

BRADLEY JAMES LOEWEN

Towards territorial cohesion?  
Path dependence and path innovation of  
regional policy in Central and  
Eastern Europe



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**BRADLEY JAMES LOEWEN**

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Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Economics and Business Administration,  
University of Tartu, Estonia.

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## 1.1 List of Abbreviations

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CHA	Comparative Historical Analysis
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPT	Causal Process Tracing
CZ	Czechia
DI	Discursive Institutionalism
EC	European Commission
EE	Estonia
ESDP	European Spatial Development Perspective
ESIF	European Structural and Investment Funds
ESPON	European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Planning
EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HI	Historical Institutionalism
HU	Hungary
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LAU	Local Administrative Unit
MLG	Multi-level Governance
MS	Member State
NUTS	Nomenclature des unités territoriales statistiques [Classification of Territorial Units for Statistics]
OP	Operational Programme
PHARE	Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies
R&D	Research and Development
RI	Rational Institutionalism
RIS	Regional Innovation Systems
RIS3	Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization
SI	Sociological Institutionalism
SME	Small and Medium-sized Enterprises
VoC	Varieties of Capitalism

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## 1.5 List of Author's Publications and Conference Presentations

### Journal Articles

- Loewen, B.** (2018). Cohesion Policy and institutional change in Hungary and Estonia, *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 5 (1): 255–262.
- Dyba, W., **Loewen, B.**, Looga, J. and Zdražil, P. (2018). Regional Development in Central-Eastern European Countries at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Path Dependence and Effects of EU Cohesion Policy, *Quaestiones Geographicae* 37 (2): 77–92.
- Loewen, B.** (2018). From decentralization to re-centralization: Tendencies of regional policy and inequalities in Central and Eastern Europe, *Halduskultuur – Administrative Culture* 18 (2): 103–126.
- Loewen, B.** and Raagmaa, G. (2018). Introduction to the Special Issue: Territoriality and Governance in the Globalizing European Eastern Peripheries, *Halduskultuur – Administrative Culture* 18 (2): 89–101.
- Loewen, B.** (2015). Contextualising regional policy for territorial cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe, *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 64 (3): 205–217.

### Book Chapters

- Loewen, B.**, Schulz, S. (in press). Questioning the Convergence of Cohesion and Innovation Policies in CEE. In Lang, T. and Görmär, F., editors, *Regional and Local Development in Times of Polarisation*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

### Conference Proceedings

- Loewen, B.** (2015). Contextualising regional policy for territorial cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe. EUGEO Budapest 2015, *Congress Programme and Abstracts*, Hungarian Geographical Society, Budapest, Hungary.

### Conference Presentations

- Loewen, B.** (2017). Towards territorial cohesion? Path dependence of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. RegPol<sup>2</sup> Final Conference, Leipzig, Germany, 20–22.9.2017.
- Loewen, B.** (2017). De/Re-centralization of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe: An institutionalist approach to regional inequalities. Regional Studies Association (RSA) Annual Conference 2017, Dublin, Ireland, 4–7.6.2017.

- Loewen, B.** (2017). Towards territorial cohesion? Path dependence of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. RegPol<sup>2</sup> Final Training, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Békéscsaba, Hungary, 24–28.5.2017.
- Loewen, B.** (2017). Decentralization and recentralization of regional policy in CEE. RegPol<sup>2</sup> National Workshop in the Czech Republic, MEPCO and University of Economics, Prague, Czechia, 21.3.2017.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. Tartu Planning Conference 2016: Spatial Planning and Inequality, University of Tartu, Estonia, 3–4.11.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. European Week of Regions and Cities (EWRC) Master Class on EU Cohesion Policy, Brussels, Belgium, 10–13.10.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence of regional policy: Institutional responses to regional polarization in CEE. 3<sup>rd</sup> RegPol<sup>2</sup> School, Velka Lomnica, Slovakia, 19–23.9.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. 56<sup>th</sup> European Regional Science Association (ERSA) Congress, Vienna, Austria, 23–26.8.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence and path innovation of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. American Association of Geographers (AAG) Annual Meeting, San Francisco, United States of America, 29.3–2.4.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. Gesellschaft für Regionalforschung (GfR) Winter Seminar, European Regional Science Association, Innsbruck, Austria, 20–27.2.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2016). Path dependence and path innovation of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. RegPol<sup>2</sup> Workshop on Regional Polarization, Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Békéscsaba, Hungary, 21.1.2016.
- Loewen, B.** (2015). Path dependence and path innovation of regional policy in old and new economy locations. 2<sup>nd</sup> RegPol<sup>2</sup> School, Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig, Germany, 26–30.10.2015.
- Loewen, B.** (2015). Contextualising regional policy for territorial cohesion in CEE: Outlining a research agenda. 2<sup>nd</sup> Evolutionary Economic Geography Workshop in Central and Eastern Europe: Agglomeration Economies, Relatedness and Spatial Networks, Szeged University, Hungary, 21–22.10.2015.
- Loewen, B.** (2015). Contextualising regional policy for territorial cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe. 5<sup>th</sup> EUGEO Congress on the Geography of Europe, Budapest, Hungary, 30.8–2.9.2015.
- Loewen, B.** (2015). Towards territorial cohesion? Path dependence and innovation of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe after 10 years of Cohesion Policy. 1<sup>st</sup> RegPol<sup>2</sup> Young Scholars School, University of Tartu, Estonia, 2–6.2.2015.
- Loewen, B.** (2014). Path contingency and path innovation of regional policy in old and new economy locations. RegPol<sup>2</sup> Introductory Event, Slovak University of Technology, Bratislava, Slovakia, 3–7.11.2014.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 List of Publications

This cumulative dissertation is based on six original papers. Papers I to IV and VI have been published, and Paper V is in press.

- I. Loewen, B. and Raagmaa, G. (2018). Introduction to the Special Issue: Territoriality and Governance in the Globalizing European Eastern Peripheries, *Halduskultuur – Administrative Culture* 18 (2): 89–101.
- II. Loewen, B. (2015). Contextualising regional policy for territorial cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe, *Hungarian Geographical Bulletin* 64 (3): 205–217.
- III. Loewen, B. (2018). From decentralization to re-centralization: Tendencies of regional policy and inequalities in Central and Eastern Europe, *Halduskultuur – Administrative Culture* 18 (2): 103–126.
- IV. Dyba, W., Loewen, B., Looga, J. and Zdražil, P. (2018). Regional Development in Central-Eastern European Countries at the Beginning of the 21st Century: Path Dependence and Effects of EU Cohesion Policy, *Quaestiones Geographicae* 37 (2): 77–92.
- V. Loewen, B. and Schulz, S. (in press). Questioning the Convergence of Cohesion and Innovation Policies in CEE. In Lang, T. and Görmar, F., editors, *Regional and Local Development in Times of Polarisation*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.
- VI. Loewen, B. (2018). Cohesion Policy and institutional change in Hungary and Estonia, *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 5 (1): 255–262.

### 2.2 Author's Contributions

Papers II, III and VI were authored by Bradley Loewen. Papers I and V were co-authored with Dr. Garri Raagmaa and Sebastian Schulz, respectively, who equally contributed to the conceptualizations of the articles. In Paper V, Sebastian Schulz contributed the content on Innovation Policy as well as the Slovakian and part of the Estonian empirical material.

Paper IV was co-authored with three Early Career Researchers from the 2016 European Week of Regions and Cities University Master Class on EU Cohesion Policy. The lead author Dr. Wojciech Dyba coordinated the paper and formulated conclusions. Bradley Loewen contributed the section on path dependence and the historical context of regional development in CEECs and contributed to the conceptualization and argumentation of the paper. Junior Fellow Jaan Looga contributed the part on EU Cohesion Policy, and Dr. Pavel Zdražil contributed the econometric analysis.

## 2.3 Motivation: Towards territorial cohesion?

The post-socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), sharing similar socio-political and economic histories, have developed along dramatically different trajectories than their Western neighbours. Affected by strong core-periphery relations at multiple scales, large disparities in economic productivity and living standards continue to persist in CEE countries more than 25 years since their systemic transition and more than 10 years since their entry into the European Union (EU) (ESPON 2014; European Commission 2014, 2017). During a time of economic transition and catching-up, however, economic growth in the global advanced economies under the banner of neoliberalism has also been highly unbalanced, pointing to the need for new spatial economic rebalancing (Martin 2015).

EU Regional Policy is a spatial rebalancing measure expressed through the aim of territorial cohesion that provides a framework for investment into Europe's lagging regions. The effectiveness of Regional Policy to tackle regional disparities has long been of interest to researchers and policymakers, especially given the great hopes of CEE countries to catch up with the so-called 'old' Member States after accession. CEE countries have indeed benefitted from Regional Policy since 2004, but, despite some economic convergence with 'old' Europe on the national level, regional inequalities within CEE countries have increased as the most developed core regions (often the capital cities) grew at a faster speed than the less developed peripheral regions that have rather experienced "convergence at the bottom" (Monastiriotis 2014, 144). The failure to realize the desired results of Regional Policy so far, to the extent initially hoped, suggests that the prescribed reforms for systemic transition and EU accession, once willingly accepted by CEE countries, were inadequate to deal with the realities of neoliberal economic development in the twenty-first century. Therefore, new research is warranted to investigate the political-institutional outcomes of more than 10 years of Regional Policy participation amongst CEE countries.

Uneven spatial development is "a complex process of cumulative causation, not just of economic growth and development *but also of political-institutional evolution*" (Martin 2015, 260) that therefore calls for the adoption of a historical and evolutionary perspective. 'Path dependence' is a concept usually used to describe the constraining effect of policies and practices, employing a historical and evolutionary perspective to offer insights into both economic and political-institutional phenomena. Inspired by Stark and Bruszt's (1998) comparative work on post-socialist transformation in CEE, path dependence is seen herein as a theory "neither of determinacy nor indeterminacy but a method for grasping the recombinant character of social innovation" (1132–33), making it a useful tool for investigating the multi-faceted aspects of Regional Policy and related institutional transformations. Path dependence has been applied in several domains relevant to this research and the CEE context, ranging from the economic to the political. First, the Varieties of Capitalism (VoC) literature traces

institutional development in CEE countries from post-socialist privatization to the formation of capital markets, invoking institutional legacies and arguing for the existence of a CEE form of capitalism that is dependent on the European core and affected by mutually reinforcing institutional characteristics (Stark and Bruszt 1998; Hall and Soskice 2001; Hall and Thelen 2009; Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009). Second, the Europeanization literature focuses on territorial and administrative reforms from the pre-accession period onwards, especially in terms of policy transfer and conditionality related to Regional Policy implementation (Grabbe 2001; Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier 2004; Scherpereel 2010). Third, the regional innovation systems (RIS) literature has found a direct application in Regional Policy, stimulating research into innovation strategies and related capacities targeted to breaking path dependent development trajectories in Europe's regions (Foray et al. 2009, 2011). These three strands of literature provide a critical knowledge base for institutional transformation in CEE and are thus taken into account in the conceptual framework.

Uneven spatial development in the context of conditionality and economic dependence described above is related to increasing regional peripheralization and polarization processes (Kühn 2015; Lang et al. 2015). These processes have recently manifested themselves through political movements, rising populism and nationalist policies (Rodríguez-Pose 2018), while the persistent visibility of inequalities on the ground threatens perceptions of Regional Policy effectiveness (Capello and Perucca 2018). This puts the political aim of territorial cohesion into question. Although cohesion was represented in European policy since the 1957 Treaty of Rome, territorial cohesion was formalized in the 1999 European Spatial Development Perspective that ensured, amongst other aims, “balanced territorial development,” “economic and social cohesion,” and “more balanced competitiveness of the European territory” (European Commission 1999, 10). At a time when many CEE countries opened accession processes, these aims signified progressive policy, and Regional Policy presented itself as a path to European convergence. ‘Europeanizing’ territorial and administrative reforms created the necessary structures for implementing the policy as a condition for EU accession. Thereafter, a controversial neoliberal shift in Regional Policy has drawn the attention of researchers and policymakers toward policy content rather than institutional development. Nevertheless, the consequences of neglecting institutions in the regional development discourse are becoming apparent. Institutions are increasingly recognized as the missing link in regional development (Rodríguez-Pose 2013) and are underresearched (Martin 2015). In CEE countries, where institutional arrangements are relatively young but attention has drifted away since EU accession, this could be especially so.

Taking the concept of path dependence, which has uses in both regional economic development and political-institutional development, this research investigates the transformations of Regional Policy and its related institutions in the national contexts of CEE through a comparative study of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary. The research aims to contribute to the wealth of CEE-focused comparative studies that emerged during the transition and EU accession

periods to provide a timely update on recent developments related to the current (2014–2020) and forthcoming (post-2020) debates on the future of Regional Policy.

## 2.4 Research Aims and Approach

Two research questions guide this research. First, *what instances of path dependence and path innovation are at play in Regional Policy in CEE?* and, second, *what are the domestic institutional impacts and outcomes of these path dependences and innovations?* The central theme of path dependence provides guidance on the applicable theories and methodologies for approaching this cross-disciplinary subject. Using historical institutionalist and comparative approaches, this research has two aims:

- (1) to follow institutional transformations surrounding regional policy in national contexts; and
- (2) to compare path dependent processes in institutional development and identify institutional factors leading to policy success;

Path dependence often carries negative connotations for its effects on regional development. Therefore, policy success can be seen as a departure from a well-established path that opens new development opportunities – in other words, path innovation. The above aims position the research at the intersection of economic geography and political science and respond to the need for further research on political-institutional aspects of regional development (Rodríguez-Pose 2013; Martin 2015).

The study is built upon chronologies of regional policy and institutional development and unfolds in two stages. First, policy review and analysis at the EU and national levels informs the evolution of policy concepts and priorities of EU Regional Policy. Second, qualitative-comparative case studies of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary investigate relevant themes and sub-research questions for basing a comparative historical analysis. The themes and sub-research questions articulated pertain to the roles of policy experts and institutions in policy-making, timelines and strategies of regional policies, understandings of territorial cohesion, and the trends and processes of Europeanization and neoliberalization of regional policies (Table 1). The themes and sub-research questions therefore address institutional arrangements in time (e.g. since post-socialist transition) and space (e.g. between countries) and the discursive aspects of policy (e.g. concepts, strategies) that will inform conclusions about political-institutional aspects of regional inequalities.

Based on the timelines of the fieldwork and publishing activities, the published articles comprising this dissertation focus on the Estonian and Hungarian cases. Empirical material and a summary of the Czech case are provided in the methodology and discussion sections, respectively.

**Table 1.** Research questions and themes

Main Research Questions	Activity	Sub-Research Questions
<p>What instances of path dependence and path innovation are at play in Regional Policy in CEE?</p> <p>What are the domestic institutional impacts and outcomes of these path dependences and innovations?</p>	Framing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the political-institutional contexts framing regional development in CEE?</li> <li>• What is the status of regional inequalities more than 25 years after socialism?</li> <li>• What institutional legacies affect regional inequalities?</li> </ul>
	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the main turning points (i.e. critical junctures) of EU Regional Policy in the post-socialist period?</li> </ul>
	Analyzing (I)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do CEE countries interpret EU Regional Policy principles in their national strategies?</li> <li>• What path dependences exist in the national policy discourses?</li> </ul>
	Analyzing (II)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the main turning points (i.e. critical junctures) of Regional Policy-related institutional development in CEE countries?</li> <li>• What impacts did these have on domestic institutions?</li> </ul>
	Interpreting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are the institutional outcomes for Regional Policy?</li> </ul>

## 2.5 Structure of the Dissertation

The structure of the dissertation proceeds as follows. First, the conceptual framework setting the core concepts of the research, path dependence and institutional change, are presented. Next, the research context pertaining to EU Regional Policy and CEE region is presented. Methodological issues related to tracing institutional development and comparative case studies are discussed before introducing the empirical material. The six original papers follow in sequence. A summary of the studies and discussion of the results leads to final conclusions and a reflection on limitations, practical implications and possible directions for future research.

## 2.6 Acknowledgements

I would like to express gratitude to my supporters throughout the four years of research leading to this dissertation. The opportunity to conduct research in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia has enriched my life both academically and personally, and it could not have been possible without academic and institutional supports from across the Marie Curie Initial Training Network, RegPol<sup>2</sup> – “Socio-economic and political responses to regional polarization in Central and Eastern Europe.” Firstly, I would like to thank my hosts during the course of the project, MEPCO and the University of Economics, Prague, as well as the RegPol<sup>2</sup> partner institutions who provided both formal and informal supervision and guidance through various stages of my research, namely, Ing. Tomáš Sýkora (MEPCO), Dr. Garri Raagmaa (University of Tartu) and Dr. Erika Nagy (Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Centre for Economic and Regional Studies). I owe special thanks to Dr. Garri Raagmaa for his academic guidance and for offering opportunities to involve myself in extra academic activities via the University of Tartu that have been valuable for my professional development. Furthermore, I owe special thanks to Dr. Kadri Ukrainski for her supervision and support within the School of Economics and Business Administration as well as to others in the faculty and administration for making my enrolment and defence possible. My ‘pre-defence’ opponents, Dr. Margit Kirs and Dr. Urmas Varblane as well as Dr. Oto Potluka, provided valuable feedback on earlier versions of this dissertation, for which I am grateful. Finally, my personal and heartfelt thanks go to the RegPol<sup>2</sup> Early Stage Researchers and colleagues in the School of Economics and Business Administration for their camaraderie through shared successes and challenges, and, last but by no means least, to my family and friends who stood with me through times of uncertainty during this long journey. Without your constant support and encouragement, this dissertation would not have been possible.



## 3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

### 3.1 Introducing Path Dependence and Institutional Change

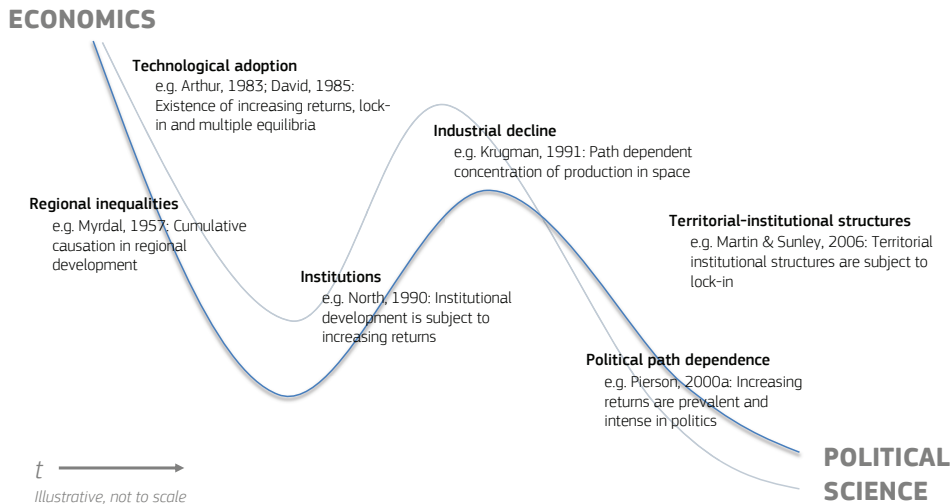
The conceptual framework for this research is intended to integrate political-institutional and economic aspects of regional development as addressed through Regional Policy and focused on the geographical context of CEE. ‘Path dependence’ as a concept explains historical and evolutionary processes pertinent to both economic and political-institutional development. It has been transported in the literature from its genesis describing technological adoption to regional economic development trajectories and political-institutional analysis, leading to a proliferation of understandings of its uses and limitations. The relevant turns in its evolution for the purposes of this research are presented in Figure 1 and elaborated in the following sections. With regard to Regional Policy in particular, path dependence has found an application in the RIS branch of economic geography that has strongly influenced Regional Policy over the last decade through so-called ‘smart specialization’. Meanwhile, in political science, path dependence is used to explain how policies and institutions change over time, adopting a historical and evolutionary perspective through the analytical lens of historical institutionalism (HI).<sup>1</sup>

The understanding of path dependence elaborated herein incorporates temporality and the constraining effects of past policy decisions on current and future policy, regional economic development and institutional arrangements. It is used to understand the context of regional development in CEE and to provide a theoretical and methodological guide for studying Regional Policy-related institutional development across national contexts. As will be shown, the concept applies to itself through concept stretching and transfer to new applications that can distort its meaning. Therefore, it is important to review its origins and interpretations in order to reach a common understanding in multi-disciplinary research. For this research, it is applied to Regional Policy and related domestic institutions – the policy and polity – considering regulatory and administrative configurations for its implementation. Moreover, it is a useful concept for bridging the logics of regional economic development and national and supranational policymaking and implementation. As will be explained below, the approach draws from North’s (1991) definition of institutions as constraints that structure economic, political and social interaction and is complementary to the focus of HI and DI on historical processes and discourses particular to the regional and political context of CEE.

---

<sup>1</sup> Historical institutionalism (HI) is one of the three ‘New Institutionalism’ alongside rational choice institutionalism (RI) and sociological institutionalism (SI) (Hall and Taylor 1996). Discursive institutionalism (DI) is proposed as a fourth strand that complements HI and SI (Schmidt 2008b). These are discussed in further in Chapter 4.3.

The following sections discuss the theoretical underpinnings of path dependence in economic geography and political institutions. After the research context is presented in Chapter 4, the conceptual framework is related to the research context in a discussion of policy transfer and institutional change with particular relevance to Regional Policy in CEE.



