for the north of Germany, coupled with effective capacity-building of regional actors important in the field of development.

(2) Fair international trade.

In the manifesto, the SSW's opposition to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) between the European Union and the United States is clearly stated, alongside a sceptical attitude towards the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) between the European Union and Canada.

(3) Tourism.

According to the SSW, the approach to tourism in the region needs to be focused upon both cultural and linguistic diversity of Schleswig-Holstein, as these two factors might be attractive for potential visitors. At the same time, tourist destinations in the region should be made accessible by public transport. What is crucial, a sustainable approach and cross-border cooperation are mentioned as two guiding principles for the regional tourism strategy. Both aspects are considered as requirements in the context of the protection of natural heritage along the Danish and German sections of the North Sea coastline, which are listed among the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.



(4) Fishing and agriculture.

In this particular area, the SSW positions itself as sceptical towards the EU-supported marketization of the agricultural sector, while favouring environmentally friendly farms and production of ecological foods. In a similar vein, it is willing to support low intensity fishing, as it is sustainable as well as of importance for the regional tourism sector and Schleswig-Holstein's identity.

References to regional development are additionally present in parts of the manifesto covering such topics as infrastructure (the SSW's strong commitment to public transport and support for the so-called shared mobility is very visible in its programme; at the same time, the development of transport infrastructure is considered as crucial for the economic prosperity of, for example, the western coast of Schleswig-Holstein; with regard to the telecommunications infrastructure, an easy access to a broadband internet connections throughout the whole of Schleswig-Holstein is pointed out as crucial within the context of digitalization processes mentioned above; *Ibid.*, pp. 35-38) or climate- and energy policies (for example, the SSW supports the expansion of energy producing wind turbines; at the same time the concerns of Schleswig-Holstein inhabitants affected by such developments have to be properly taken into account and addressed; it is also strongly supporting policies concerning the protection of the sources of drinking water, both Baltic and North Sea coasts and forests, which clearly influence the party's approach to agriculture or tourism, *Ibid.*, pp. 64-67).

The SSW's regional development goals are considered by the party as achievable only through a multi-layered cooperation with actors operating on various levels, for example local authorities (according to the party, an administrative reform is necessary for their more effective participation), civic society and international partners (e.g. the EU, but also partners from the Nordic and Baltic Sea countries). In this context, cross-border cooperation with Denmark is frequently mentioned too (*Ibid.*, pp. 56-61).

4.3 The GMEC and Regional Development

The content concerning regional development features clearly in the most recent of the electoral manifestos produced by the GMEC (i.e. published before October-November 2018 local and regional elections in Poland). Already in its preamble, a set of unique regional features (e.g.



cultural diversity, work ethic, pragmatism, creativity, linguistic and cultural competences) is mentioned, which – according to the authors – contributes to the region’s already and globally recognized status of an area with bright economic perspectives. It is obvious that such a statement also indirectly informs a reader on how members of the GMEC perceive their region: not as an isolated entity, but rather as one of numerous global and national actors competing for investment, human resources etc. (“Program Wyborczy 2018”, Preambuła).

Linguistic competences as a key-feature contributing to the economic development of the region are also mentioned in the section discussing education, within sub-sections concerning culture and regional identity and German language. What is interesting is that English is also mentioned in that context, alongside resulting trilingualism (“Program wyborczy 2018”, Język niemiecki). Besides them, and the necessity for adequate quality of language classes offered by the schools in the region, an issue of identity is also addressed. Cultural competences stemming from regional diversity are also considered crucial for the future prosperity. As a consequence, the GMEC is strongly in favour of educational initiatives focused on that particular topic and reaching towards all sectors of the regional population (“Program wyborczy 2018”, Kultura i tożsamość regionalna). It can be argued then that traditional claims of national minorities (the right to learn/education in minority language) are combined here with a wider issue of competitive advantage in a globalized economy.

In the following parts of the manifesto (“Program wyborczy 2018”, Firmy lokalne; Inwestorzy zagraniczni; Rolnictwo; Turystyka), more detailed elements of an economic programme are offered, regarding: local entrepreneurs (e.g. tax exemptions; capacity-building in the field of entrepreneurship); foreign investors (the necessity of foreign investment and the creation of high-paying jobs is connected to actions countering depopulation trends affecting the region; close cooperation between different levels of government is mentioned in that context too); agriculture (further modernization, infrastructure improvements as well as production of healthy and high quality foods are among the priorities); tourism (interestingly enough, well-preserved regional tourist attractions are considered not exclusively as a factor attracting visitors, but also as an incentive important for potential investors interested in other sectors of regional economy).



Important references to regional development are present in the section discussing infrastructure as well. Here, the most strategic element concerns the river Odra and investment necessary for making it again a navigable waterway over most of its length. This, together with additional investment in road infrastructure connecting the river to locations further away from its banks, is considered a major factor potentially attracting both national as well as foreign investors (“Program wyborczy 2018”, Żeglowna Odra). Environmental issues are also connected to regional development: for example, through the ECGM’s support for both dense and effective network of public transport and the production of clean energy (“Program wyborczy 2018”, Transport publiczny; Odnawialne źródła energii).