**Figure 1.** Evolution of path dependence from economics to political science

### 3.2 Economic Origins and Applications in Economic Geography

Path dependence is used to describe economic development within a spatial context, often drawing on historical legacies. The concept was coined through technological applications by authors such as Arthur (1983, 1990, 1994) and David (1985, 2001), who defined path dependence as the existence of positive feedbacks in the economy, increasing returns to scale, technological ‘lock-in’ and multiple equilibria, placing the concept in conflict with classical and neo-classical economics which tend to assume diminishing returns. David (2001) stated that path dependence is anchored in a quest to integrate historicity into economics. Thus, path dependence implies that the current economic system is contingent on historical events that have influenced economic processes and not on efficient resource allocation *prima facie*. To expand, the efficient allocation of resources can be subject to factors such as lingering policies and practices from historical political or administrative systems, social structures, accepted business practices, etc. The result of such historical contingencies may be, according to David (2001), “the possibility that sub-optimal equilibria will be ‘selected’ by dynamic processes” (9). Therefore, the concept of path dependence

provides a useful lens for discovering sub-optimal equilibria, identifying historical contingencies, and developing strategies to mitigate their effects.

Economic geographers situated the concept of path dependence in both time and *place*, showing that regional economies could also exhibit increasing returns and were subject to historical processes such as territorial institutional-regulatory structures leading to regional ‘lock-in’ (Krugman 1991a, 1991b; Scott and Storper 1992; Martin and Sunley 2006;). Martin and Sunley summarized the marriage of concepts across disciplines well:

...[T]here is an emphasis on the context-specific, locally contingent nature of self-reinforcing economic development, particularly the ‘quasi-fixity’ of geographical patterns of technological change, economic structures and institutional forms across the economic landscape. (398)

While path dependence found a new foothold in the emerging New Economic Geography, building upon location theory and the core-periphery model through examples of industrial decline in Europe and North America (Krugman 1998), it is important to note that it described processes well known to social scientists concerned with development. Myrdal’s (1957) theory of cumulative causation, for example, described path dependent processes that prevented less developed regions from achieving growth, highlighting differences in capital flows and social policies between advanced and underdeveloped economies by the mid-twentieth century. Nevertheless, the adoption of path dependence in New Economic Geography, with its useful related concepts and mechanisms, revolutionized approaches to regional development at a time of rapid globalization and economic transformation.

The feature concept of lock-in took greater hold in the emerging RIS field as regional economic development trajectories appeared to fall into various typologies such as ‘old industrial regions’ characterized by overinvestment in obsolete technologies, ‘fragmented metropolitan areas’ and ‘peripheral regions’ characterized by institutional thinness, thus placing regional innovation at the forefront of economic development almost two decades ago (Isaksen 2001). While the inertia in regional development trajectories described by path dependence is now well recognized, less is known about how regions can break free from this fate. Martin and Sunley (2006) argued that more must be learned about different types and degrees of path dependence. They specify three ways of looking at regional path dependence – whether it is investigating locally contingent and emergent processes, specific industries, or the regional economy as a whole – the three of which may or may not be interrelated.

The RIS literature that emerged amidst this discussion has shaped the paradigm of regional development behind EU Regional Policy, incorporating geographical aspects of place – so-called ‘endogenous development factors’ – with knowledge networks and entrepreneurship. This approach answers the need for developing innovation-based competitive advantages and addressing regional inequalities (Asheim et al. 2011), which makes it well suited to the Regional

Policy context (see Chapter 4). Stemming from aspects of regulation on regional economic systems (Cooke 1992), the RIS literature expanded upon the knowledge of path dependent industrial districts with a focus on firm-level activities, especially targeting examples of successful regions and high-technology sectors (Asheim et al. 2011). Such applications potentially offered few lessons for CEE regions. Research on the forefront, however, also targets path renewal and new path creation in combined actor and system approaches (Isaksen and Jakobsen 2017), including in peripheral areas (Isaksen and Trippel 2016). Despite widespread acknowledgement of the importance of institutions for regional success (Isaksen 2001; Tödtling and Trippel 2005; Asheim et al. 2011; Isaksen and Trippel 2016; Isaksen and Jakobsen 2017), institutions have yet to receive significant attention in this literature. RIS is therefore conceptually compatible with political interpretations of path dependence due to its theoretical consideration of institutions, networks and political mechanisms of knowledge transfer, although these have hardly been explored to date.

The discussion of path dependence in economics comes about through the wider issue of economic restructuring and adaptability to global economic trends. The EU's turn in focus toward economic growth, revealed through strategies such as the Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020, has been the direct response to growth stagnation and falling global competitiveness (Sapir et al. 2003; European Commission 2004). Structural economic transformation in CEE since the fall of socialism, interpreted as the development of gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, has shown the fastest growth rates in core-capital regions as they integrated with the global economy, leaving the peripheral old economy locations in a disadvantaged state (European Commission 2014, 2017). This corresponds with global trends affecting old industrial regions in Northern and Western Europe and North America alike and is certainly not unique to CEE or other post-socialist countries. Nevertheless, the post-socialist and EU policy environment particular to CEE presents a quite different political-institutional context for regional policy and strategies for successful economic restructuring, which makes the path dependence of policy an interesting subject for CEE. The next section shifts focus to path dependence in political institutions.

### **3.3 Concept Transfer and Expansion to Political Institutions**

Following early conceptualizations of economic path dependence, developments in institutional economics opened new applications in the social sciences that were particularly relevant to the blossoming New Institutionalism (NI) (see Chapter 4). North (1991) ascribed path dependence to the development of institutions, which he defined in a game theoretic context as “humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic and social interaction” (97). This definition is sufficiently wide to incorporate the scope of rationalist, structuralist

and cognitive views that currently exist within NI. The formal and informal rules of institutions that he described appealed to political scientists, who foresaw the potentials of path dependence in the political and social aspects of institutions. For example, Page (2006) interpreted path dependence as the “build-up of behavioural routines, social connections or cognitive structures” (89), which develops our understanding of institutions and demonstrates a transformation in the theoretical approach to path dependence as it applies to political processes. Political scientists emphasized the importance of historical legacies in institutions, which go hand in hand with path dependence, and, further to relying on deep descriptions of historical context, attempted to identify mechanisms of institutional change.

Feedback mechanisms became a focus in political path dependence, but there has been some debate surrounding the types of mechanisms and, moreover, basic characteristics of path dependence processes. Pierson (2000a) described political path dependence in terms of increasing returns processes and dynamics shaped by the cost of switching, on one hand, and issues of temporality, on the other, arguing that “placing politics in time...can greatly enrich our understanding of complex social dynamics” (Pierson 2000b, 72). He argued that institutional stickiness, weak competitive mechanisms and learning processes, and short time horizons of political actors make it particularly difficult for policy to move off an established path (Pierson 2004). Moreover, he identified four features where self-reinforcing processes are at work in political life: multiple equilibria; contingency; timing and sequencing; and inertia. Addressing what he believed to be a misplaced focus on increasing returns or positive feedback in the literature, Page (2006) demonstrated that path dependence could arise from decreasing returns due to the presence of constraints and argued for the need to distinguish between different types of path dependence to capture the degree to which ‘history matters’ as well as other processes at work besides positive feedback. Others have identified four common elements in path dependence: causal possibility, contingency, closure and constraint (Bennett and Elman 2006). These interpretations demonstrate the violability of basic economic assumptions such as decreasing returns and optimal equilibrium as they pertain to political processes.

While there has been ample discussion on the theoretical merits and justifications for using path dependence – and scholars believe that concept stretching and proliferation have been problems (Rixen and Viola 2015) – the lack of a unified theoretical framework is not necessarily cause to shy away from the concept. Even in early stages of theory-building, the political approach to path dependence was used in the study of initial institutional transformations in CEE through the transitions of the 1990s (Stark and Bruszt 1998). In the relative absence of empirical studies using path dependence, these early ones can yet be treated as models for comparative studies on institutional transformation in the region for this study and therefore provide an important knowledge base.

Comparative studies of institutional transformation in the post-socialist CEE countries focused on the construction of the market economy. Evolutionary

theory was used to study path dependent processes, finding that socialist legacies hampered the search for economic efficiencies (Grabher and Stark 1997). In a similar vein, the study of privatization strategies explained the unique institutional contexts between countries that reflected heavily on political events and personalities (Stark and Bruszt 1998). These studies showed that competition in free markets does not necessarily result in the formation of optimal organizational arrangements, and the existence of multiple sub-optimal arrangements across the region support an evolutionary economics explanation of institutional development. Such studies provided the foundations for path dependence as applied in CEE, necessarily combining economic and political aspects in accordance with the complex and interrelated nature of the systemic transition. The VoC literature that emerged links political path dependence to economic development, building upon similar foundations for comparative politics as historical institutionalism (see section 5.1.2) (Hall and Soskice 2001; Hall and Thelen 2009). It has been proposed that CEE countries constitute a unique Dependent Market Economy – as opposed to Liberal Market or Coordinated Market Economy seen elsewhere – based on mutually-reinforcing institutional particularities that structure the economic environment and often result in suboptimal arrangements (Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009). This strain of literature continues to push the comparative knowledge of institutional development in CEE.

Despite the above, relatively few studies put the concept of path dependence into practice to investigate institutional change. Nevertheless, interest seems to be seeing a resurgence. Recent papers employing historical institutionalist approaches, such as in urban planning (Sorensen 2015), the long-term development of Regional Policy (Mendez 2012), and the closely related European spatial planning (Faludi 2018; Sorensen 2018), may inspire more empirical studies in the future.

### **3.4 The Other Side of Path Dependence: Path Innovation in Regional Development**

So far, path dependence has been mainly cast in a negative light with respect to regional development, as it is seen as a hindrance to growth-inducing innovation. The term itself can in fact have positive, neutral or negative connotations, in the sense that cumulative causation can build up advantages as well as disadvantages. For example, while technological rigidity is a negative indication of path dependence, technological flexibility and agility could be the result of institutionalized practices that foster innovation and could therefore be seen as a positive instance of path dependence. Leading innovative city regions may owe part of their continued success to the build-up of institutions that attract talent and investment, creating a positive feedback loop that reinforces a position of centrality in global city networks, commodity chains, command and control functions, etc. (see Sassen 1991; Castells 1996; Taylor 2004). Nevertheless, the

long-term success of regions is believed to rest on the ability to navigate change and create new development paths.

In management studies, innovation is associated with change. This connection is useful for building distinctions (or breaking them down, as the case may be) between path dependence and path innovation in an evolutionary regional development context. In the economic and political interpretations described above, path dependence has been used to explain continuity alone as well as the broader interrelated processes of continuity and change. However, it is the knowledge about change that is lacking and has become the focus of recent RIS research. For instance, path innovation has been articulated as path renewal or new path creation as applied to industry (Isaksen and Jakobsen 2017). Path plasticity has also been used in economic geography to describe the ability to innovate within established paths (Strambach and Halkier 2013). Different interpretations have implications for strategy in specific regions and point to new directions in RIS studies, which are beginning to break away from a recent fixation on 'old industrial' regions, by definition, suffering from path dependent 'lock-in' effects (Isaksen 2001).

Chapter 4 discusses this further, introducing and developing the important contextual elements of EU Regional Policy, path trajectories of CEE regions, and the implications of these for conducting institutional analysis. As put forth by Schmidt (2008b), theoretical frameworks such as those used for institutional analysis tend to explain continuity better than change. Interpretations of path dependence and innovation and analyses of institutions can be improved by incorporating agency, which research on both economic and political-institutional sides are starting to pursue. By taking an agent-centred approach, path innovation can be investigated through questions of leadership and power, such as in the case of regional development (Strambach and Halkier 2013; Beer and Clower 2014; Sotarauta 2016), thus moving beyond technological aspects of economic transformation.

## **4 RESEARCH CONTEXT**

The conceptual framework for investigating path dependence and institutional change is applied in the policy context of EU Regional Policy and the regional context of CEE. In the following sections, the policy and its polity, the institutional arrangements for its delivery, are described, first, providing an overview of its operation and, second, reviewing the evolution of its underlying principles that settle in the current smart specialization paradigm. Following, the current and historical trends in regional development are described as they unfold in CEE.

### **4.1 EU Regional Policy**

#### **4.1.1 Programme Overview**

Variably referred to as EU Regional Policy or Cohesion Policy in the literature (henceforth referred to as ‘Regional Policy’ and ‘regional policy’ for the domestic iterations), it denotes the official regional development policy of the EU, which promotes territorial cohesion through targeted interventions of the Cohesion Fund, but also more widely as the coordinated strategy for the allocation of European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) including the European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund and Cohesion Fund as its primary funds. With elements dating back to the 1957 Treaty of Rome, the core concept of territorial cohesion formally entered the Regional Policy discourse through the 1999 European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP), stipulating balanced, multi-scalar development in both social, economic and environmental terms (European Commission 1999). Whereas Regional Policy has recently described a strategy applicable to all regions in Europe regardless of whether they are urban or rural, highly developed or underdeveloped, references to Cohesion Policy tend to invoke a historical focus on Europe’s poorest MS and least developed regions. Such is the specific focus of the Cohesion Fund in relation to the other ESIF.

Despite a shift in Regional Policy orientation described below, the Cohesion Fund maintains its role of “strengthening the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the Union in the interests of promoting sustainable development,”<sup>2</sup> with a comprehensive Regional Policy programme applicable to ‘less developed,’ ‘transition,’ and ‘more developed’ regions. Most regions in CEE countries have been eligible for maximum support since accession, being within countries that qualify for the Cohesion Fund (gross national income of less than 90 percent of the EU average) and qualifying as ‘less developed’ regions themselves (regional GDP per capita less than 75 percent of the EU average, except for capital regions that then to have above-average GDP per capita). The termi-

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<sup>2</sup> Regulation (EU) No 1300/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 17 December 2013 on the Cohesion Fund and repealing Council Regulation (EC) No 1084/2006

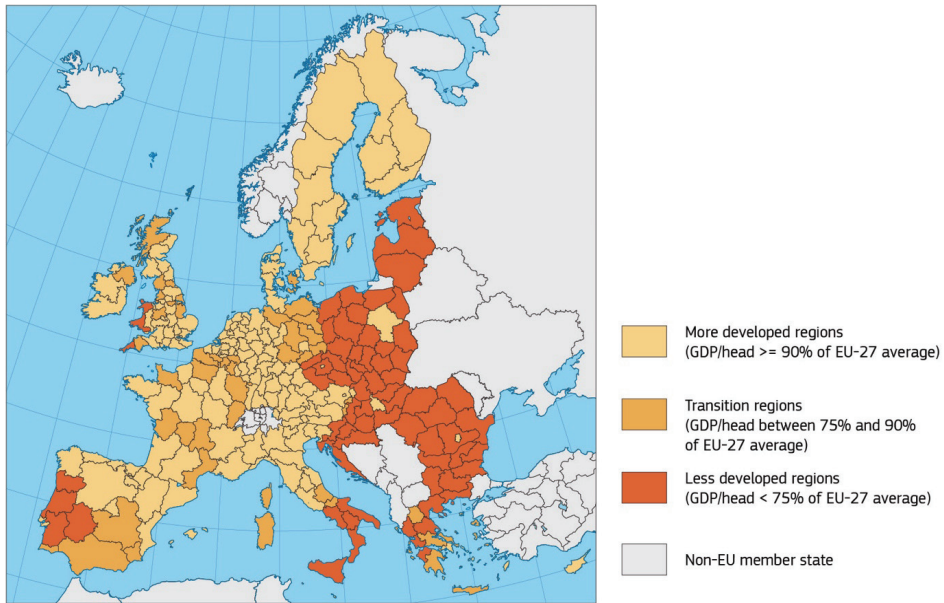


nology of regional classifications has evolved across programming periods since CEE accession, but the economic basis for classifying regions has been consistent (Table 2). When drawing comparisons across programming periods, it is necessary to be aware of the changes in terminology. Thus, ‘less developed’ regions in the 2014–2020 period are analogous to ‘objective 1’ or ‘convergence’ regions in previous periods. Similarly, these regions are also referred to more generally as ‘lagging,’ ‘backward’ or ‘disadvantaged’ in policy circles and the literature at large. Figure 2 illustrates the regional classification of the European territory for the 2014–2020 period.

**Table 2.** Regional eligibility classifications in recent EU programming periods

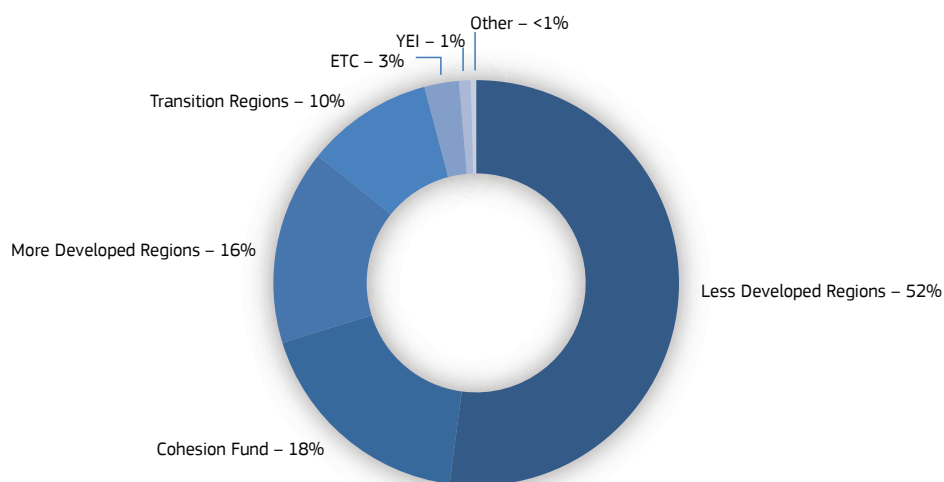
Regional eligibility criterion	Corresponding labels		
	2000–2006	2007–2013	2014–2020
GDP per capita < 75% of EU average	Objective 1: Development and structural adjustment of regions where development is lagging behind	Convergence	Less developed
GDP per capita between 75 and 90% of EU average	Ex 1: Phasing-out Objective 1	Phasing-out and -in	Transition
GDP per capita $\geq$ 90% of EU average	Objective 2: Supporting the economic and social conversion of areas facing structural difficulties & Objective 3: Training systems and employment policies	Regional competitiveness and employment	More developed

Adapted from European Commission (2014).

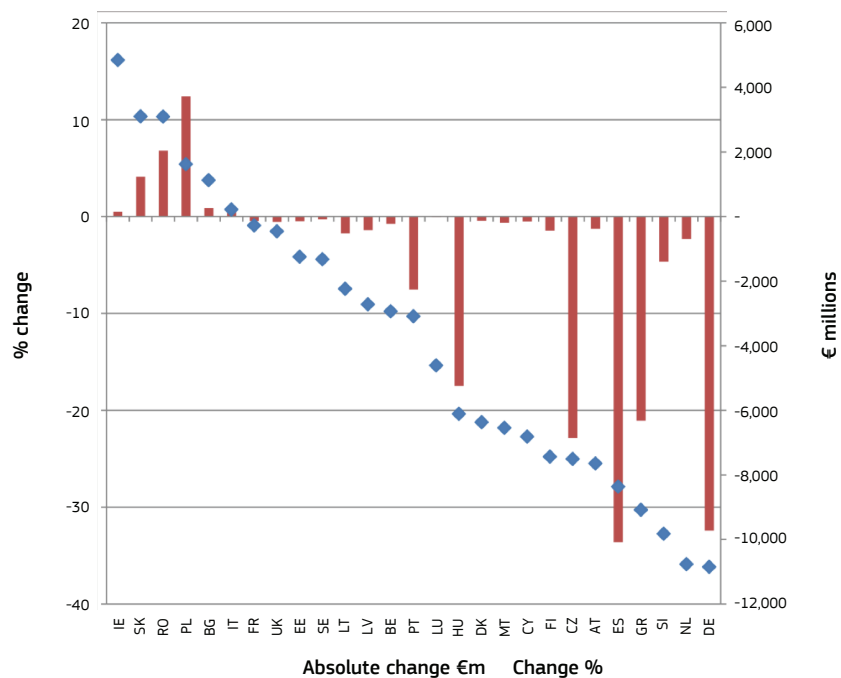


**Figure 2.** Cohesion regions in the 2014–2020 programming period. Adapted from European Commission (2014).

In the 2014–2020 period, EU contributions of approximately 350 billion EUR were planned for allocation through Regional Policy, which can be broken down by spending categories (Figure 3) (European Commission 2016). ‘Less developed’ regions were allocated approximately 52 percent of the ESIF (EU contribution of 179 million EUR). As can be seen in Figure 2, the majority of CEE regions are categorized as ‘less developed’, and they are joined by others in Southern Europe and the United Kingdom. From the post-socialist countries, only the regions of former East Germany were classified as ‘transition’. More on these development disparities in CEE will be discussed in Section 4.2. When it comes to financial allocations, changes between the previous and current programming periods suggest some regional economic rebalancing, with increased allocations to Slovakia, Romania and Poland and decreased allocations to Czechia, Hungary and Slovenia (Figure 4) (Mendez and Bachtler 2015). Bulgaria and the Baltic states had little absolute change between periods.

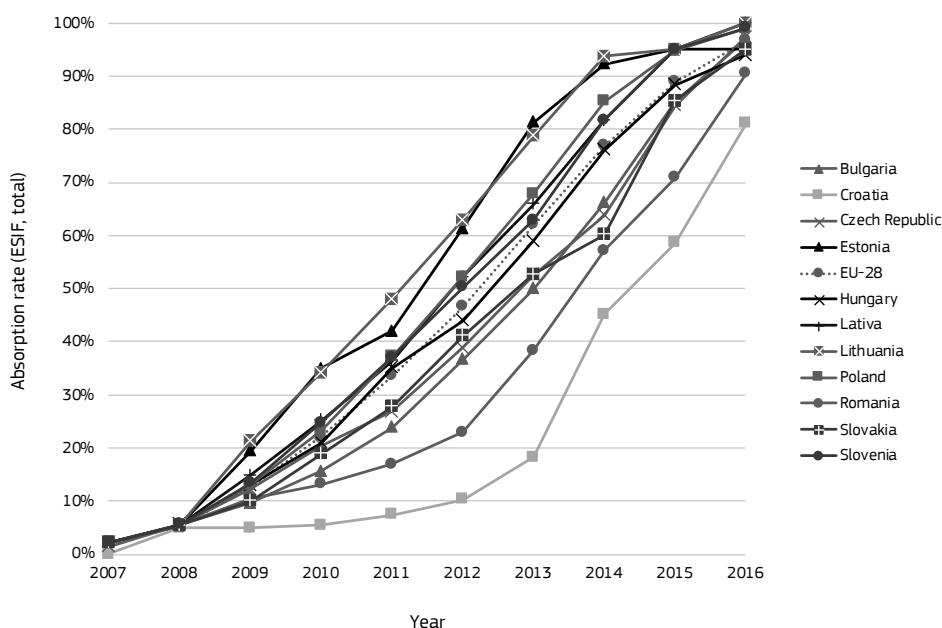


**Figure 3.** Total allocations of EU Cohesion Policy by spending categories, 2014–2020 – EU28. Adapted from European Commission (2016).



**Figure 4.** Changes in financial allocations from 2007–2013 to 2014–2020. Source: Mendez and Bachtler (2015).

As for its implementation, Regional Policy is officially coordinated through multi-level governance (MLG) based on the partnership and subsidiarity principles, due to the belief that national, regional and local levels can best interpret policy objectives to solve real problems on the ground (Committee of the Regions 2009; Van Den Brande 2014). This has been considered a mode of experimentalist governance that made territorial cohesion a shared competence between the EU and MS (Faludi 2010). Nevertheless, MLG varies between MS, and the implementation of Regional Policy according to its principles can occur within established institutional frameworks (Van Den Brande 2014). In practice, MLG has been criticized for creating inefficiencies, and there is a longstanding mismatch between institutional capacities and the complex administrative workload and rules surrounding the ESIF (Mendez and Bachtler 2015). More capable institutions tend to be located in more developed regions due to the link between economic development, tax bases and accumulation of institutional knowledge and expertise associated with economic and political aspects of path dependence (recall Myrdal's (1957) theory of cumulative causation). Therefore, it is no surprise that weaker regions have faced challenges to implement European funded projects. The issue of administrative capacity has thus often been highlighted in the debate on the management of ESIF and Regional Policy reforms. During the 2007–2013 programming period, ESIF absorption rates varied across CEE countries and indicated a lag in spending (Figure 5), that in many cases could risk losing allocations during the prescribed spending period (i.e.  $n + 2/3$  rule). Moreover, the bottom-up aspect of creating competitive project proposals to win ESIF funding can further skew ESIF allocations within countries away from the least developed regions (see Novosák et al. 2017). An EU rhetoric promoting stronger MLG for the 2014–2020 period showed mixed results in the processes for drafting national Partnership Agreements (PAs) and Operational Programmes (OPs), since regional and local authorities in CEE countries had, at best, limited involvement (Van Den Brande 2014). Programme simplification reduced the number of OPs and managing authorities in MS, creating an opportunity for central states to consolidate power over Regional Policy while technically fulfilling MLG requirements.



**Figure 5.** Absorption rates (percentage of funds paid compared to available budget) of ESIF in CEE countries for the 2007–2013 programming period. Data: European Commission (2018c).

### 4.1.2 Three Periods of Regional Policy

Now putting the operations of Regional Policy aside, this research is concerned with changes in the guiding principles of Regional Policy over time. The evolution of Regional Policy is elaborated in Papers II and V according to three periods of relevance to CEE countries: the Europe of the Regions, Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020. The review shows a shift in focus of Regional Policy from a welfare-distributional approach targeting Europe’s least developed regions to an economic competitiveness and growth approach open to all regions. This shift also presents challenges in CEE countries for territorial cohesion due to differences in convergence strategies and the trend of regional polarization, depending on whether MS interpret Regional Policy for national or regional convergence, which has implications for the degree of tolerable regional inequalities.

First, the Europe of the Regions period of the 1990s and early 2000s included policies and institutional transformations associated with experimental governance and underpinned by the subsidiarity and partnership principles. The era identified ambitious projects for EU integration (European Commission 1997), enshrined the concept of territorial cohesion (European Commission 1999) and promoted territorial rescaling through MLG (Faludi 2006) and de-

bates on regionalization and European federalism that challenged the nation state (Loughlin 1996). Looking towards EU membership, CEE countries adapted to this paradigm to varying degrees in terms of territorial and administrative reforms (Illner and Andrlé 1994; Illner 1997; Grabbe 2001; Brusis 2002; Yoder 2003; Baun and Marek 2006; Bruszt 2008; Pálné Kovács 2009) (see Papers III and VI).

The second period addressed is associated with the Lisbon Agenda of 2000, which emerged and integrated with Regional Policy in the 2000–2006 through the 2007–2013 periods. The Lisbon Agenda marked a shift in strategic direction toward European productivity and economic growth that aimed to integrate across the EU’s sectoral policies (Sapir et al. 2003; European Commission 2004). The era saw the re-orientation of Regional Policy resources from a relatively welfare-distributional to economic competitiveness model in what has been termed the ‘Lisbonization’ of Cohesion Policy (Mendez 2011). Place-based development targeted lagging regions through an endogenous growth model (Barca 2009). By supporting MLG, it was also seen to strengthen the role of regions in policymaking (Committee of the Regions 2009; Farole et al. 2011).

Third, the Europe 2020 era corresponding with the 2014–2020 programming period continued promoting “smart, sustainable and inclusive growth” (European Commission 2010) in response to the negative effects of the 2008 financial crisis (Lois González 2013). Following disappointing results of the previous period, further centralization of Regional Policy and tighter financial controls were imposed (European Commission 2013), potentially decreasing the role of regions. Europe 2020 adopted the strategy of smart specialization inspired by the RIS literature, bridging Regional Policy with innovation and entrepreneurship as the main driver of growth (McCann and Ortega-Argilés 2013). This strategy has been criticized due to the diminished role of convergence and difficulties of lagging regions to successfully implement place-based policies (Avdikos and Chardas 2016). In preparation for the 2014–2020 programming period, most MS adapted their strategies to favour economic competitiveness over more traditional convergence aims (Nosek 2017).

#### **4.1.3 Regional Policy and Smart Specialization**

As an integral part of Europe 2020, smart specialization has moved from a theory to an institutionalized form of RIS in EU policy over approximately one decade. Smart specialization was conceived as a bottom-up approach to innovation policy built on the “entrepreneurial process of discovery” in order to identify and develop important economic domains for specialization that could lead to structural change in a region (Foray et al. 2009, 2). This contrasts with prior practices in innovation policy based on international best practices that resulted in the duplication of strategies amongst neighbouring regions and countries: “Too many regions have selected the same technology mix ... showing a lack of

imagination, creativity and strategic vision” (Foray et al. 2011, 4). Furthermore, the theory is adaptable to both leading and lagging regions. While leading regions focus on the creation of new technologies, lagging regions have potential to gain advantages through the co-invention of technological applications suited to their regional economies.

The EU adopted smart specialization as a strategy for achieving the growth objectives of Europe 2020 through the creation of the RIS3 platform (Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization). RIS3 aims at developing innovation competences through the compulsory creation of national/regional strategies that, in turn, guide and integrate ESIF investments (e.g. through Regional Policy) (Foray et al. 2012). It is especially intended to guide investments related to the research and development (R&D) and information and communications technologies (ICT) thematic objectives, which are seen to play a key role in innovation and entrepreneurial discovery. RIS3 also advocates for a collaborative leadership structure following the quadruple helix model involving government, industry, academia and civil society in innovation processes. This can be seen as a form of MLG, including bottom-up insights, to be entrenched in RIS3 (Carayannis and Rakhmatullin 2014), even after Regional Policy itself tended towards greater centralization at the state level (see Paper III). The quadruple helix model supports the shift from technology-driven to user-driven or open innovation, thereby supporting the shift from a knowledge-based economy to a knowledge society, and the involvement of local citizens is believed to promote growth in the territory (Committee of the Regions 2016).

The experts who articulated ‘smart specialization’ admit that it was not a new idea, but that prioritizing economic domains was previously taboo in international policy circles (Foray et al. 2011). Economic specialization itself is believed to lead to an international competitive advantage (Porter 1994, 1998) and drive innovation (Tödtling and Trippel 2005), but policymakers have been reluctant to give priority to certain domains for fear of ‘picking winners’. While the theory is considered to be more complex than prior policies (i.e. not to be reduced to a clusters policy or top-down industrial policy), it is a more encompassing solution for both leading and lagging regions. Less developed regions have traditionally been seen as attractive locations for low value-added activities within the European market, which, in areas such as CEE, led to growth through foreign direct investment following their economic transitions (Berend 2009) (see Section 4.2.2). The Bratislava region, for example, became a key location for automotive manufacturing in Europe (Jacobs 2013). However, this role in CEE has become precarious since higher value-added activities within the industry tend to be located elsewhere and the cost advantages of post-socialist countries are eroding. Smart specialization provides a means for upgrading such regional economies, thereby supporting Regional Policy objectives under the current Europe 2020 strategy.

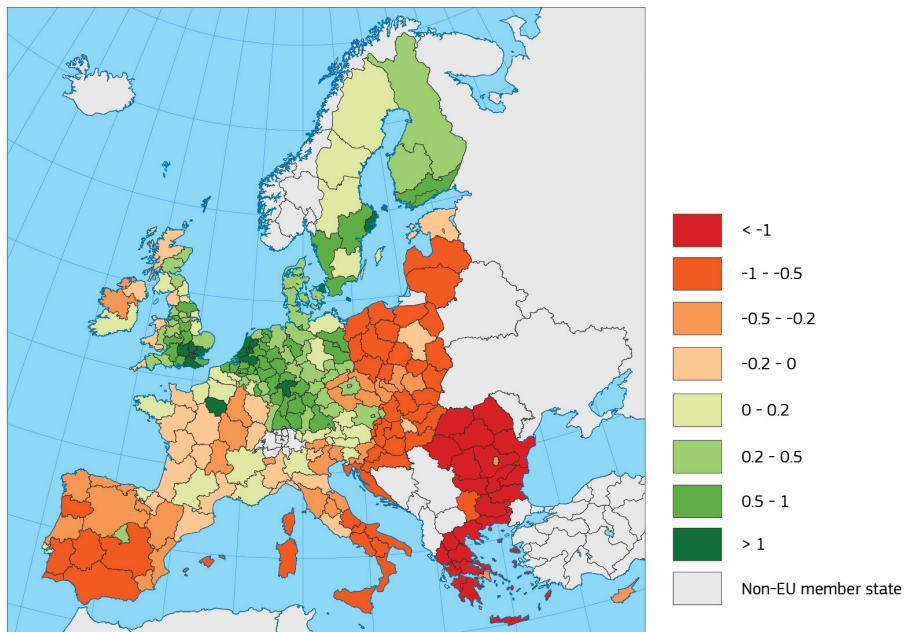
Despite the integration of this theoretically beneficial strategy into Regional Policy, RIS3 has been criticized for furthering a neoliberal agenda in practice and constraining the scope of Regional Policy for less developed regions in the

2014–2020 programming period (Avdikos and Chardas 2016) (see Paper V). This brings into question whether the RIS3 implementation stayed true to the original smart specialization concept and whether Regional Policy will be flexible enough to provide the supports that lagging regions need to successfully deliver smart specialization. What is uncertain is the ability to practice the quadruple helix approach in less developed regions that may lack institutional capacity, expertise and civil society networks, resulting in smart specialization strategies that are imposed by the core, missing the ‘entrepreneurial discovery process’ entirely. Such was the experience of many CEE countries regarding the duplication of Regional OPs and cornering of Regional Policy projects by core-based consultants in previous programming periods (Kováč and Kučerová 2006, 2009). Nevertheless, the impacts of RIS3 cannot yet be evaluated, and it is still a central concept in Regional Policy proposals for the post-2020 period.

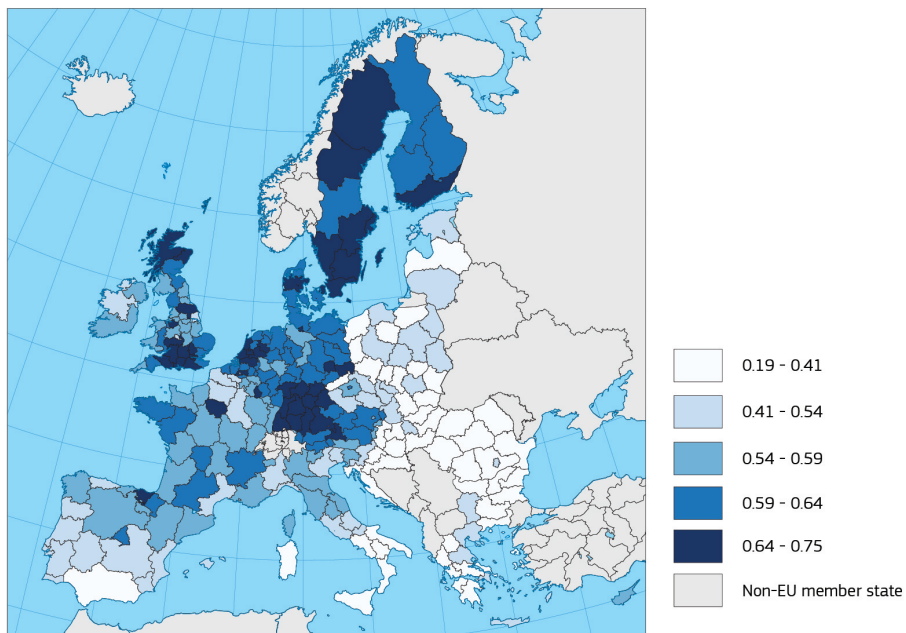
## **4.2 Regional Development in Central and Eastern Europe**

The policy context of EU Regional Policy, as it applies to CEE countries, is built upon their situation in the European periphery and their relative economic, social and political-institutional underdevelopment (see European Commission 2017). As previously shown, CEE regions are classified as ‘less developed’ within Europe for the 2014–2020 programming period, with the exception of highly developed capital regions such as Budapest, Bratislava, Prague and Warsaw. This pattern continues to hold according to the most recently published regional GDP data (Eurostat 2016). CEE peripherality and relative underdevelopment have also been illustrated in terms of economic competitiveness and human development (Figures 6 and 7). In order to further understand this regional context, the following section discusses peripheralization processes in CEE that are related to globalization and historical development trajectories. These topics are further elaborated in Papers I and IV. Paper I provides a theoretical overview of territoriality and peripherality in CEE countries, situating them in EU and global processes, thereby setting the broad context of regional development in politico-institutional and socio-spatial perspectives. Paper IV includes a discussion of the historical context of economic development in CEE countries.





**Figure 6.** EU Regional Competitiveness Index, 2013. Adapted from Annoni and Dijkstra (2013).



**Figure 7.** EU Regional Human Development Index, 2012. Adapted from Hardeman and Dijkstra (2014).

### 4.2.1 Territoriality and Peripherality

EU Regional Policy is territorially based according to the classification of territorial units for statistics (NUTS) that define comparable regional units across countries. While regions may be conceptualized in these terms for Regional Policy, territorial units on this scale often have little historical basis in CEE. Territoriality is an important concept that has been addressed in the Regional Policy and Europeanization literature for decades, coming to the forefront with the inclusion of territorial cohesion in the 1999 ESDP (European Commission 1999). As the policy context section has shown, Regional Policy classification schemes situate most CEE regions on the European periphery.

The literature on territoriality can be grouped by political-institutional and socio-spatial perspectives. The former is defined by the state system (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999) and EU principles such as MLG (Faludi 2013) and subsidiarity (Swianiewicz 2010), while the latter pertains to relational constructions of regional identity and complexity (Healey 2006; Paasi 2013). While EU-Member State relations reinforce the state system, they also support power sharing through MLG and e.g. cross border co-operations (Perkmann 1999, 2007), representing a softening of spaces as opposed to hardening of borders. The same forces of globalization that ultimately caused the collapse of CEE economies (Berend 2009) were envisioned to cause a decline of territoriality (Ohmae 1990, 1993, 1995; Castells 1996), but such claims have been over-estimated (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). Instead, territoriality has become more complex and multi-scalar (Storey 2015).

Multi-scalar notions of peripherality become an issue in CEE in relational and territorial terms. Regional Policy attempts to bridge the relational and territorial, but, as the RIS literature showed, various types of regions experience some sort of peripherality. A common aspect to European peripheries is that they are currently affected, often intensified, under globalization causing shifts in local economies, institutions and power relations. CEE countries have been through transition in the 1990s, sometimes building new institutions from scratch (Drechsler and Randma-Liiv 2015). New approaches including the LEADER and INTERREG programmes challenged traditional structures through relational activities such as bottom-up and cross-border initiatives, respectively, with limited success (Perkmann 1999; Chevalier et al. 2013). Recently, the need for enhanced institutional and leadership capacities for realizing development potentials has been highlighted (Sotarauta et al. 2012; Beer and Clower 2014), measures that would help peripheries with the place-based development and smart specialization strategies advocated by Regional Policy (Barca et al. 2012).

#### 4.2.2 Regional Development and Historical Legacies

The economic interpretation of path dependence explains much about regional development in CEE, which is a story of historical legacies. Applying the RIS logic to economic development based on innovation capacities, barriers to innovation and therefore economic development fall into three categories: organizational thinness, fragmentation and lock-in (Isaksen 2001). Many of the socialist-industrialized regions in CEE can be identified as old industrial regions (Lux 2009), which are understood to be primarily affected by lock-in resulting in an overspecialization in mature industries experiencing decline (Tödtling and Trippl 2005; Coenen et al. 2015). Nevertheless, many CEE regions also have the problems of peripheral regions due to their relationships with the European and national cores. Based on old industrial and peripheral region characteristics, some relevant policy areas for CEE regions include: economic restructuring, attracting exogenous support (e.g. foreign direct investment), and developing new sectors for old industrial regions; and strengthening endogenous potential, knowledge infrastructure and absorption capacity for peripheral regions (Tödtling and Trippl 2005). Recent recognition of the necessity for institutional supports for economic development are also particularly relevant to CEE (Asheim et al. 2011; Isaksen and Trippl 2016; Isaksen and Jakobsen 2017).

Institutional economists have defined particularities to CEE countries that distinguish them as a group from other European countries. The economic and institutional legacies of socialism produced institutional arrangements that sub-optimally structure economic activity and innovation in a so-called Dependent Market Economy (Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009), which can be seen to reinforce the traps of old industrial and peripheral regions. According to the VoC literature, CEE countries share characteristics such as lack of capital (dependence on FDI), weak civil society and dependence on EU supports that are seen to prevent further convergence with the West (Farkas 2011, 2017), although argue differences between Visegrad and Baltic states, the latter being purely neoliberal (Bohle and Greskovits 2007; Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009). While these findings have implications for regional development, they also provide guidance on institutional arrangements for this research.

The historical context of CEE is crucial for understanding the connection between institutional arrangements, political systems and economic development in a region that has seen systemic changes and varying speeds of development in a relatively short period. With regard to regional economic development, historians have articulated three periods in CEE since industrialization: nineteenth and early twentieth century laissez-faire capitalism (i.e. pre-socialism); state socialism; and late twentieth and twenty-first century capitalism. Moreover, three phases of development apply in the former socialist countries: Stalinism, post-Stalinism and globalization (Berend 1996). The Stalinist era denotes a period of intense industrialization and capital accumulation, which was followed by an easing of accumulation in favour of increased consumption in the post-Stalinist period, while the globalization era was entered amidst

global crises of the 1970s (e.g. oil shock) that exposed structural weaknesses leading to macroeconomic instability and collapse (Berend 1996). These periods, from pre-war to globalization, roughly correspond with phases of capitalist development in the West (e.g. 1820–1913, 1913–1950, 1950–1973 and 1973 onwards) (Maddison 1991), which are mutually punctuated by war, global crises and technological disruption.

The pre-socialist period of *laissez-faire* capitalism extended industrialization patterns from nineteenth century empires in CEE and included unprecedented processes of accumulation, innovation, diffusion of technology and personal enrichment (Maddison 1991). Following Simonazzi and Ginzburg's (2015) classification system of first-comer, latecomer and late latecomer regions to industrialization in Southern Europe, the first-comers in CEE can be located in Austria and Czechia due to Habsburg-era development (Good and Ma 1999). Most of the region entered the socialist (i.e. Stalinist) period with an economically backward, agricultural level of development (Berend 2006).