In terms of actors engaged in further conceptualization and implementation of regional development policies, the ECGM’s manifesto refers to a wide array of entities, both national (e.g. civil society, local authorities) and international (e.g. German partners when it comes to the above-mentioned issue of river Odra). Furthermore, the German minority’s deeply ingrained attachment to the concept of local and regional self-government is also mentioned, together with references to the minority’s vast experience in government, both at regional and local levels.

5. Concluding Analysis

Returning to the set of research questions formulated in the preceding parts of the present Working Paper, it has to be acknowledged that political organizations representing the three analysed national minorities display a significant interest in the issue of regional development. As a consequence, scrutinized political parties and electoral committees in their programmes/electoral manifestos offer complex (of course, the degree of that complexity is not exactly the same in all cases) and rather coherent approaches to regional development, although frequently they are expressed in a concise way. These conceptualizations are clearly tailored for specific regional needs and demonstrate a nuanced understanding of regional affairs. It is interesting that in all cases the actors considered are aware that the implementation phase requires engagement of various stakeholders, i.e. complex cooperation with majority actors too. It is clearly consistent with their general approach to politics: pragmatic, open for different alliances and subordinated to the overarching goal, that is regional prosperity and well-being. Similarly, all three conceptualizations take into account wider context (national, global) conditioning regional development trends.



The question of regional development features prominently in the programmes/electoral manifestos of the analysed political parties/electoral committees. It can be argued, that the issue of regional development is perhaps of primary importance for them, as in term of volume it eclipses even the issues traditionally important for national minorities. It needs to be remembered though, that in all three cases most of such traditional issues are resolved to at least a satisfactory degree from the point of view of the considered minority groups (this statement does not imply, however, that with regard to certain aspects there might be no room for improvement). As a result, a space is created for new ideas, consideration of challenges important for areas inhabited by these communities and cooperation with majority actors in order to address them. On the other hand, it can be assumed with a rather high degree of certainty that the above-mentioned ranking of importance concerning certain issues might be quickly reversed, had the current level of protection awarded to all three minorities been jeopardized by the authorities at either central or regional levels. It all leads to an interesting theoretical question: when do minorities become interested in regional development? Does it happen only after a certain level of legal protection, alongside educational and cultural opportunities are guaranteed (a tipping point theory)? Or, are both issues argued for simultaneously and at an earlier stage, as an interest in regional development (and thus well-being of a majority as well) on a given minority's side might convince the majority about its overall integration and good intentions and, as a result, pave a way for faster provision of the aforementioned protection and opportunities?

The focus on regional development seems to affect the ideological/political profiles of the political parties/electoral committees of the national minorities considered in the present text to a significant degree. As it was already signalled in the preceding paragraph, since the issue of development concerns all inhabitants of a given area, it results in the overcoming of a certain insularity, i.e. minorities understand that the well-being of their regions requires intense interactions with different kinds of local, regional, national and international actors. This particular issue provokes a follow up question to be addressed in future research: how may the structures of the political organizations representing national minorities change because of a strong focus on regional development? Issues concerning not exclusively minorities themselves can lead to the initiation of discussion within minority circles on, for example, membership in such bodies. To what extent are



national minorities willing to welcome members with non-minority background, but – for example - well-versed in the questions related to local and regional development?

Regarding two research questions of the secondary rank, the preceding analysis shows that in all three cases elements of sustainable approach to development are visible. What is important, they are consistent with other parts of the analysed electoral manifestos/political programmes, therefore cannot be described as environmental ornaments having no real impact on other aspects of approaches to development on offer. At the same time, all of them can be classified as reformist in nature and incremental in practical terms. All three actors acknowledge the importance of environmental issues, neither of them formulates radical solutions though. Similar conclusion can be drawn when it comes to the complexity of contemporary debates concerning regional development. In all three cases development is perceived as a result of a multi-faceted interplay of different factors and is not limited to, for example, GDP measure. This finding is further strengthened by the minorities' simultaneous focus on environment, quality of education, cultural competences, well-being of regional populations etc.

Due to the initial nature of the present analysis (please see the relevant remarks in the Introduction), numerous follow up research questions can be formulated in addition to the ones already stated above. Certainly, a further comparative research is necessary in order to determine whether the focus on regional development of the three analysed national minorities is an exception or rather a part of a wider trend concerning their counterparts elsewhere?

Another potentially interesting research question concerns the process of the conceptualization of regional development strategies: How are these issues debated, e.g. are only politically active members of minorities engaged in such discussions or are wider consultations conducted? How is the consensus, e.g. among members of a given party, reached? Are deeper analytical documents, reports etc. prepared beforehand or during the conceptualization stage? Do different minorities debate such issues among themselves (circulation of ideas)? What are the ideological and theoretical inspirations behind considerations focused on regional development? Last but not least, do minority media take an active part in debates concerning regional development?

It could be equally interesting to focus on the influence of minorities' approaches to development beyond minority circles. For example: to what degree do voters without a minority background,



support political organizations representing national minorities during elections due to their approach to regional development?

Finally, the question of implementation arises. How do political organizations of national minorities try to implement their development strategies (e.g. what tactics are used with regard to the building of coalitions around certain issues with mainstream political parties within legislative bodies) and how does the political culture of a given country condition such actions? The issue of political efficiency must not be overlooked either, therefore it is important to focus upon implemented projects, i.e. minorities' tangible achievements within the field of regional or local development.



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