The effect of the socialist period on regional development mainly entailed the transformation of agriculture- to industrial-based regional economies and widespread provision of social services. The Stalinist period was defined by forced capital accumulation through industrialization and limited consumption, while the post-Stalinist period allowed for increased consumption and economic reforms that were met with varying degrees of success. According to Szczepański (1977), the difference between socialist industrialization and other forms lies in the complex of economic processes characterized by the social appropriation of the means of production and planned, centralized economy administered by the government. Nevertheless, variations between countries led to experiments such as the “planned market” and “mixed price system” (e.g. associated with the Prague Spring and Hungarian Miracle) that had dramatically different political results (Berend 1996). GDP proxies showed divergent growth rates across CEE in the socialist period that correspond somewhat with previous differences in development, although the least developed countries experienced significant gains (Good and Ma 1999; Maddison 2003). According to Ehrlich (1991), all CEE countries reduced their differences with the United States from 1937 to 1986, while deterioration occurred after 1960, when the economic policy switched from an extensive to intensive growth strategy. Towards the end of the socialist period, market experimentation was unable to cope with global economic disruptions and, “the Schumpeterian structural crisis of the 1970s–80s” opened the gap between East and West wider than ever before (Berend 2006, 183).

In terms of territorial development, industrialization during the socialist period introduced an urban explosion, followed by industrial de-concentration associated with peripheral development, leading to the beginnings of a post-industrial landscape in the most developed regions (Enyedi 1990). Thus, the problems of old industrial regions and peripheral areas are prevalent throughout CEE, presenting a problematic legacy for regional development. By the fall of socialism, CEE regions were more industrialized but still backward as they

lacked innovation in technology and processes (Berend 2009). High specialization between the COMECON countries including the Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc led to overspecialization and investment in obsolete technologies, withering CEE competitiveness amidst globalization. In present-day Czechia, for example, the socialist period ended with a “polarised regional structure, overindustrialised urban agglomerations, and underdeveloped infrastructure, a polluted environment, and a weak and over-centralised territorial administration” (Illner and Andrlé 1994, 10), calling up impediments to innovation associated with old industrial and institutionally thin peripheries. With the exception of diversified economic activities surrounding capitals and large cities, CEE regions are still largely agricultural (Copus and Noguera 2010). Moreover, many are below average or depleting in terms of economic performance relative to the EU average. The exceptions to these trends include parts of Czechia and Northwest Hungary, matching the historical development patterns of the pre-socialist era, namely the industrialization of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The general patterns of territorial development during the socialist period can be viewed as temporary departures from the long-term paths of development established beforehand, which are, in turn, re-emerging through catching-up processes in the post-socialist period. The result of the historical patterns of development that created strong core-periphery relations and left many regions in economic decline suggests that interventions of Regional Policy should support structural change in order to be sustainable in the long term.

### **4.3 From Concepts to Context: Policy transfer and institutional transformation**

Having presented the conceptual framework of path dependence and the research context of EU Regional Policy and CEE regions, the literature on policy transfer and institutional transformation is particularly apt for this study. Policies have been deemed prominent constraining features due to legal and coercive power (Pierson 2004). This raises questions about the constraining effects of Regional Policy on domestic policies and institutions, the extent to which domestic institutions are able to deviate from established paths, and the implications of these constraints for policy effectiveness. As can be seen, these are highly related to the overarching questions of this research, and the literature on policy transfer and Europeanization is complementary to the historical institutionalist interpretation of path dependence employed.

The study of institutional transformation can be approached from three basic paradigmatic views under the umbrella of New Institutionalism: rational choice institutionalism (RI), historical institutionalism (HI) and sociological institutionalism (SI) (Hall and Taylor 1996). First, RI bases institutional arrangements on utility maximization involving e.g. behavioural assumptions and preference sets and sees institutions as incentive structures on which to base calculated, strategic actions (North 1991; Hall and Taylor 1996). Second, HI emphasizes

structuralism and sees institutions on a corporate level as the accumulation of rules and practices. Third, SI sees institutional arrangements as being shaped by social relations, power and culture, emphasizing cognitive and social constructivism (Hall and Taylor 1996). While RI takes a relatively hard view towards institutional change based on an objective view of reality, HI and SI share a subjective view of reality that enables them to play off of one another. A main difference between HI and SI is regarding their respective concerns with normative and cognitive levels (Campbell 1998). HI may serve as a pivot point between other views; history affects rational choices and internal beliefs, alike (Steinmo 2014). As the longstanding debates within and between these three traditional schools of thought continue regarding their ontologies, it is widely accepted that the choice of approach depends more on the research aims than differences in worldviews. Researchers tend to take advantage of opportunities for cross-fertilization in practice, as appropriate (Campbell 1998).

A fourth and relatively recent approach is discursive institutionalism (DI), which can be seen as a separate school or an extension of the three traditional institutionalisms. DI focuses on institutional structures of meaning through discourses whereby the traditional three are seen to set the wider context or structure of institutions (Schmidt 2008a). DI explains why institutions change by focusing on the discursive interactions of agents, illuminating ideational change and revealing institutions as structures of meaning-making. Similarly to SI, it sees institutions as internally constructed by agents and is particularly useful for extending HI's focus on 'macro trends' by incorporating agency in order to more adequately explain why institutional change occurred. According to Schmidt (2008a), HI, like RI, is mainly suited to explaining exogenous change. Therefore, HI and DI are complementary for incorporating exogenous and endogenous change, for example, in the study of political institutions. The characteristics of these four institutionalisms are compared in Table 3.

While HI has been used to explain institutional change on the macro level, it faces shortcomings in explaining why change occurred and often reverts to either RI or SI to explain the micro level (Schmidt 2008a). The VoC literature, for example, relies on HI to frame the macro political and economic institutional contexts of systemic change in post-socialist countries, while using RI to explain the micro level of firms and other economic agents (Schmidt 2008b). This is reasonable in the context of economic path dependence. However, for political path dependence, there is an opportunity to integrate HI with DI since the focus shifts to the content of policies and the discourses surrounding their meanings. According to Schmidt (2008a), political elites often use communicative and coordinative methods to present a master discourse. This crosses with SI studies on international relations that focus on the legitimization of ideas through hierarchical processes – top-down or bottom-up. In the case of EU Regional Policy, the political programme is the result of discursive processes between the European Commission and MS, leading to core principles and thematic objectives for a finite period, the multi-annual financial framework or programming period, which is then implemented through a top-down process

through the distribution of funds and management of OPs and individual projects. The formulation of domestic regional policies and institutional arrangements for implementation, however, is presumably a national affair that could see wide variation between MS, with the possibility of incorporating more bottom-up initiatives. In light of the scholarly need to explain institutional change, recent research on HI also focuses on how institutions reinforce stability through the institutionalization of cultural categories, particularly regarding bottom-up activities (Capoccia 2016). Agenda-setting power, for example, can enable or delay institutional change. Thus, even as research aims become more specific, they are spreading in many directions, and it is evident that the domains of the various New Institutionalisms continue to blur.

**Table 3.** Characteristics of the three institutionalisms (plus one)

Rational choice institutionalism (RI)	Historical institutionalism (HI)	Sociological institutionalism (SI)	
<i>More quantitative</i>	<< >>	<i>More qualitative</i>	
<i>Objective reality</i>	<< >>	<i>Subjective reality</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on self-interested actors, firms</li><li>• micro level</li><li>• externally constructed</li><li>• belief in rational decision-making</li><li>• influenced by sunk costs, opportunity costs</li><li>• institutions as incentive structures</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on corporate actors</li><li>• macro level</li><li>• externally constructed</li><li>• historical constraints, institutional legacies</li><li>• influenced by build-up of rules and norms</li><li>• institutions as rules and practices</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on agents</li><li>• micro and macro level</li><li>• internally constructed</li><li>• social relations</li><li>• influenced by behaviours, culture, norms</li><li>• institutions as relationally constructed norms (static norms)</li></ul>	
<<	<i>(blurred boundaries in practice)</i>		>>
	<b>Discursive institutionalism (DI)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• focus on ideas and ideational change</li><li>• micro and macro level</li><li>• internally and externally constructed</li><li>• internal discursive interactions of agents to reinterpret or subvert institutions (dynamic norms)</li><li>• influenced by discourses</li><li>• institutions as internal constructs of actors</li></ul>		

Source: Author's own.

The present analysis adheres to HI while incorporating DI tendencies – inherent in the empirical material, policy analysis and expert interviews – for explaining institutional change. This is believed to be increasingly common but often goes unstated (Schmidt 2008a). The typical focus of HI on macro trends suits this study due to the broad political and economic transformations occurring across the region over the time period in question, as well as the nature of policy transfer associated with Europeanization, discussed below, which potentially reduced the agency of the case countries in shaping their regional policies. While ideational change is also considered through the examination of principles of regional policy and their comparison across time periods and national jurisdictions, the study does not delve deeply into their discursive formation.

In the geographic and political context of this study, the EU-MS relations – not to mention Candidate Country relations – are fraught by power imbalances and conditionalities. On the one hand, the CEE countries in question actively sought EU membership while, on the other hand, they were required to implement institutional reforms. The prospectus for CEE accession was laid out in *Agenda 2000*, which included a basic overview of needed reforms in order to fulfil the EU consolidated law for MS known as the *acquis communautaire* (European Commission 1997). Treated as a bloc of accession countries, the EU streamlined the process for CEE countries that potentially left less room for manoeuvre and negotiation between countries that previous Candidate Countries may have enjoyed. As latecomers to European integration, the smaller and weaker CEE candidate countries had to adjust to the rules of the game rather than participate in their design and conform more closely to those rules than previous candidates (Ágh 1999).

Faludi (2014) states that policy transfer is the engine of Europeanization. Therefore, the transfer of Regional Policy to MS and its diffusion to regional and local levels as a condition for substantial investment is a key component of the Europeanization process. Outcomes of Europeanization include absorbing policy objectives, accommodating governance and institutions and transforming programmes, for which Regional Policy is an ideal study, but for CEE in particular, there is a question about whether Europeanizing reforms will hold or if historical practices will reassert themselves (Ferry and McMaster 2013). Reflecting on more than ten years of EU membership, the long-term effects of policy transfer in CEE are beginning to emerge. During the accession process, the large CEE countries including Czechia, Hungary and Poland as well as the Baltic States were already advanced democratic reformers, therefore the costs of policy adoption rested upon *acquis* or regulatory conditionality where Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2004) suggest there may have been a trade-off between short-term effectiveness and long-term inefficiency. Shortly after accession, the Europeanized structures representing MLG posed little threat to central state authority in CEE (Scherpereel 2007), and academic interest in institutional transformation through decentralization and regionalization waned in favour of sub-national governance in general (Pitschel and Bauer 2009). Regarding Regional Policy, the outcomes of Europeanization have been mixed



across the new MS, which can be seen in the merely superficial changes to planning and policy practices (Dąbrowski 2014) or the varying outcomes of regionalization, which endured in Czechia and Poland but declined in Hungary (Brusis 2014). While EU conditionality played a role in shaping institutions in the larger CEE countries, smaller states such as the Baltics faced different requirements and expectations in their EU relations. In Estonia, for example, EU accession has had little effect on governing institutions (Kull and Tatar 2015). Looking to the future of Regional Policy, its role as the driving force for regional development is expected to continue after 2020, and new conditionalities based on the rule of law have been proposed, recalling external incentives during the accession process (European Commission 2018a).

The will to join the EU and the conditionality of institutional reforms to benefit from Regional Policy amount to what Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) classify as a mixture of voluntary and coercive policy transfer. This they deem to be an important observation for framing empirical work in order to deepen the understanding of processes and understand how they change over time. They contend that the degree to which a policy transfer process is coercive rather than voluntary increases the chance of policy failure. In light of the 2008 financial crisis and recovery that dominated issues of Regional Policy in CEE over the past decade, it is difficult to discuss Regional Policy in terms of successes or failures, especially in terms of institutional development. To investigate policy transfer, Dolowitz and Marsh (2000) recommend to focus on actors and processes and to distinguish between processes of policy transfer and how the process leads to a particular outcome. This will influence the methodological approach. As mentioned earlier, an outcome of Regional Policy transfer to CEE, e.g. policy success or failure, cannot be easily identified for this research. Part of this research will reconsider the policy transfer process and institutional transformations since accession and the differences across countries. Process tracing, a technique commonly used by political scientists, seems to be a suitable approach for explaining policy transfer (see 5.1.3 Methodological Approach).

Another useful principle is policy assemblage, which is conducive to historical institutionalist notions of institutional transformation (Prince 2010) and to evolutionary theory as used by Grabher and Stark (1997) to examine organizational transformation in CEE countries. By focusing on the recombination of inherited organizational forms with emerging new forms, they found that institutional legacies produced friction and preserved organizational diversity. At the national level, the policy assemblage approach can be used to investigate institutional transformation in the comparative context of CEE countries, identifying path dependences and divergences, and assessing institutional legacies across cases.

Previous studies of institutional transformation in CEE discuss policy transfer and assemblage implicitly as well as in terms of Europeanization. Some of these studies have already been mentioned above. Several discussed institutional reform in terms of the transition from socialism to capitalism. For

example, Grabher and Stark (1997) described how post-socialist organizations recombined resources with institutional legacies, thus preserving organizational diversity. Stark and Bruszt (1998, 2001) compared CEE countries' transitions to capitalism through political transformations and privatization strategies. Institutional transformations are also the subject of institutional economists interested in the emerging forms of capitalism in CEE that have come to define CEE countries as a cohesive group (Bohle and Greskovits 2007; Nölke and Vliegenthart 2009; Farkas 2011, 2017). Others tackled administrative and territorial reforms of the transition (Enyedi 1990; Gorzelak and Kukliński 1992; Illner and Andrie 1994; Illner 1997; Horváth 1999) and EU accession periods (Horváth 1999; Bruszt 2002; Yoder 2003; Pálné Kovács et al. 2004; Baun and Marek 2006; Bruszt 2008; Pálné Kovács 2009), which serve as crucial reading for the path dependence of Regional Policy in CEE. New research is also now emerging that reflects on the post-accession period, such as the changing implementation logics of Regional Policy over multiple programming periods in Czechia (Baun and Marek 2017), the outcomes of regionalization in Czechia, Hungary and Poland (Bruszt 2014; Lysak and Ryšavý 2018), and review of MLG in Estonia (Kull and Tatar 2015). In the investigation of the institutions related to Regional Policy and the relevant domains of policymaking, administrative institutions are usually put into focus.

## **5 METHODS AND DATA**

### **5.1 Methodological Approach**

The research methodology can be divided into sections addressing the main aspects of the various fields from which this interdisciplinary study draws. The first and most general pertains to case study research as commonly employed in the social sciences, from which examples can be drawn for the operationalization of path dependence in CEE. Semi-structured expert interviews from the three case countries of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary provide the primary data source, which brings along certain methodological conventions.

As discussed in the conceptual framework of this study, HI has advanced the discourse on path dependence and comparative studies, furthering a debate on methodological issues to take into account when working with this approach. The methodological issues pertaining to qualitative-comparative studies are addressed in this chapter. HI work uses qualitative-comparative analysis to emphasize the particularities of specific cases and exemplify the diversity of institutional arrangements (Hopkin 2010), which is complementary to the policy transfer literature described earlier. Process tracing has flourished as a method for identifying causal mechanisms underpinning arguments of path dependence. By developing several strands of process tracing, scholars have added significant rigour to the approach. However, practical disadvantages to implementing fractured interpretations of process tracing are discussed, and the more traditionally deployed, flexible and open approaches to comparative case studies are ultimately deemed to be appropriate for many research purposes including the present research.

#### **5.1.1 Comparative Case Research**

Comparative case studies have made a large contribution to the literature on institutional transformation. According to Bennett and Elman (2006), case study methods are well suited to analyse path dependence, offering four advantages: “they allow for detailed and holistic analysis of sequences in historical cases, they are suited to the study of rare events, they can facilitate the search for omitted variables that might lie behind contingent events, and they allow for the study of interaction effects” (259). In political science, influential comparative studies inspired future historical institutionalists through what would be termed Comparative Historical Analysis (CHA), employing path dependence and process tracing to compare political-institutional structures on macro-level topics such as political regime change, the formation of welfare states, and other social revolutions (see Skocpol 1979; Esping-Andersen 1985). Many of the earlier mentioned studies on post-socialist institutional transformation used comparative case methodology to examine: political and economic transition and divergent institutional arrangements of capitalism (Stark and Bruszt 1998, 2001);

territorial and administrative reforms associated with transition (Illner 1997, 1999) and EU accession (Brusis 1999, 2002; Yoder 2003; Bruszt 2008). This body of comparative literature tends to focus on the Visegrad countries – Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia – while the Baltics countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – are less researched in a comparative fashion. While these studies incorporate the historical and evolutionary perspective to compare processes and the resulting institutional arrangements, others take a more static approach to distinguish cross-country variation, for example, to develop new typologies applicable to CEE countries (Swianiewicz 2014).

The work of Stark and Bruszt (1998, 2001) is particularly inspirational for this research due to their use of path dependence to elaborate upon the transformation of politics and institutions, privatization strategies, and production of different (i.e. “actually existing”) capitalisms in post-socialist countries. Using comparative institutional analysis, they invoke path dependence to study the reshaping of institutions, describing “paths of extrication from state socialism” leading to “different types of democracy” and “different types of capitalism” in Germany, Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary (Stark and Bruszt 1998, 101–2). Thus, their work serves as a model for studying processes that shape regional policy institutions in CEE since the transition period, which is built upon with the aforementioned literature on the EU accession and Europeanizing reforms, and new lessons from the post-accession period.

Stark and Bruszt (2001) saw path dependence as a theory, “neither of determinacy nor indeterminacy but a method for grasping the recombinant character of social innovation” (1132–33), demonstrating that existing institutions were used as resources in the shaping of new institutions. This interpretation of path dependence is highly compatible with HI that is concerned not necessarily with mechanisms of path dependence according to the conventional economic interpretations *per se* (see David 1985; Arthur 1989) but with various forms of incremental institutional transformation, e.g. ‘layering’ and ‘conversion’ (Thelen 2003). To Stark and Bruszt (2001), “The central problem for post-socialist societies is not how to enact the best policy but how to develop institutions that are capable of learning” (1132). By challenging notions of pure capitalism and never-existing socialism, they considered post-socialism as a laboratory for developing new concepts and theories. To explain the differences between the institutional transformations and privatization strategies in the four countries, Stark and Bruszt (1998) refashioned the theory of the developmental state emphasizing coherence and embeddedness (see Evans 1992) to the CEE context by explaining how harnessing network properties through deliberative association and institutions of extended accountability could reconcile the conflicting ideologies of neoliberals and neostatists. Their study can serve as an example of comparative analysis in CEE on which to model the current research and develop new ideas.

### **5.1.2 Comparative Historical Analysis**

As suggested in the earlier discussion of the New Institutionalisms, the proliferation of approaches to institutional analysis has left us with a variety of methodological tools suited to different purposes. In HI, CHA is a preferred method that “share[s] a concern with causal analysis, an emphasis on processes over time, and the use of systematic and contextualized comparison” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003, 10), and “makes possible a dialogue between theory and evidence of an intensity that is rare in quantitative social research” (13). According to Goldstone (2003), CHA aims to test, challenge and shift prior beliefs about a set of cases through process tracing and congruence testing, two methodologies that permit the within- and between-case analyses at the heart of this research. Thelen (2003) noted the attractiveness of the concept of path dependence to scholars and observed that “path dependence theorists tend toward a historicist view of institutional genesis, evolution, and change” (218), offering examples of institutional layering and conversion as means of transformation.

For the above reasons, CHA is a useful and appropriate approach for the current research. Nevertheless, advancements in comparative case study methodologies bring further considerations, the acknowledgement of which are necessary before fixing the methodological approach of this research. Political scientists working beyond the bounds of HI have offered advancements in the operationalization of the path dependence concept through process tracing. Path dependence and process tracing have both, however, become vague and generalized terms as used in real research. As epistemologists have focused on developing more rigorous methodologies to answer questions of institutional transformation, they have proposed different types of process tracing, which are presented in the following section.

### **5.1.3 Process Tracing**

The question of how to operationalize the concept of path dependence in the social sciences has led to the development and branching of process tracing methodologies. Process tracing is widely considered to be one of the most common methods of political scientists and political economists, but, like path dependence, has suffered from concept stretching. In recent attempts to order the wide body of research claiming to use process tracing – the linking of variables and outcomes via causal chains, processes and mechanisms – different types of process tracing can be distinguished that are suitable for particular research purposes. While it is important to acknowledge the methodological implications of recent advancements amidst this “confused state of affairs” surrounding process tracing, the new contributions to the art are “more and more distanced from real research” (Trampusch and Palier 2016, 2). Some of these recent advancements are discussed below.

Situating process tracing amongst the comparative case study methods, Blatter and Haverland (2012) identified three approaches for small-*N* explanatory case study research: co-variational analysis for cross-case comparisons, and causal-process tracing (CPT) and congruence analysis for within-case analysis. They argue that within-case analysis has historically played a more important role in influential studies formally employing the comparative approach (i.e. co-variational analysis). Further development of within-case analysis focused on aligning methodology with ontology (Hall 2003), the effect of which Blatter and Haverland (2012) consider to be more internally consistent case study research. While CPT depends on dense description and the construction of a storyline following a sequence of events, co-variational analysis seeks to extract causal chains from storylines, smoking guns, and confessions, while congruence analysis compares expectations and observations through selected theories. As they demonstrated in several influential studies, between-case and within-case analyses are often employed together. Beach and Pedersen (2013) also specify case-centric, theory testing and theory building variants of CPT. To them, case-centric process tracing is used to uncover a causal mechanism that sufficiently explains an outcome, while theory-testing process tracing is used to show that a mechanism was present and functioned as expected. Theory-building process tracing is used to infer the existence of a general mechanism beyond a single case. Therefore, they propose that process tracing has inductive and deductive applications.

Despite the usefulness of these recent advances for operationalizing path dependence through more refined and specific branches of process tracing, the complexity and intense labour requirements of data collection and analysis, often relying on qualitative data in the social sciences, present serious disadvantages to the researcher. Thus, Beach and Pedersen (2013) advise that cross-case methods such as small-*n* comparisons can be more effective for inferring causality and suggest that it should precede attempts at process tracing. While best practices of CPT follow Bayesian tests of causality, Kay and Baker (2015) deem this to be impractical in policy studies. These are two practical advices for carrying out the comparative case studies in this research. Trampusch and Palier (2016) confirm that process tracing remains extremely diverse in practice and can include deterministic and probabilistic interpretations of causality as well as inductive and deductive approaches to theory. When seeking definitive guidelines and examples for how carry out process tracing, it seems that generality and variation will prevail in practice. In qualitative research, this reflects the uniqueness of real case research and the practical decisions that the researcher must (and has licence to) make.

### **5.1.4 Reconciling Theory and Practice**

The literature on comparative case study methodologies including CHA indicate process tracing as an appropriate technique for investigating topics of path dependence and institutional development, allowing for within-case and between-case analysis to strengthen potential findings. However, with the previous discussion in mind, it is important to note that co-variational analysis may often be implicit in comparative case studies, and, employed with congruence analysis, case-centred methodologies may become blurred in practice. Few case researchers thoroughly discuss such issues in their approaches, and the detailed descriptions of how researchers have performed process tracing tend to not be made explicit. Trampusch and Palier (2016) offered that process tracers conduct qualitative research using documents and interviews, the way in which this research proceeds.

Qualitative-comparative case studies including those on CEE mentioned above often use mixed methods and blend deductive and inductive approaches. Furthermore, one is hard pressed to locate studies that go so far as to successfully identify mechanisms as described in the most recent CPT literature; the epistemological discussions seem to be mainly theoretical exercises. Following the advice of Beach and Pedersen (2013), Kay (2005) and Kay and Baker (2015), we limit ourselves to small-*n* cross-case comparison of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary, in the tradition of previous comparative studies in CEE (Evans 1992; Stark and Bruszt 1998), relying on combined inductive and deductive approaches and co-variational and congruence analysis, focusing on the comparable domestic iterations of Regional Policy and implementing institutions as the units of analysis.

### **5.1.5 Limitations to Comparative Case Methods**

Qualitative-comparative studies in the social sciences have been criticized for being insufficiently rigorous and failing to produce generalizable results. According to Hopkin (2010), however, “There is no a priori reason to regard case-oriented, qualitative-comparative research as methodologically ‘soft’, and indeed this approach can provide a more rigorous and sophisticated response to some research questions” (300). Small-*n* qualitative-comparative studies “look at phenomena within their contexts” (301), which fulfils an aim of the current research. As Herrschel and Nancheva (2014) put it, “Studying Central Europe as a region and within the framework of regional science implies the assumption of similarity and ‘belonging’ of the states comprising the region” (79). This can make studies characterizing CEE as a cohesive group particularly problematic, and distinguishing processes and institutional arrangements within the group – otherwise opening the black box – is an aim in itself of many studies on CEE.

## 5.2 Empirical Work

### 5.2.1 Case Selection

The cases of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary were selected for this study in order to ensure variation within the cohort of post-socialist countries that contemporaneously underwent political and economic transitions and EU accession processes, ultimately becoming EU MS and full participants in Regional Policy. Czechia and Hungary are two countries of the Visegrad group that spent fifty years behind the Iron Curtain and within the sphere of Soviet influence and Estonia is a Baltic country that was occupied by the Soviet Union. The three countries are generally characterized as simple polities (see Schmidt 2004; Bache 2008 in Tatar 2016) and, most importantly, are all unitary rather than federal states, which better enables their comparison. Nevertheless, they vary in population size, from 1.3 million in Estonia to 9.8 million in Hungary and 10.6 million in Czechia (Eurostat 2018). For studying Regional Policy, the study could have been enriched through the inclusion of Poland due to its advanced regionalization. Nevertheless, the largest CEE countries receive plenty of attention in the literature. Recent studies have followed up on Europeanization processes, comparing Czechia, Hungary and Poland (Brusis 2014; Dąbrowski 2014), but comparative studies including the Baltics are scarce. The case selection also took advantage of possibilities to conduct fieldwork within the Marie Curie Initial Training Network RegPol<sup>2</sup>, which had partners in Czechia, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia.

Since NUTS-2 regions are the unit for Regional Policy analysis and provide a basis for allocating ESIF, they are compared for the three countries in Table 4. Czechia and Hungary, having similar sized territories and populations, have similar distributions of NUTS regions, although Hungary makes the further territorial distinction of three NUTS-1 regions. Estonia has one NUTS-2 region, and, unlike the others that have functioning NUTS-3 regions, Estonia's is based on statistical groupings of counties. Poland, in comparison, has six NUTS-1 regions, 16 NUTS-2 regions and 72 NUTS-3 regions and therefore potentially represents a quite different scale for implementing Regional Policy.



**Table 4.** Territorial units of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary, 2016

		<b>Czechia</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Hungary</b>
Territorial framework		Regionalized unitarism	Centralized unitarism	Regionalized unitarism
Territorial unit, number	NUTS-1	country, 1	country, 1	statistical region, 3
	NUTS-2	region, 8	country, 1	planning and statistical region, 7/8*
	NUTS-3	county, 14	county groupings, 5	county, 20

Source: European Commission (2018b). \* The number of NUTS-2 units in Hungary increased from 7 to 8 between 2013 and 2016, when Central Hungary (containing Budapest) was divided in two.

In accordance with Hopkin’s (2010) views on small-*n* qualitative-comparative research, the three countries are suitable for providing insights into institutional transformations and differences that can potentially affect Regional Policy implementation and outcomes, while taking into account EU integration and policy convergence processes and institutional legacies from socialist pasts. Due to these well documented processes, the availability of equivalent EU and national resources and the accessibility of policy experts during the study period allow for comparable analyses for each country. The methods employed in the two main parts below follow from HI due to the emphasis on macro-level exogenous shocks on institutional arrangements and DI due to the nature of empirical material and competing ideas behind the formulation and implementation of regional policy.

### 5.2.2 Policy Analysis

The first stage of the research consisted of a review of the Regional Policy literature and content analysis of national programming documents for the 2000/2004–2006, 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 periods. The details and results of the main analysis are published in Paper II, “Contextualising regional policy for territorial cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe” and expanded upon in Papers V, “Questioning the convergence of Cohesion Policy and Innovation Policy in Central and Eastern Europe”, and VI, “Cohesion Policy and institutional change in Hungary and Estonia”.

Publicly available documents concerning EU Regional Policy programming periods and domestic regional policies were collected and analysed for the three

countries to put Regional Policy into national contexts. International organizations such as the World Bank conducted reviews of institutional transformations in CEE countries in the transition from state socialism to democratic, market-based economies. Key policy agenda documents for the general orientation of Regional Policy provide a background to the trends unfolding throughout the periods of analysis, the evolution of the territorial cohesion concept and its measurement through spatial monitoring, and the strategic approach to use Regional Policy to target economically lagging regions (Table 5).

**Table 5.** Key reports influencing EU Regional Policy in CEE countries (Paper V and VI)

Year	Document	Author
1997	Agenda 2000: for a stronger and wider Union	European Commission
1999	ESDP – European Spatial Development Perspective	European Commission
2003	An Agenda for a Growing Europe: Making the EU Economic System Deliver (Sapir Report)	Sapir <i>et al.</i>
2004	Facing the challenge: The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment (Kok Report)	European Commission
2005	Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy (Barroso communication)	European Commission
2009	An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy (Barca Report)	Barca
2009	The White Paper on Multi-level Governance	Committee of the Regions
2010	Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	European Commission
2014	Investment for jobs and growth: Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities (Sixth Cohesion Report)	European Commission

Country-specific documents regarding Regional Policy include monitoring reports during the pre-accession period and national strategic planning documents for the programming periods 2004–2006, 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 (Table 6). These national strategic documents guide OPs, considered here to be the implementing instruments of Cohesion Policy. Czechia, Estonia and Hungary were

funded for OPs for the remainder of the 2000–2006 (i.e. 2004–2006), 2007–2013 and the current 2014–2020 periods. In 2004–2006, Community Support Frameworks outlined five OPs in each of Czechia and Hungary. Estonia had a single national OP for comparison. In 2007–2013, the number of OPs (not to mention cross-border co-operations) proliferated: six national and eight regional OPs in Czechia (including one national and one regional Objective 2 programme); two regional OPs in Estonia; and seven national and seven regional OPs in Hungary; all of which stemmed from the EU-negotiated documents, National Strategic Reference Frameworks. The 2014–2020 period was simplified, with only national OPs in the roster (again, excluding cross-border programmes), developed under the guiding national Partnership Agreements. Together, such documents constitute the national developments of EU Regional Policy along with strategic development plans stipulating interventions for lagging regions, if any.

**Table 6.** Regional Policy instruments reviewed: Czechia, Estonia and Hungary (Paper II)

Programming Period	Instrument	Czechia	Estonia	Hungary
<i>2004–2006</i>	Community Support Framework	Yes	No	Yes
	Operational Programme (National)	5 (combined)	1	5
	Operational Programme (Multiregional)		-	-
	Operational Programme (Regional)	1	-	-
<i>2007–2013</i>	National Strategic Reference Framework	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Operational Programme (National)	6	2	7
	Operational Programme (Regional)	8	-	7
<i>2014–2020</i>	Partnership Agreement	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Operational Programme (National)	7	1	6

### 5.2.3 Expert Interviews

The second stage of the empirical part of the research involved the collection of qualitative data for fleshing out comparative case studies on the policy discourses and institutional transformations in Czechia, Estonia and Hungary. The results informed Papers III, “From decentralization to re-centralization: Tendencies of regional policy and inequalities in Central and Eastern Europe”, V, “Questioning the convergence of Cohesion Policy and Innovation Policy in Central and Eastern Europe”, and VI, “Cohesion Policy and institutional change in Hungary and Estonia”.

Drawing on HI and DI approaches to the study of path dependence described earlier, it is necessary to trace the development of regional policy institutions beyond the publicly available legislation and EU programming documents, which belie internal struggles incrementally shaping institutional arrangements. As recommended in the policy transfer literature (see Dolowitz and Marsh 2000), the focus turned to key actors across the national contexts. Therefore, information was sought from insiders who could reveal power relations, competing policy alternatives and unintended consequences of policy decisions. Expert interviews aimed to provide a deeper comparative understanding of effective regional policy institutions for reaching overarching goals such as territorial cohesion and informing future policy-making.

Experts were sought based on their personal knowledge of regional policy formulation and implementation as well as personal interactions with changing institutional structures over the period in question, from post-socialist transition to the present. Thus, the sampling followed a process similar to that of elite interviewing for process tracing supported by Tansey (2007), whereby “the aim is not to draw a representative sample of a larger population of political actors that can be used as the basis to make generalizations about the full population, but to draw a sample that includes the most important political players who have participated in the political events being studied” (765). Interview participants were invited based on current or prior positions in relevant departments, the longevity and richness of experience indicated by their curriculum vitae, and the recommendations of other experts. The resulting non-probability sample, based on a combination of purposive and chain-referral sampling (Tansey 2007), consisted of experts primarily representing the public sector including national governmental and academic roles. In European studies, it has been shown that although the issue of expert reliability is largely ignored, there are acceptable levels of inter-expert agreement regardless of whether the leading expert is included in the sample (Dorussen et al. 2005). Nevertheless, a leading expert was included from each country. Academic and public sector expertise tended to overlap, for instance, due to the historical relationships between the Academies of Science and national government offices in providing work contracts and consultations on regional policy and planning, and due to the wide range of academic studies from economics and social sciences used to inform domestic regional policy.

Interviews were conducted in three stages according to the planned field-work in Czechia, Estonia and Hungary. Materials were carefully prepared and provided to respondents in advance so as to conduct the semi-structured interviews as systematically as possible. These materials included a project information sheet, consent form and outline of themes and questions to be covered in the interview (see Annex). The consent form included a guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality of respondents and their agreement to be recorded. A structured worksheet prepared along the lines of the themes provided to respondents was used for note-taking.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed, with the exception of one unrecorded interview in Estonia (Interview E1) and one partially recorded interview in Czechia (Interview C4). Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to two hours in length, with an average length of over one hour. Two Estonian interviews (E4 and E5) were conducted by a colleague within the framework of the research project. Interview and respondent characteristics are provided in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Interview characteristics: List of respondents and sectors, interview length

Country	ID code	Profile	Location	Length (h:mm:ss)
Hungary (n = 10)	H1	Public servant (national level)	Budapest	1:12:34
	H2	Public servant (national level)	Budapest	1:16:58
	H3	Academic	Pécs	55:49
	H4	Academic	Pécs	1:27:04
	H5	Politician (national, regional, county level)	Békéscsaba	1:11:36
	H6	Public servant (national level)	Budapest	1:18:32
	H7	Politician (national, county, local level)	Confidential	45:29
	H8	Academic	Békéscsaba	1:52:20 *
	H9	Academic	Békéscsaba	1:52:20 *
	H10	Academic; Politician (regional, county level)	Békéscsaba	1:22:16

Country	ID code	Profile	Location	Length (h:mm:ss)
Estonia (n = 5)	E1	Academic	Tartu	–
	E2	Academic	Tallinn	47:44
	E3	Public servant (national level)	Tallinn	1:01:15
	E4	Practitioner	Tartu	–
	E5	Academic	Tallinn	–
Czechia (n = 4)	C1	Academic	Prague	1:20:29
	C2	Academic; Public Servant	Prague	48:49
	C3	Academic	Prague	59:42
	C4	Academic	Pardubice	1:15:00

\* Joint interview

The first stage of interviews was conducted in Hungary from November 2015 to January 2016, which set the tone for data collection in subsequent stages and yielded ten respondents. This cohort represented the widest range of sectors and served as a testing ground for identifying the scope of the expertise and the preliminary range of themes to be pursued in the subsequent cases. Thus, Hungary yielded the largest number of respondents. Continuing in Estonia and Czechia, it was deemed best to focus on experts from academic and national government sectors. While political sector respondents provided useful corroborating data in Hungary, responses were generally partisan in nature, thus introducing an unintended issue of representativeness of the sample, which is otherwise not an objective within the expert interview methodology. In order to avoid the need to expand responses to include a full political spectrum on multiple levels in the three countries, it was therefore deemed appropriate to draw focus away from political actors for interview rounds in Estonia and Czechia. Moreover, local and regional level actors were shown to have less impact on regional policy institutions in these three highly centralized countries and were limited in experience to specific projects funded by the EU, while they were useful in revealing political conflicts.

Following with fieldwork in Estonia, three experts were interviewed during April and May 2016, with additional interviews added from November 2016 and February 2017. Four experts were interviewed in Czechia from November 2016 to July 2017. The relatively low numbers of respondents from Estonia and Czechia compared to Hungary reflect the different stages of the research and

types of expertise encountered in the different countries. In Hungary, the net was cast relatively wide for the reasons mentioned above. Estonia, being a small country with limited personnel, has concentrated expertise between a small number of actors, some of whom were not available due to intense municipal reform processes and elections concurrently underway. Czechia, on the other hand, has a relatively high number of specialized experts who were, nevertheless, more reluctant to comment on such a broad and interdisciplinary topic as regional policy. Moreover, public servants were comparably difficult to reach, and the participation of a direct decision-maker in regional policy was not secured. The Czech respondents, therefore, were fewer than in Hungary and represented specific academic sectors highly related to regional policy such as social planning, public administration, local governance and EU programme evaluation. Nevertheless, respondents from each country included a leading expert in the domestic policy context with personal experience dating to the socialist and early transition periods.





## **6 EMPIRICAL STUDIES**

## **7 DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS**

### **7.1 Summary of Studies**

The six empirical studies forming this research shed light on variations in domestic regional policy and institutional development in CEE since the post-socialist transition. A major contribution is the extension of the body of comparative knowledge of CEE regional policy and institutions into the post-accession era. Using methods in line with HI and DI, the analyses identified periods of development to structure cross-country comparison. In terms of Regional Policy, the three periods identified aligned with the Europe of the Regions, Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020 supranational strategy periods and the corresponding 2004–2006, 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 programming periods. Regarding domestic institutional developments, the timeframe extends back to the transition, pre-accession and post-accession periods corresponding with systemic transition in 1989/1991, the signing of accession agreements in 1998, and EU accession in 2004. The periods are associated with waves of administrative reform across the countries that lead to various policy effects. The findings of each paper are summarized below.

#### **Territoriality and Governance in the Globalizing European Eastern Peripheries (Paper I)**

Paper I provided a theoretical overview of territoriality and governance in CEE countries considering their position in the global and European periphery, highlighting politico-institutional and socio-spatial perspectives of territoriality that shape conceptualizations of CEE regions. While territories are sites of governance and provide the basis for the state system, changing territorial arrangements in the EU are expressed through MLG, new regional identities, and changing border regimes. The projected diminishment of territoriality as a result of globalization has not come to pass. Rather, territorial rescaling and blurring of boundaries has made territoriality more complex, presenting new challenges for governance. In the context of Regional Policy, the goal of territorial cohesion in CEE has become elusive. With the absence of a unifying theory for different types of peripheries in CEE, place-based approaches are necessary to tackle the problems of different types of regions, ranging from economic development and innovation to place leadership. The promotion and acceptance of neoliberal principles for economic development and governance in CEE following the post-socialist transition has led to growth but also increased polarization that has continued to entrench peripheries. Thus, the discussion shows that territoriality still matters for Europe's peripheries.

#### **Contextualising Regional Policy for Territorial Cohesion in Central and Eastern Europe (Paper II)**

Paper II compared national strategies for territorial cohesion by examining Regional Policy documents for elements of economic development and regional

inequalities. By tracing these discourses across three programming periods of EU membership for Czechia, Estonia and Hungary, different interpretations of Regional Policy objectives were detected. In general, Czechia followed a strategy of increasing economic competitiveness against the European core along a national convergence strategy. Estonia followed a strategy of rapid growth targeting global markets in ICT, also following a national convergence strategy. Hungary followed a strategy centred on human resources, increasing economic development through employment and including a regional convergence dimension. All three countries exhibited a policy convergence toward economic aims according to the streamlining effects of the Europe 2020 strategy. Nevertheless, differences in the national interpretations of Regional Policy amidst EU streamlining processes suggest the need for a deeper comparative understanding of the policymaking institutions. This finding informed the next directions of the study.

### **From Decentralization to Re-centralization: Tendencies of Regional Policy and Inequalities in Central and Eastern Europe (Paper III)**

Paper III used empirical data from Estonian and Hungarian cases to investigate the institutional transformations related to Regional Policy since the 1990s. The comparative analysis indicated a shared timeline of institutional development in transition, pre-accession and post-accession periods, shaped by Europeanization processes. The issues of decentralization, regionalization and recentralization of domestic regional policy came to the forefront, which correspond with the three policy periods and have implications for tackling regional inequalities. Nevertheless, the countries demonstrated different paths of institutional development. While both countries went through decentralization processes, Estonia lacked regional development capacity, and what emerged within the central government to administer pre-accession supports continued to implement Regional Policy after accession as a national development strategy. Hungary had a long history of regional development dating from the socialist period and was an early reformer amongst CEE countries to implement a regionalization programme. Nevertheless, post-accession EU programme requirements led to the re-centralization of Regional Policy. Comparing the two countries, institutional stability has benefited Estonia, while instability and weakened institutional capacities have been detrimental in Hungary. The result suggests that Europeanizing reforms did not necessarily lead to intended results, and the institutional arrangements do little to support Regional Policy objectives in themselves. Thus, it is recommended to consider institutional effects of Regional Policy design in forthcoming programming periods.

### **Regional Development in Central-Eastern European Countries at the Beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Path Dependence and Effects of EU Cohesion Policy (Paper IV)**

Paper IV examined the effects of Regional Policy on regional development in CEE, finding that GDP per capita increased both nominally as a percentage of

the EU average. The analysis also found convergence between CEE and more developed European regions. The author contributed the historical context of regional development in CEE. The results showed that Regional Policy positively affected historical development paths and played a role in transforming CEE economies by providing new financial opportunities and introducing new thematic objectives for regional development in traditionally backward regions. Different performance patterns between different types of regions, however, confirmed that the potentials of Regional Policy differed between regions. These different possibilities can be addressed through a continuation of the place-based development and smart specialization paradigms, while avoiding traps of reliance on external support, suggesting a need to include institutional supports, alternative sources of financing, and strategies for maintaining EU-funded investments over the long term.

### **Questioning the Convergence of Cohesion and Innovation Policies in Central and Eastern Europe (Paper V)**

Paper V compared the development of Regional (Cohesion) Policy and Innovation Policy over three periods of relevance to CEE – the Europe of the Regions, Lisbon Agenda and Europe 2020. Using content analysis on national strategic documents and expert interviews from Czechia, Estonia, Hungary and Slovakia, the analysis found that the increasing focus of Regional Policy on competitiveness since the 1990s indicated a convergence of Regional and Innovation Policies. It was found that there were no targeted innovation policies in CEE prior to EU accession, but they were introduced along with the ‘Lisbonization’ of Regional Policy at varying speeds between countries. Recognizing the tendency of the growth-through-innovation strategy to support more developed cores over the peripheries traditionally supported by Regional Policy, this convergence could be seen to further regional polarization in CEE. In countries with more centralized Regional Policy – another trend in CEE countries – the convergence of these two policy areas to the benefit of core regions could also be seen as more politically palatable than supporting less developed peripheries. In the future programming periods, it is recommended to clearly distinguish between economic and other aims of Regional Policy in order to understand the impacts of different policy interventions.

### **Cohesion Policy and Institutional Change in Hungary and Estonia (Paper VI)**

Paper VI returned to the empirical material from Estonia and Hungary, examining institutional change related to Regional Policy through the historical institutionalist lens. Periods of institutional development were structured according to key critical junctures: the transition period from 1989/1991; the pre-accession period following the signing of accession agreements in 1998; and the post-accession period after entering into Regional Policy in 2004. Mechanisms of institutional transformation were described. Hungary exemplified incremental transformation and institutional layering, as institutional changes incor-

porated socialist legacies, while Estonia exemplified event sequencing, reactions and backlashes to Soviet rule leading to the creation of new institutions with new actors. Europeanization processes in effect during the pre-accession period initiated new institutional transformations in Hungary but not in Estonia. EU accession coinciding with radical reform (Lisbonization) of Regional Policy interrupted institutional path trajectories yet again, leading to spatially blind policy in Estonia and a reversal of regionalization processes in Hungary. The institutionalist lens offers an alternative perspective on Regional Policy during discussions of Regional Policy reform that tends to focus policy content and evaluative frameworks. By demonstrating the policy effects on institutions, the study reinforces their importance for Regional Policy outcomes and legitimacy.

The analysis of institutional transformation in the papers above included the Estonian and Hungarian cases due to publication timelines. Comparable processes were traced in the Czech case, the insights of which are included in the discussion of results below.

## **7.2 Discussion of Results and Practical Implications**

Reflecting the sequence of the research, the results can be discussed in two parts – Regional Policy evolution and the related institutional transformations in Czechia, Estonia and Hungary. The first part focuses on the content of Regional Policy national documents. Exploring those findings further, the longer-term analysis of domestic policy settings including strategies and institutional arrangements provides insights on path dependence and path innovation and sheds light on potential areas for future research in the political-institutional dimension of regional development.

### **7.2.1 The Neoliberal Turn of Regional Policy in CEE**

The policy analysis that set the context for further research in Czechia, Estonia and Hungary found variations in the neoliberal elements revealed in their strategies amidst a convergence towards the EU-level strategy of cohesion through competitiveness and growth (Table 8). Early investigation of individual OPs proved to be a rather futile task, since they frequently reproduced similar elements, thereby revealing little differentiation in regional development strategies. The focus therefore shifted to the higher-level policy documents negotiated between the MS and European Commission that set the objectives of OPs: Community Support Frameworks, National Strategic Reference Frameworks and Partnership Agreements in the 2004–2006, 2007–2013 and 2014–2020 programming periods, respectively.

**Table 8.** Variations of neoliberal elements in Regional Policy instruments: Czechia, Estonia and Hungary (Paper II)

<b>Pro-gramming Period</b>	<b>Czechia</b>	<b>Estonia</b>	<b>Hungary</b>
<i>2004–2006</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic competitiveness through productivity and low cost strategy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic competitiveness through technology and skills development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socio-economic development through increased employment and social inclusion</li> </ul>
<i>2007–2013</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic competitiveness through upgrading skills and knowledge;</li> <li>• Transition from low-cost strategy;</li> <li>• Promotion of growth pole producing spill-over effects;</li> <li>• Removal of barriers to economic development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benefit from global economic integration;</li> <li>• Knowledge and entrepreneurialism through communication and mobility;</li> <li>• Transition from low-cost to knowledge-based economy;</li> <li>• Global attractiveness and place competition (e.g. clean environment)</li> <li>• Promotion of polycentric urban structure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased employment through skills development;</li> <li>• Social stability and efficient delivery of social services;</li> <li>• Increased territorial cohesion through development of regional growth poles;</li> <li>• Improved accessibility through transport infrastructure</li> </ul>
<i>2014–2020</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved functioning of labour market;</li> <li>• High quality business environment;</li> <li>• Support to SMEs;</li> <li>• Transition to non-price competitiveness;</li> <li>• Social inclusion including employment services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased productivity replacing employment;</li> <li>• R&amp;D capitalization, venture capital, foreign direct investment;</li> <li>• Efficient use of resources;</li> <li>• Transition to low carbon economy;</li> <li>• Global connectivity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fiscal stability and structural reforms incl. social services;</li> <li>• Necessity of economic growth from all investments</li> </ul>

Across the three countries, the objectives in each period have been fairly continuous and the contents of programmes differ to little extent, in accordance with the reproduction of EU policy elements. Nevertheless, the comparison suggests some differentiation between the national perspectives as well as some convergence across these perspectives towards the 2014–2020 period. Generally speaking, the Czech strategy focused on competitiveness through service upgrading to catch up with the European core, the Estonian strategy focused on rapid development and technological adoption to serve the global market, and the Hungarian strategy focused on increasing employment, uniquely incorporating more traditional welfare objectives into their development strategies. Further detailed descriptions of the results can be found in Paper II.

The policy analysis takes crucial steps towards understanding the national contexts and the values underpinning interpretations and applications of EU policy elements. The HI approach initially adopted to structure the comparative analysis across three periods and countries highlights the discursive aspect of policy formulation, policy transfer and institutional transformation, further demonstrating the compatibilities of HI and DI, as proposed by Schmidt (2008b). Amidst the constraining effect of supranational policy objectives (e.g. EU Regional Policy) on domestic regional policies, the three countries exerted different interpretations of competitiveness, as exhibited in their strategies for achieving economic growth. The resulting strategies and their compatibilities with the objectives set in Brussels suggest variations in policy transfer from the EU to national contexts that may have implications for regional inequalities. Nevertheless, following policy analysis, more knowledge is needed on the institutional arrangements in order to understand the potential impacts. The VoC literature, which points to institutional characteristics between countries often based on institutional legacies representing path dependencies, offers an explanation for the various approaches to normative principles of competitiveness and growth through the notions of “actually existing” and “variegated” neoliberalisms (Jessop 2002; Brenner et al. 2010), and experts were asked to reflect on the meanings attributed to core Regional Policy concepts and strategies. Aspects of concept interpretation, policy transfer and institutional legacies were explored through the in-depth case studies based on expert interviews.

### **7.2.2 Institutional Transformation: Reforms, Strategies, Impacts**

Following the policy analysis, experts from Czechia, Estonia and Hungary were sought to provide a deeper comparative understanding of the national political-institutional contexts in order to move beyond the neoliberal rhetoric of Regional Policy that is reproduced in national documents. Employing approaches in line with HI and DI, the institutional transformations affecting policymaking and implementation were traced to provide structure to the analysis and identify policy periods for cross-country comparison. Policy experts were questioned on

historical-evolutionary and discursive aspects of institutional continuity and change:

- Describing professional and institutional roles in regional policy formulation and implementation;
- Establishing timelines based on turning points and milestones;
- Reflecting upon national strategies for regional development and their successes and failures and conceptualizations of ‘territorial cohesion’; and
- Reflecting upon the Europeanization and neoliberalization of Regional Policy and their effects on the above.

The final point relating to the impacts of the Lisbon Strategy – well-known in policy circles – was often addressed implicitly. Respondents were free to deviate from the interview structure (see Annex) to follow the themes they felt were most important or most applicable to their expertise.

Across the three countries, common periods of institutional development can be traced – transition, pre-accession and post-accession periods (see Paper VI) – which roughly correspond to waves of administrative reform associated with the restoration of pre-war local governments and public administrative structures, the preparation of chapters of the *acquis communautaire* for Regional Policy programmes, and the implementation of Regional Policy programmes, which continued to evolve thereafter. According to the HI approach, these are the relevant critical junctures across the case countries. The established literature goes so far as to describe first- and second-wave public administration reforms in CEE. After experiences with three Regional Policy programming periods and preparations for the next period already underway, prospects for what may constitute third-wave reforms are emerging.

This section will proceed as follows. First, the changing institutional arrangements in the three countries will be presented according to territorial and administrative reforms, highlighting decentralization, regionalization and re-centralization processes. With these institutional arrangements in mind, the results of the previous policy analysis are expanded with the help of expert interviews to summarize the three countries’ approaches to Regional Policy through their strategies and implementations. Then, the impacts of institutional change are discussed in terms of institutional stability and capacity. Altogether, they comprise the comparative case studies of Regional Policy and institutional change in Czechia, Estonia and Hungary.

### ***Territorial and administrative reforms***

Starting with fieldwork in Hungary, tracing institutional arrangements revealed transformations through decentralization and re-centralization processes related to Regional Policy, a trend that could also be traced in the Czech and Estonian cases. Whereas the transition period has been associated with decentralization and empowerment of local governments, and the pre-accession period with the



creation of regional levels for planning purposes, the post-accession period has become associated with re-centralization, the concentration of policy-making power and shift to top-down processes concerning the use of European funds for Regional Policy.

Early work on CEE transition highlighted different points of departure for institutional transformation between countries (see Stark and Bruszt 1998). The patterns of institutional arrangements emerging after the post-socialist transition indicated a return to normalcy through the restoration of pre-Soviet political-institutional structures, on the one hand, and the new influence of powerful Western actors, on the other. While power, actor-network and legitimacy aspects of institutions came to the forefront, the inertia of existing institutions nevertheless varied widely. Between Czechia, Estonia and Hungary, different initial responses to institutional transformation through decentralization processes can be observed:

- In Czechoslovakia, the 1990 Act on Municipalities and Act of District Offices restored local self-governments closely to pre-war structures and replaced socialist-era national committees with district offices performing roles of the central state, effectualizing decentralization and deconcentration (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic 2004). The 1993 Constitution of the Czech Republic guaranteed local self-government. Traditional ‘lands’ – Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia – were not reinstated, thwarting any potential for regionalism, although a 1997 constitutional amendment would enable the future creation of smaller regions in 2001 (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic 2004). The result was a territorial fragmentation in the order of more than 6000 municipalities, of which approximately 80 per cent had a population of less than 1000 inhabitants.
- Through Estonia’s 1993 Local Government Organization Act, the central government absorbed the county level, leaving a two-tiered system of government (i.e. one-tiered local government). Even with the centralized intermediary level, external organizations considered Estonia to be fiscally decentralized, albeit with low autonomy for local governments that could be detrimental for efficiency and accountability (The World Bank 1995).
- In Hungary, the 1990 Local Self Government Act, continuing the trajectory of earlier 1980s reforms introducing regional development principles, defined the roles and responsibilities of regions, counties and local governments and provided local governments with a range of revenue sources (The World Bank 1992). The 1996 Act of Regional Development and Physical Planning created Regional Development Councils (at the NUTS-3 level), further enforcing decentralization through regionalization and reinforcing the intermediary levels (Pálné Kovács et al. 2004).

First-wave reforms in the three countries thus illustrate different approaches to decentralization leading to asymmetrical decentralization and deconcentration in Czechia, fiscal decentralization in Estonia, and a complex separation of powers in a multi-tiered Hungary. These could present different opportunities and challenges to tackling regional inequalities as well as different conditions for implementing Regional Policy between countries.

Second-wave reforms are associated with preparations for EU accession. At this time, the promise of future ESIF and their pre-accession counterparts further shaped institutional arrangements, notably through the imposition of NUTS-2 territorial units for Regional Policy implementation. NUTS-2 regions, defining a sub-national unit for comparability across MS (with the exception of small MS that constituted one NUTS-2 region, e.g. Estonia), resulted in the creation of regions that often had little to no historical basis in CEE countries, challenged existing and historical institutional structures, and built up certain expectations of a decentralized regional policy after EU accession:

- In Czechia, regional policy fell under the purview of the Ministry for Regional Development, while the functional regional unit existed in the newly created 'kraje' (NUTS-3) in 2001. In 2002, the largest municipalities were delegated competences of state administration, further cementing the role of local governments (Ministry of Interior of the Czech Republic 2004), asymmetrical decentralization and territorial fragmentation that will thwart future attempts of territorial and administrative reform.
- In Estonia, the acceptance of a single NUTS-2 area eliminated any push for internal spatial differentiation for Regional Policy. Similar to Czechia and Hungary, the functional areas fell to the LAU-1 (i.e. county) levels. After having established some spatially targeted programmes with pre-accession PHARE funds, the logic of Regional Policy changed so that ESIF would be targeted to the country as a whole, with the possibility of targeting specific sectors and creating an environment of spatially blind competition. This national, sectoral orientation of regional policy in Estonia stands in contrast to formal programme ideals and implementations in larger countries.
- In Hungary, the traditional regional unit was also the county at the NUTS-3 level. Nevertheless, the EU made the creation of NUTS-2 regions compulsory, and the resulting regions neither had historical political or institutional precedent or reflected spatial or functional relations. Experts involved in their creation believed the boundaries to be more or less arbitrarily defined. The transfer of functions and creation of new institutional capacity at the NUTS-2 level was seen as untenable. Moreover, without regional identities and institutional capacities at this level, the new regions could be used as concentrated organs of the central government.

Despite the necessary creation of NUTS regions to implement Regional Policy, regionalization processes in CEE stalled as the strategic direction of Regional Policy itself was shifting from the Europe of the Regions that supported MLG and democratic legitimacy to the Lisbon Strategy that focused on economic growth and efficient implementation. Since functioning intermediary levels failed to institutionalize in Estonia and Hungary and emerged with separate and competing competencies to the central and local governments in Czechia, re-centralization processes took hold.

Scholars claim that regionalism was a less legitimate aim in CEE than in Western Europe (Campbell and Coulson 2006) and that the European Commission attempted to ‘flatten’ MLG in CEE (Bruszt 2008). Indeed, the delay in creating regions indicates the low priority of region-building in Czechia (Baun and Marek 2006). Hungary, on the other hand, was enthusiastic with decentralization and regionalization reforms, which were considered a great success of their homegrown regional policy prior to EU accession. However, the need for EU conformity eventually required the creation of a centralized, parallel system for implementing Regional Policy that avoided the multi-level, decentralized system built up before accession, and the functioning county level (NUTS-3) lost power and capacity as a result. In Estonia, accession enabled the creation of a centralized system to administer sectoral regional policy projects where there had been few funds beforehand. While the link between decentralization and reduced regional inequalities seems to be clear in advanced economies (Rodríguez-Pose and Ezcurra 2010), the reason may be due to higher quality institutions (Rodríguez-Pose 2013). When assessing Regional Policy, the centralizing tendencies across CEE should therefore be questioned.

### ***Strategy and implementation***

With the policy analysis and institutional transformations in mind, expert interviews contribute discursively to an overall picture of the strategies pursued and implementations of Regional Policy across countries. The differences between the three countries belie interventionist versus non-interventionist strategies in Hungary and Estonia, respectively, and some complexity- and inertia-related ambiguity in Czechia. The key trends and challenges with regard to strategies and implementation are summarized below.

In Czechia, there is a tension between Regional Policy strategy as written in official documents and its implementation. Experts consider the Regional Policy goals to be appropriate to the development issues of the territory, with the caveat that regional inequalities are, in reality, generally minor. Regional Policy is therefore viewed as a means to receive and spend ESIF, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Regional Development but involves countless actors including politicians, bureaucrats, line ministries (representing sectoral OPs), external reviewers, etc. who have their own opportunities to exert influence and complicate procedures. One result is in ‘goldplating’ – the addition of criteria and conditionalities above and beyond EU requirements – that makes implementation all the more difficult for common actors. Thus, administrative

and bureaucratic complications threaten the legitimacy of Regional Policy. The extreme proliferation of OPs in the 2007–2013 programming period was a low point for Regional Policy, and administrative requirements for managing authorities and project beneficiaries were a burden that discouraged participation. In the recent programming period, tools such as Integrated Territorial Investments and Community-Led Local Development have been embraced to coordinate investments and generate bottom-up activities that were previously prevented by the aforementioned municipal fragmentation, but their use has still been highly controlled by the state.

In Estonia, experts associate Regional Policy directly with ESIF and acknowledge that the country does not have a ‘real’ regional policy that intervenes to address inequalities. As has been shown above, this can have to do with the operation of Regional Policy on the national level without regard to regional differentiation, but the absence of a regional policy is also a political decision that reflects Estonia’s consistent neoliberalism. There is a division between the political will (or lack thereof) for domestic regional policy and its technical implementation which is seen to operate smoothly. Although regional inequalities are clearly represented in Regional Policy background documents (e.g. Partnership Agreement; Estonia 2030+ (Republic of Estonia 2012) – overcoming territoriality through connectivity and mobility), experts do not see Regional Policy interventions decreasing inequalities in the near future because EU economic convergence is more politically valued. The consistent focus on competitiveness rather than welfare aims is complementary to smart specialization. Estonia’s Smart Specialization Strategy presents a similar vision and economic assessment as prior Regional Policy documents and, while it is not regionally differentiated, includes sectors typically located in peripheries (e.g. forestry and wood products).

In line with the socialist-era tradition of regional policy in Hungary, regional inequalities have always been of concern and, as suggested by the policy analysis, experts perceive stark disparities in material living conditions and human development. Therefore, traditional notions of Regional Policy in the welfare distributional sense are invoked in strategies and in policy-makers’ motivations. Accordingly, the regionalization process that put Regional Policy in the hands of Regional Development Agencies/Councils (county/NUTS-3 level) was seen as the high-point of Regional Policy, while the abolishment of these and centralization of competences is seen as a great retrenchment. There is a pervasive belief that political meddling within the central state affects the distribution of funds and project selection. As a result, Regional Policy, once seen as the saviour of regional development in Hungary, is regarded as a lost opportunity for long-term Europeanizing reforms while recognizing that the country depends on ESIF for development. Since the political discussions dominate over strategy content, topics such as smart specialization and competitiveness are not on the forefront of the policy discourse. However, experts specifically mentioned the persistent problem of industrial transition and

uncoordinated efforts to specialize in the spa and tourism sector that resulted in overbuilding that would not be sustainable in the long term.

### ***Impact on institutional stability and capacity***

After tracing the policy and institutional transformations above, implications of the decentralization and re-centralization processes can be discussed with regard to their supposed effects on Regional Policy and regional inequalities, namely the institutional stability and capacity to implement Regional Policy programming. North (1991) maintained that institutions provide incentive structures and solve problems of human cooperation. In this way, institutional stability can be considered a resource. Moreover, the increasing returns associated with path dependence institutions are affected by learning effects, coordination effects and adaptive expectations. These are important capacity issues for Regional Policy delivery, which theoretically depend on bottom-up and collaborative processes to deliver projects with lasting impact. The waves of institutional reforms outlined for Czechia, Estonia and Hungary highlight the importance of institutional stability and capacity to provide the appropriate incentive structures and supports for learning and cooperation for Regional Policy. The situation surrounding institutional stability for each country follows:

- In Czechia, the institutional landscape shaped by first-wave reforms secured local government autonomy and constrained future regionalization and adaptive responses to EU accession. Centralized and top-down implementation of Regional Policy through the Ministry for Regional Development may be seen as a practical solution to the complex administrative, legal and governmental environment in Czechia. Municipal fragmentation has not been solved, and the small size of municipalities largely prevents collective action. These institutional arrangements do not reflect theoretical ideals of Regional Policy *per se* but created a stable situation for its delivery. Nevertheless, experts noted that regional inequalities are not particularly problematic in Czechia. This could be due in part to historical development levels and the socialist legacy of services and infrastructure (Copus and Noguera 2010).
- In Estonia, little change occurred in public administration leading up to EU accession, despite numerous discussions surrounding reform packages (Viks and Randma-Liiv 2005). The portfolio for regional development moved from shared responsibility between the Ministries of Agriculture, Economic Affairs and Interior in the early 1990s to the Department of Regional Development in 1997, which itself moved from the Ministry of Regional Affairs to the Ministry of Interior in 1999 and finally Ministry of Finance in 2015. Counties – thus far excluded from Regional Policy – gradually lost their competences to the extent that recent reforms in parliament targeted their abolition. Combined with municipal amalgamations, territorial rescaling in the Esto-

nian context of low population density outside the capital region may provide an impetus for a ‘third wave’ of reforms.

- In Hungary, Regional Policy has been subject to continuous institutional change. The domestic regional policy dates back to the 1970s and went through bureaucratic, transitory and decentralized policy periods until the late 1990s (Horváth 1999). The Ministry of Environment and Regional Policy established in 1990 consolidated activities previously divided between the Ministry of Environment and Regional Policy, Ministry of Transport, Building and Communication, Ministry of Finance, and Ministry of Interior, and the 1996 Law on Regional Development and Physical Planning ushered in decentralization. Before and after EU accession, regional policy continued to be shuffled between reorganized ministries and government offices, largely coinciding with frequent changes of government and political ideologies (e.g. 1998 – Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development; 2002/2004 – creation of National Office for Regional Development/National Development Office within the Prime Minister’s Office; 2006 – Ministry of Local Authorities and Regional Development and creation of National Development Agency; 2008 – Ministry of National Development and Economy; etc.). Ongoing centralization including the creation of parallel institutions and transfer of capacity and expertise can be distinguished over the past 15 years. The resulting policy is ineffective due to a high turnover of ministers who are unable to grasp their subject or responsibilities.

The capacities of the three countries also depend on the expertise of key personnel or civil servants, which vary between countries according to the personal incentives offered through the respective institutions. Despite the rate of institutional change in Hungary that has led to deficiencies in institutional capacity, some key civil servants have travelled with the portfolio through these transformations. Decentralization through privatization also resulted in a shift of functions and responsibilities to non-state actors. Civil servants tended to be drawn to the private sector of their own volition, especially during earlier programming periods when those with entrepreneurial ambitions and experience with Regional Policy processes could sell their services to potential beneficiaries. The so-called ‘project class’ emerged across CEE to compensate for lacking lower-level capacities to write and implement projects (Kováč and Kučerová 2006, 2009; Aunapuu-Lents 2013). In Czechia, the role of the non-profit sector in the design, delivery and evaluation of Regional Policy projects has also been highlighted, although they are most likely driven by their own motivations rather than incentives for cooperation.

When the success of Regional Policy depends on its implementation in a given country, the quality of the domestic institutions is important. The findings from Czechia, Estonia and Hungary point to institutional deficiencies related to stability and capacity, aspects that fall under governance in the EU’s official

reviews of Regional Policy (European Commission 2014, 2017). The most recent of these shows an improvement in quality of governance in Estonia (in spite of regional policy being consistently centralized), a decline in Hungary, and moderate results in Czechia, which supports the above research findings. The trends of institutional transformations in this study suggest that Estonia may be opening new opportunities for capacity improvements following municipal amalgamations, but similar opportunities are not foreseen in Czechia or Hungary. As attention to the state of governance in lagging regions grows in the Regional Policy discourse in general, the problems with institutional arrangements that have developed over the long term since transition, pre-accession and post-accession transformation may garner additional attention within the affected countries and feed back into Regional Policy reform negotiations for setting new objectives and mechanisms to support institutional development.

### **7.2.3 Implications for Path Dependence and Innovation**

The paths of institutional development described above can be interpreted more generally with respect to mechanisms of institutional transformation at work in CEE. In the HI tradition, the analysis of Regional Policy and institutional arrangements identified common critical junctures that frame policy periods across Czechia, Estonia and Hungary: transition, pre-accession and post-accession. The transition period that set divergent path trajectories of institutional development (see Stark and Bruszt (1998) regarding privatization and the construction of markets or Illner (1997) regarding territorial decentralization) progressed towards Europeanization and regionalization in the pre-accession period (see Grabbe (2001) regarding governance and Brusis (1999) regarding the construction of regions) and streamlining centralization in the post-accession period. Processes of institutional change at work include event sequencing (Pierson 2000b) and reactions and backlashes (Mahoney 2000) in Czechia and Estonia, respectively, and institutional layering (Thelen 2003) in Hungary, where incremental reforms to existing institutions during the socialist period continued beyond transition. This research extends the body of literature on CEE to include the policy and related institutional transformations in the post-accession period that has shown some surprising developments.

Recognizing the different processes at work, it is interesting to note that Hungary seems to have suffered the most from institutional instability in the decades following transition, while Estonia, having implemented the most radical reform, experienced the greatest impact of Regional Policy in terms of national convergence and improvements in government performance (European Commission 2017). This coincides with the neoliberalization of Regional Policy with which Estonia's consistent economic strategy has been so well aligned, while Hungary's suggested resistance. Czechia also registered relatively good performance, which could be expected given the historically strong legacy of

economic development and comparatively low impact of regional inequalities. This research suggests that institutional stability supports Regional Policy performance and refutes the notion that incremental change rather than radical reform should support capacity-enabling stability. However, the potential for HI approaches to explain such questions here has reached its limit, and DI and SI approaches tracing actors and agency should be employed to examine institutional stability more deeply. Path dependence, such as the complexity-induced inertia in Czechia, and innovation, such as recentralization in Hungary, can both hinder policy according to the Regional Policy principles upheld by experts in either country.

In HI, agenda-setting power is deemed to be an explanation for institutional stability, whereby the holders of power control the possibilities for institutional reforms, both content and timing (Capoccia 2016), and reforms are affected by coalitional politics (Hall and Thelen 2009). The findings from the three countries support this theory. In Czechia and Estonia, institutional reforms have been delayed, resulting in stability. In the former, the complexity of institutional arrangements and a historical resistance to Europeanizing reforms such as regionalization has created a stable institution for Regional Policy. In the latter, administrative and territorial reforms have been on the agenda, but precarious coalition governments failed to pass and then deliver them. In Hungary, however, agenda-setting power has been seized by successive governments to implement drastic institutional reforms that threatened stability and all but eliminated existing capacities. While the agenda-setting power in setting overall Regional Policy framework favours the European Commission through its control over ESIF, the power for national implementations has been shown to rest on the national level, despite EU aims to involve sub-national actors. Agenda-setting power also features in the decentralization literature as political, fiscal or administrative authority and is related to regional inequalities (Marks et al. 2008), albeit with a decreasing effect in small countries such as Estonia.

In order to understand the reasons for and effects of the observed institutional developments, the VoC literature offers insights, drawing together the economic and political implications of path dependence. Referring to VoC, Hall and Thelen (2009) argued that institutional analysis should start with conceptions of how institutions are sustained, based on the notion of stable rules upon which to structure myriad activities and transforming institutional stability into a resource. This runs contrary to the inclinations of many scholars concerned with the theory of path dependence or path innovation without a particular context that call for a greater understanding of institutional change. In practice, this may be too advanced in the research agenda, when there is still much to be learned about the existing institutional arrangements and the historical legacies that reinforce them. Here, the part of the VoC literature that focuses on CEE is useful for characterizing institutions, and lines can be drawn between Regional Policy and related institutions, institutionalized forms of capitalism and their performance in competitive economies. Czechia and Hungary have heavily path dependent Regional Policy configurations that are



reminiscent of Bohle and Greskovits' (2007) 'embedded neoliberalism' and Nölke and Vliegenthart's (2009) 'dependent market economy', particular to the Visegrad countries. In contrast, Estonia's lean and efficient Regional Policy configuration is reminiscent of the purely neoliberal capitalist system of the Baltic countries (Bohle and Greskovits 2007). Discursive aspects of Regional Policy uncovered in this research suggest compatibilities between the national strategies, institutional arrangements and theorized capitalist systems. In future research, the compatibilities between the VoC and Regional Policy should be further exploited to close the gap between political, structural and cultural aspects of institutions in CEE (bridging HI and SI), especially given the orientation of Regional Policy towards economic competitiveness and growth through innovation.

It can hardly be said that any of the three countries' institutional transformations contributed to an improvement in regional inequalities over the long term even though those occurring since the pre-accession period have been heavily shaped by Regional Policy. This draws attention back to the EU-wide convergence objective and the operation of Regional Policy. Studying capital and labour market conditions in post-socialist countries, Farkas (2011) does not see potential for future convergence in the EU. Nevertheless, Regional Policy is still maintained with that aim – albeit through growth – and the net positive effects of Regional Policy across CEE continue to be shown. This does not mean, however, that within-country inequalities will be narrowed. In the more developed countries such as Czechia, simply maximizing ESIF spending could be a rational response when significant obstacles to cooperation exist and further reductions in regional inequalities are not considered to be realistic. To focus on regional inequalities, it may be worthwhile to return to prior ideals of decentralization and MLG, which are supported in a roundabout way through the newly required smart specialization strategies that are built on bottom-up processes. This could be an ironic turn of events, since the EU's implementation of smart specialization is considered by many experts to be an extreme manifestation of neoliberal policy. Further research may also examine how the top-down implementation of Regional Policy interacts with bottom-up smart specialization activities in the current programming period.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

The main aim of this research was to examine EU Regional Policy and institutional transformations in CEE countries, filling the knowledge gap that has opened since their EU accession and participation in three programming periods as full MS. Using the concepts of path dependence and path innovation and following historical institutionalist and discursive institutionalist approaches, the changing logic of Regional Policy and its national interpretations has been traced through policy analyses using the cases of Czechia, Estonia and Hungary. In order to understand the impacts of these across countries, institutional ar-

rangements for delivering Regional Policy and related aims were investigated through expert interviews. Regional Policy has been shown to have a path-shaping effect on domestic institutions in CEE, promoting decentralization and regionalization in the pre-accession period and centralization in the post-accession period. This has had negative consequences for political-institutional aspects of regional development such as institutional stability and capacity that will need to be addressed in future reforms of Regional Policy. The main conclusions drawn from different stages of the study are summarized below (Table 9).

**Table 9.** Summary of conclusions

Sub-research questions	Conclusions	Paper
<b><i>Framing:</i></b> What are the political-institutional contexts framing regional development in CEE? What is the status of regional inequalities more than 25 years after socialism? What institutional legacies affect regional inequalities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The shared political-institutional and economic contexts of socialism mask differences between CEE countries that arise in the post-socialist period.</li> <li>• Despite national economic convergence with the EU over the past decade, regional inequalities are growing within CEE countries and reflect development patterns established during the pre-socialist era of industrialization.</li> <li>• CEE countries contain regions with different political and economic characteristics affecting growth, from highly developed capital regions (Czechia, Estonia and Hungary), to old industrial (Czechia and Hungary) and institutionally thin, underdeveloped peripheries (Estonia and Hungary).</li> </ul>	I, II, IV
<b><i>Structuring:</i></b> What were the main turning points (i.e. critical junctures) of EU Regional Policy in the post-socialist period?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• EU Regional Policy has been re-oriented from its traditional welfare-distributional role to an economic growth-oriented policy over the course of CEE accession, moving from the ‘Europe of the Regions’ strategy (1990s; regionalization and MLG to support democracy and build institutional capacities), to Lisbon Strategy (2000; international competitiveness and growth for lagging regions, later place-based development) and Europe 2020 (2010; growth-through-innovation, smart specialization)</li> </ul>	III, V, VI

Sub-research questions	Conclusions	Paper
<p><b>Analyzing (I):</b> <i>How do CEE countries interpret EU Regional Policy principles in their national strategies? What path dependences exist in the national policy discourses?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Czechia, Estonia and Hungary interpreted the competitiveness agenda of the Lisbon Strategy toward their own national aims (service upgrading in Czechia; science and technology in Estonia; basic skills and employment in Hungary), albeit converging toward the innovation objective of Europe 2020.</li> <li>• Czechia and Estonia favoured a national convergence strategy, while Hungary favoured both convergence and reducing inequalities. The differences have implications for the integrity of territorial cohesion as a basis for Regional Policy in CEE countries.</li> <li>• Approaches to innovation strategy varied, with Estonia being an early adopter and Czechia and Hungary lagging, seeming to implement it as a result of EU conditionality.</li> </ul>	II, V
<p><b>Analyzing (II):</b> <i>What were the main turning points (i.e. critical junctures) of Regional Policy-related institutional development in CEE countries? What impacts did these have on domestic institutions?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CEE countries have been through three periods of institutional transformation associated with territorial and administrative reforms: post-socialist transition (decentralization), pre-accession preparations (regionalization, internalization of EU subsidiarity principle) and post-EU accession adjustments (re-centralization). Unlike Czechia and Hungary that implemented different types of regionalization, Estonia was not under pressure to regionalize.</li> <li>• Czechia and Estonia feature institutional stability, the former resulting from institutional complexity causing inertia, the latter from weak agenda-setting power of minority/coalition governments and consistent neoliberal outlook. Hungary features institutional instability resulting from frequent political changes associated with agenda-setting power to reform institutions. Capacities to implement Regional Policy correspond with the institutional stability.</li> </ul>	III, VI

Sub-research questions	Conclusions	Paper
<i>Interpreting: What are the institutional outcomes for Regional Policy?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of governance suffers in CEE countries with respect to institutional stability and capacity, which are important for delivering Regional Policy and maintaining its integrity and legitimacy as the main tool for regional development.</li> <li>• The neoliberal turn of Regional Policy has highlighted its inadequacy to address social and political concerns in the highly centralized CEE countries.</li> <li>• In Czechia, stability reflecting institutional complexity and inertia could hinder programme efficiency, participation and cooperation to develop high quality projects.</li> <li>• In Estonia, institutional stability following radical reforms during post-socialist transition has led to comparatively strong performance, albeit through centralized management and spatially-blind policies that fail to address inequalities.</li> <li>• In Hungary, institutional instability and perceived misuse of funds/projects toward political aims threatens the legitimacy of Regional Policy.</li> </ul>	III, VI

These conclusions ought to inform the future of Regional Policy which undergoes regular reforms in line with the cycle of programming periods. The combined historical and discursive approach to institutional analysis used herein points to structural and conceptual issues to be addressed. Concepts such as territorial cohesion should be clarified in order to understand whether national convergence strategies effectively ignoring internal inequalities are appropriate. Moreover, the role and operation of MLG for implementing EU policy is in question when the centralization of national implementations has taken hold. In order to clarify the meaning behind commonly used but still poorly understood concepts, attention in EU and national discourses needs to return to a long-term vision of Europe's territorial development and the related political and economic objectives that have variably entered and faded from the agenda. The aim of economic growth has become a distraction from other fundamental European principles, such as MLG and local democracy, after Europeanizing reforms in CEE countries set up the necessary structures to deliver Regional Policy on the surface but allowed the integrity of subnational structures to deteriorate.

Amidst the prevailing confusion on the conceptual level, different understandings of territorial cohesion over time have been suggested through the changing orientations of Regional Policy between the Europe of the Regions, Lisbon and Europe 2020 policy periods and different emergent strategies between countries. While Regional Policy is now centralized in most CEE countries, the shift from a welfare-distributional to growth-through-innovation policy has been accompanied by a transfer of collective responsibility for regional inequalities to the less developed regions that have insufficient capacities to solve their socio-economic situations within wider national, European and global systems. This shows the current conflict between the application of confused concepts and underlying principles of Regional Policy to practical issues of implementation. A lack of capacity and power of lagging regions to influence the national development strategies and coordinate their needs can be the result of institutional arrangements that have made little progress, if not regressed, since EU accession. In CEE countries, institutional capacity was supported through pre-accession instruments, and it could hardly be foreseen that early capacities would be so easily threatened as through the EU's own actions to encourage the centralization of regional development programming. However, recent political trends suggest that new supports to institutional capacity are critical not only for succeeding in economic development but also for protecting democratic values built up during the transition and pre-accession periods.

The neoliberal turn of Regional Policy has been criticized for putting the burden of its success on Europe's most vulnerable regions. Indeed, Regional Policy has narrowed in scope over time, neglecting sub-national structures and bottom-up processes. The RIS approach now entrenched in Regional Policy through smart specialization provides indications for the pursuit of growth in different types of regions and highlights the role of institutions. It should be noted that the theoretical underpinnings of smart specialization are based on bottom-up processes that may potentially serve as a counterweight to centralized Regional Policy management. There is a risk, however, that national governments will not be able to resist directing these processes. Moreover, since smart specialization involves the long-term transformation of regional economies, historically lagging regions that lack critical political-institutional capacities are unlikely to see short term wins indicating policy success. This should be strongly considered in future evaluations of Regional Policy and smart specialization. Building institutional capacities should become a new aim of Regional Policy for the regions that need it. For others – generally the more developed regions that can implement smart specializations with their current capacities – assistance from Regional Policy to pursue economic growth is less critical. A new assessment of need for ESIF support could be based on institutional requirements rather than GDP alone in order to target a long-term sustainable impact of Regional Policy interventions.

## **7.4 Limitations, Implications and Suggestions for Future Research**

This study faces limitations based on the conceptual framework and methodologies employed. The limitation of theory pertains to the concept of path dependence and its operationalization. As discussed in Chapter 3, path dependence faces myriad interpretations ranging from the conceptually loose ‘history matters’ based on increasing returns and lock-in (David 1985; Arthur 1989) to narrower definitions specifying constraint, timing and sequence and/or causality and directionality (North 1991; Pierson 2000b; Page 2006; Bednar et al. 2012). Scholars have been concerned with distinguishing different types of path dependence in order to advance theory. However, consensus in this regard is far from reached, and the specificities of these theoretical discussions can be impractical for policy researchers. It is necessary to take liberties in interpretation to give path dependence meaning in this research context. In terms of HI and DI, the focus should not be put on the conceptualization of path dependence itself but on the lessons that can be drawn for institutional change in real policy environments. For this reason, a loose interpretation was adopted to speak generally about structural and conceptual change across three case countries over a relatively wide time period. It does not offer an advancement on the theory of path dependence. In order to do so, more specific mechanisms could possibly be examined in a narrower research context that focuses on discrete instances of institutional change and involves more sociological aspects of institutional analysis suited to answering questions of agency and power.

This leads to a second limitation of theory regarding the usefulness of HI to explain institutional change. The choice of institutionalist lens depends on the aims of the research. By focusing on timelines and periods of institutional development to compare across cases, HI was a practical choice that provided structure and methodological guidance through CHA. Inasmuch as it identified critical junctures, it also identified policy periods for comparison of institutional arrangements and discursive aspects of policy across countries. Thus, it implicitly incorporated discursive and sociological aspects characteristic of DI and SI. Schmidt (2008b) argues that HI is better suited to explaining institutional continuity than change and that DI is complementary to that end. In future studies of institutional change, it would be helpful to incorporate DI and SI more explicitly in the research design in order to examine timely questions of agency in policymaking. In practice, they were implicit in the expert interviews and policy analysis, although not to the extent necessary to answer sociologically-motivated research questions.

The methodology relying on three case studies may be criticized for not producing generalizable results. Comparative case studies are not necessarily intended to do so. However, they “look at phenomena within their contexts” (Hopkin 2010, 301) and can provide sophisticated responses to certain types of research questions. As with many studies of CEE, looking into the ‘black box’ of this regional categorization is motivated by the search for differentiation

rather than generalizability. As EU MS, Czechia, Estonia and Hungary fall under a common policy framework for regional development, and the lessons offered may be transferrable to other post-socialist countries within or outside of the EU as well as other countries with strong regional inequalities and historical legacies of underdevelopment such as those in Southern Europe. The policy periods and experiences with Europeanizing reforms are also useful for future EU candidate countries such as those in the Western Balkans that might draw lessons for ongoing institutional transformation. Many lagging regions across Europe are prone to institutional deficiencies and seek solutions for implementing smart specialization. Similar comparative analyses in the VoC literature provide another basis for matching cases based on institutional arrangements (e.g. liberal, coordinated, hybrid and dependence market economies).

Returning to a main motivation of this study, the political-institutional dimension has been lacking in regional development frameworks in general (Martin 2015) and in studies of Regional Policy that have recently been more concerned with content rather than the implementing institutions. This study therefore points to two opportunities for future research. First, after updating the evolution of institutional arrangements in CEE using HI, future research on the political-institutional side of regional development in CEE should shift to SI and DI approaches to investigate questions of power and agency in setting Regional Policy priorities and implementing projects in peripheries. Second, future studies on the political-institutional dimension of regional development can benefit from closer complementarities with the VoC literature to distinguish institutional characteristics between countries in hopes of further understanding the connections between economic systems, governance, regional policies and development. By developing these two areas for future research, the frontiers of New Institutionalism and VoC can meet to provide much needed knowledge for CEE countries and regional development in peripheries in general. For researchers specifically interested in Regional Policy, there is an opportunity to investigate the development and implementation of smart specialization strategies in institutionally-weak regions and to compare how they are evaluated against more capable regions over the short and long term, taking into account the institutional characteristics informed by the VoC.

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## 9 SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

### **Teel territoriaalse sidususe poole? Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa regionaalpoliitikate rajasõltuvus ja uuenemine**

#### **9.1 Sissejuhatus**

##### **9.1.1 Teema valiku põhjendus: Teel territoriaalse sidususe poole?**

Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa (KIE) postsotsialistlikke riike ühendab sarnane ühiskondlik-poliitiline ja majanduslik ajalugu ning nende areng on kulgenud mööda kardinaalselt erinevat trajektoori võrreldes naabritega Lääne-Euroopas. Kuigi Euroopa Liiduga liitumisest ja ELi regionaalpoliitikas osalemisest on möödunud üle kümne aasta, iseloomustavad neid riike endiselt suured erinevused majandusliku tootlikkuse ja elatustaseme osas (ESPON 2014; Euroopa Komisjon 2017, 2014; Monastiriotis 2014). Samas oli sel samal üleminekuperioodil ka n-ö arenenud riikides neoliberalismi egiidi all toimunud majanduskasv äärmiselt ebaühtlane, tingides vajaduse regionaalse majandusliku arengutaseme tasakaalustamiseks (Martin 2015). ELi regionaalpoliitika on üheks meetmeks, mis pakub raamistiku investeeringute tegemiseks Euroopa vähem arenenud piirkondades. Ebaühtlane regionaalne areng on “kumulatiivse põhjuslikkuse keerukas protsess, mis hõlmab lisaks majanduskasvule ja -arengule ka *poliitilis-institutsioonilist arengut*” (*ibid.* 260), mis nõuab ajaloolist ja evolutsioonilist analüüsi. Sellest tulenevalt kasutatakse käesolevas uurimuses nii majanduslike kui poliitiliste nähtuste analüüsimisel rajasõltuvuse mõistet ning selle töö kontekstis käsitatakse seda “mitte ettemääratuse ega ka määramatuse teooriana, vaid pigem meetodina mõistmaks sotsiaalse innovatsiooni rekombinantset iseloomu” (Stark ja Bruszt 1998, 1132–33).

ELi kandidaatriikidele seatavate tingimuste ja majandusliku sõltuvuse kontekstis on KIE riikide ebaühtlane ruumiline areng seotud üha süvenevate ääremaastumise ja polariseerumise protsessidega (Kühn 2015; Lang jt. 2015). Need on viimasel ajal avaldumas poliitilistes liikumistes, pead tõstvas populismis ja natsionalistlikes poliitikates (Rodríguez-Pose 2018) ning samaaegselt on ebavõrdsuse püsivad ilmingud ohustamas EL regionaalpoliitika tõhususe kuvandit (Capello ja Perucca 2018). Need ääremaastumise ja polariseerumise trendid töötavad vastu territoriaalse sidususe eesmärgi saavutamisele, mis on ELi regionaalpoliitika peamiseks sihiks. ELi regionaalpoliitika käsitlustes on pööratud palju tähelepanu sisulisele poolele, kuid märgatavalt vähem on uuritud selle mõju KIE riikide institutsioonilisele arengule pärast ELiga liitumist. Sellegipoolest käsitatakse tänapäeval institutsioone üha enam kui puuduvat lüli regionaalarengu protsessis (Rodríguez-Pose 2013). Võttes aluseks rajasõltuvuse

mõiste, analüüsib käesolev uurimus muutusi ELi regionaalpoliitikas ja KIE riikide vastavates institutsioonides, kasutades võrdleva analüüsi meetodit Tšehhi, Eesti ja Ungari näidete varal.

### 9.1.2 Uurimistöö eesmärgid, teoreetiline raamistik ja struktuur

Käesolev uurimistöö võtab vaatluse alla kaks laiemat teemat. Esiteks, *millised rajasõltuvuse ja rajainnovatsiooni ilmingud KIE regionaalpoliitikas esinevad?* ja teiseks, *millised on taolise rajasõltuvuse ja rajainnovatsiooni mõjud ja tagajärjed riigisiseste institutsioonide jaoks?* Selle interdistsiplinaarse teema uurimisel on kesksel kohal rajasõltuvuse mõiste, mis on suunanäitajaks teoreetilise raamistiku ja metodoloogiate osas. Võttes aluseks ajaloolise institutsionalismi ja võrdleva analüüsi meetodi on käesoleval uurimistööl kaks eesmärki:

- (1) kaardistada regionaalpoliitika institutsioonilisi muutusi riiklikul tasandil;
- (2) võrrelda rajasõltuvuslikke protsesse institutsioonilises arengus ning kindlaks määrata institutsioonilised tegurid, mis aitavad kaasa poliitika edukale rakendamisele;

Need eesmärgid positsioneerivad käesoleva uurimuse majandusgeograafia ja politoloogia ristumiskohta ning täidavad vajadust põhjalikumalt analüüsida regionaalarengu poliitilis-institutsionaalseid aspekte (Martin 2015; Rodríguez-Pose 2013). Selle uurimuse võrdlevas analüüsis on kesksel kohal ELi regionaalpoliitika ja institutsioonilise arengu kronoloogia koos struktuuriliste tingimustega, mis on aluseks laiematele majandusarengu trendidele. Analüüsi peamised teemad ja uurimisküsimused puudutavad ekspertide ja institutsioonide rolle poliitikakujundamises protsessis, regionaalpoliitikate arengulugu ja strateegiaid, arusaamu territoriaalsest sidususest, euroopastumise trende ja protsesse ning regionaalpoliitika neoliberaliseerumist (Tabel 10). See uurimistöö panustab olemasolevasse KIE riikide võrdlevuuringute baasi, mis kujunes postsotsialistlike riikide siirdeprotsessi ja ELiga liitumise raames, pakkudes ajakohastatud analüüsi viimaste arengute osas nii ELi regionaalpoliitika praeguse (2014–2020) kui ka järgmise (pärast 2020. aastat) programmiperioodi kohta.

Doktoritöös antakse esmalt ülevaade teoreetilisest raamistikust, mis määratleb uurimuse kesksed mõisted: rajasõltuvus ja institutsioonilised muutused. Seejärel esitatakse ülevaade ELi regionaalpoliitikast KIE riikide perspektiivist. Enne empiirilise materjali juurde asumist esitletakse metodoloogilised aspektid, mis on seotud institutsioonilise arengu kaardistamisega võrdlusriikides. Sisuline osa hõlmab kokkuvõtet autori kuuest uurimusest, millele järgneb peamiste tulemuste analüüs ja kokkuvõtvad järeldused.

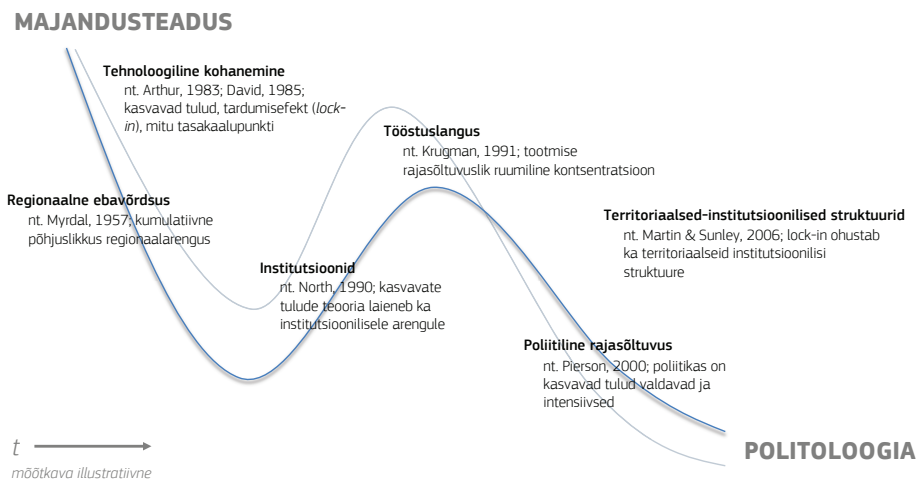
**Tabel 10.** Uurimisküsimused ja -temaatika

Peamised uurimis- küsimused	Tegevus	Alamküsimused
<p>Millised rajasõltuvuse ja rajainnovatsiooni ilmingud esinevad KIE riikide regionaalpoliitikas?</p> <p>Millised on nende rajasõltuvuse ja rajainnovatsiooni protsesside riigisisesed institutsioonilised mõjud ja tagajärjed?</p>	<b>Raamistik</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Milline on KIE riikide regionaalpoliitika poliitilis-institutsiooniline kontekst?</li> <li>• Milline on regionaalse ebavõrdsuse olukord enam kui 25 aastat pärast sotsialistliku süsteemi lagunemist?</li> <li>• Millised institutsioonilise pärandi elemendid mõjutavad regionaalset ebavõrdsust?</li> </ul>
	<b>Struktuur</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mis on olnud ELi regionaalpoliitika peamised pöördepunktid (st otsustavad momendid) sotsialismijärgsel ajastul?</li> </ul>
	<b>Analüüs (I)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kuidas tõlgendavad KIE riigid ELi regionaalpoliitika põhimõtteid oma riiklikes strateegiadokumentides?</li> <li>• Millised rajasõltuvuse ilminguid esineb riiklikus poliitikadiskursuses?</li> </ul>
	<b>Analüüs (II)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mis on olnud KIE riikides peamised pöördepunktid (st otsustavad momendid) regionaalpoliitikaga seotud institutsioonilises arengus?</li> <li>• Millist mõju omasid need riiklikele institutsioonidele?</li> </ul>
	<b>Tõlgendamine</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Millised on institutsioonilised tulemid regionaalpoliitika perspektiivist?</li> </ul>

## 9.2 Teoreetiline Raamistik

### 9.2.1 Rajasõltuvus ja institutsionaalsed muutused

Teoreetiline raamistik lõimib kokku regionaalarengu poliitilis-institutsioonilised ja majanduslikud aspektid vaadelduna läbi ELi regionaalpoliitika prisma ja keskendudes KIE riikide geograafilisele kontekstile. Rajasõltuvuse mõiste käsitleb nii ajaloolisi kui ka evolutsioonilisi protsesse, mis on puutumuses nii majandusliku kui ka poliitilis-institutsioonilise arenguga. See mõiste on laenatud tehnoloogilise kohanemise teooriatest avamaks regionaalse majandusarengu trajektoore olemust ja poliitilis-institutsioonilist analüüsi. Joonisel 8 on toodud selle teooria arenguloo olulisemad vestapostid, millest antakse ülevaade järgnevas alapeatükis ning asetatakse ELi regionaalpoliitika konteksti.



Joonis 8. Rajasõltuvusteooria arengulugu majandusteadusest politoloogiani

### 9.2.2 Rajasõltuvuse mõiste majandusteaduslik päritolu ja kasutamine majandusgeograafias

Rajasõltuvuse mõiste võtsid tehnoloogiliste rakenduste kasutuselevõtu kontekstis kasutusele sellised autorid nagu Arthur (1994, 1990, 1983) ja David (2001, 1985), kes defineerisid “rajasõltuvust” kui majanduses ilmneva positiivse tagasiside olemasolu, suurenenud mastaabiefekti, tehnoloogilist tardumiseffekti (*lock-in*) ja mitme tasakaalupunkti olemasolu. Majandusgeograafias leiti, et ka regioonide puhul ilmneb mastaabiefekt ja et ka nende puhul esineb tardumiseffekt (Krugman 1991a, 1991b, 1998; Martin ja Sunley 2006; Scott ja Storper 1992). Kiirenenud globaliseerumise ja majanduslike muutuste ajajärgul tõi rajasõltuvuse teooria regionaalarengu teoreetilisse käsitusse suuri muutusi. Kesksetest mõistetest juurdus tardumiseffekt kõige tugevamalt alles kujunevas

regionaalsete innovatsioonisüsteemide (RIS) valdkonnas, mis võimaldas regioonide kategoriseerimist lähtuvalt olemuslikest innovatsioonitõketest, nt vanad tööstuspiirkonnad killustunud suurlinnastud ja ääremaastunud piirkonnad (Isaksen 2001). Rajasõltuvus kirjeldab regionaalarengu trajektooridele iseloomulikku inertsust, mis on tänapäeval leidnud laialdast tunnustust, samas on vähem teada selle kohta, kuidas regioonid saaksid sellelt rajalt kõrvale astuda.

RIS valdkonna uuringud on olulisel määral kujundanud regionaalpoliitika aluseks olevat laiemat regionaalarengu paradigmat, sidudes geograafilise asukoha teadmusvõrgustike ja ettevõtlusega. Selline lähenemine võtab arvesse ka ebavõrduse teemad (Asheim jt. 2011). RIS uuringutes, mis said alguse piirkondlike majandussüsteemide õigusliku regulatsiooni analüüsist (Cooke 1992), arendati edasi rajasõltuvuslike tööstuspiirkondade temaatikat, peamiselt edukate regioonide ja kõrgtehnoloogia sektorite näidete varal (Asheim jt. 2011). Sellegipoolest oli KIE riikidele nendest vähe kasu. KIE riikide perspektiivist omavad potentsiaali uuringud, mis keskenduvad rajauuendustele ja uute radade loomisele kombineeritud süsteemikäsitlustes (Isaksen ja Jakobsen 2017), sh. ääre-aladel (Isaksen ja Trippl 2016). Hoolimata laialdasest äratundmisest, et institutsioonid mängivad regionaalarengus olulist rolli (Asheim jt. 2011; Isaksen 2001; Isaksen ja Jakobsen 2017; Isaksen ja Trippl 2016; Tödtling ja Trippl 2005), ei ole need erialakirjanduses siiski kuigi suurt tähelepanu pälvinud. Seega on RIS kontseptuaalselt kokkusobiv rajasõltuvuse poliitiliste tõlgendustega, kuigi neid ei ole seni peaaegu üldse uuritud.

### **9.2.3 Rajasõltuvus mõiste ülekandumine ja kohaldamine poliitilistele institutsioonidele**

Pärast rajasõltuvuse mõiste esimesi formuleeringuid majandusteaduses, on institutsioonilises majandusteaduses toimunud arengud avanud võimalusi selle mõiste kasutuselevõtmiseks sotsiaaltes, olles eriti asjakohased kujunevas uus-institutsionalismi (*new institutionalism*) teoorias. North (1991) omistas rajasõltuvuse institutsioonidele, defineerides seda kui “inimeste loodud piiranguid, mis struktureerivad poliitilist, majanduslikku ja sotsiaalset läbikäimist” (lk 97). Rajasõltuvuse kui mõiste potentsiaal on osutunud atraktiivseks ka politoloogide jaoks, kes analüüsivad institutsioonide poliitilisi ja sotsiaalseid aspekte. Page (2006) defineerib rajasõltuvust kui “käitumuslike rutiinide, sotsiaalsete kontaktide või kognitiivsete struktuuride kumulatiivset kogumit” (lk 89), mis loob paremat arusaamist institutsioonide olemusest ja poliitilistest protsessidest. Ajaloolise institutsionalismi koolkonna esindajad kasutavad rajasõltuvuse mõistet rõhutamaks institutsioonidele omast ajaloolise pärandi olemasolu ning on lisaks ajaloolise konteksti põhjalikule kirjeldamisele seadnud eesmärgiks tuvastada ka institutsiooniliste muutuste mehhanisme (Goldstone 2004; Mahoney 2000; Mahoney ja Rueschemeyer 2003; Pierson 2000a, 2000b, 2004; Thelen 1999).

Hoolimata rajasõltuvuse mõiste sisu laiendamisest ja laialdasest levikust (Rixen ja Viola 2015) ei peaks ühtse teoreetilise raamistiku puudumine siiski

andma põhjust selle mõiste kasutamise vältimiseks. Rajasõltuvuse mõistet on kasutatud uurimaks üleminekuperioodil KIE riikides toimunud institutsioonilisi muutusi (Grabher ja Stark 1997; Stark ja Bruszt 1998, 2001) ning kapitaliturgude kujunemist, mille tulemusena kujunes välja kapitalismi tüpoloogiate (ik. *Varieties of Capitalism*, VoC) teooria (Hall ja Soskice 2001; Hall ja Thelen 2009; Nölke ja Vliegenthart 2009), mis pakuvad kasulikke mudeleid võrdlevuuringuteks ja on eeskujuks rajasõltuvuse käsitluse kasutamisel KIE riikide uurimiseks. Uuematest uuringutest kasutavad rajasõltuvust institutsiooniliste muutuste analüüsiks võrdlemisi vähesed, kuid huvi näib olevat tõusuteel regionaalpoliitikaga seotud valdkondades (Faludi 2018; Mendez 2012; Sorensen 2015, 2018).

#### **9.2.4 Rajainnovatsioon regionaalarengu valdkonnas**

Rajasõltuvus on küll saanud negatiivset kriitikat, kuid kumulatiivse põhjuslikkuse tulemusena võib ilmnedagi nii eeliseid kui ka puudusi. Eespool käsitletud majanduslikes ja poliitilistes tõlgendustes on rajasõltuvust kasutatud analüüsima järjepidevust nii eraldiseisva nähtusena kui ka järjepidevuse ja muutuse protsesside omavahelisi seoseid, kuid tänapäeval seostatakse muutusi sagedamini innovatsiooniga ja mitte sõltuvusega. RIS raamistikus käsitatakse rajainnovatsiooni (*path innovation*) tööstuse valdkonnas kui rajauuendust (*path renewal*) või uute radade loomist (*new path creation*) (Isaksen ja Jakobsen 2017). Majandusgeograafias on kasutatud rajaplastilisuse mõistet (*path plasticity*) kirjeldamaks võimekust uuendusteks n-ö sissetallatud radade tingimustes (Strambach ja Halkier 2013). Taolised tõlgendused mõjutavad regionaalarengu strateegiaid konkreetsetes regioonides, mida kirjeldatakse selle töö järgnevatel osades. Uurimistöös võetakse institutsioonilise järjepidevuse ja muutuste analüüsil aluseks nii ajaloolise kui ka diskursiivse institutsionalismi teooriad ning selle töö kontekstis ei käsitleta rajasõltuvuse ja rajainnovatsiooni mõisteid eraldiseisvatena.

### **9.3 Uurimistöö Kontekst**

#### **9.3.1 Euroopa Liidu regionaalpoliitika**

Käesolevas väitekirjas kasutatakse teoreetilise raamistikuna rajasõltuvuse ja institutsiooniliste muutuste käsitlust analüüsima ELi regionaalpoliitikat ning KIE riikide majanduslikku ja poliitilist olukorda. Regionaalpoliitika tähistab antud kontekstis Euroopa Liidu ametlikku regionaalarengu-poliitikat (ehk ühtekuuluvuspoliitikat), mille sihiks on edendada territoriaalset sidusust läbi Euroopa struktuuri- ja investeerimisfondide (s.t. Euroopa Regionaalarengufond, Euroopa Sotsiaalfond ja Ühtekuuluvusfond) sihtotstarbeliste investeeringute. Territoriaalne sidusus ilmus keskse mõistena ELi regionaalpoliitika diskursusesse 1999. aastal seoses Euroopa ruumi arenguplaaniga (*European Spatial Development Perspective*, ESDP; Euroopa Komisjon 1999). Kuigi regionaalpoliitikas tuldi mõned aastad tagasi välja strateegiaga, mis laieneb kõikidele ELi

piirkondadele (Euroopa Komisjon 2014), siis näib see siiski meenutavat ajaloolist fookust vaesematele liikmesriikidele ja vähem arenenud piirkondadele.

Hoolimata käesolevas uuringus kirjeldatud sisulistest muutustest ELi regionaalpoliitika aluspõhimõtetes, on Ühtekuuluvusfond säilitanud oma esialgse eesmärgi, milleks on “majandusliku, sotsiaalse ja territoriaalse ühtekuuluvuse tugevdamine, et edendada jätkusuutlikku arengut”<sup>3</sup> koos põhjaliku regionaalpoliitika programmiga, mis on suunatud ‘vähem arenenud,’ ‘siirde’ ja ‘enam arenenud’ piirkondadele. Enamik KIE regioone on olnud alates liitumisest olnud abikõlblikud maksimaalse toetuse saamiseks, kuuludes nende riikide gruppi, mis kvalifitseeruvad Ühtekuuluvusfondi toetustele (kogurahvatulu alla 90% ELi keskmisest) ning kuuludes ka n-ö vähem arenenud piirkondade hulka (piirkondlik SKP inimese kohta alla 75% ELi keskmisest), mille hulka ei arvestata reeglina kõrgelt arenenud pealinnade piirkondi. Joonis 9 kujutab ELi regionaalpoliitika klassifikatsiooni 2014–2020 programmiperioodil. Kuigi teoreetiliselt võiksid vähem arenenud piirkonnad olla suurimateks kasusaajateks ELi regionaalpoliitikast, viitavad viimaste programmiperioodide kogemused ebakõladele institutsioonilise võimekuse ja ELi regionaalpoliitika rakendamisega kaasneva halduskoormuse vahel (Mendez ja Bachtler 2015) ning projektikonkursside protsessi võistlevast iseloomust tulenevat regionaalsete toetuste kallutatust (Novosák jt. 2017).

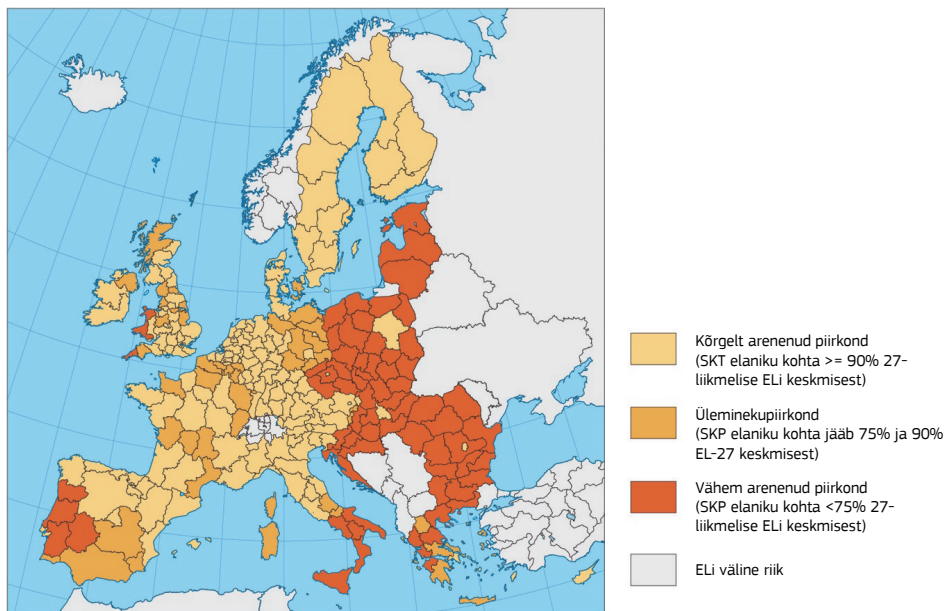
ELi regionaalpoliitika on alates 1990. aastatest kuni tänapäevani teinud läbi ülemineku heaolu ümberjaotavast mudelist majandusliku konkurentsi arengumudeliks. 1990. aastatest kuni 2000. aastate alguseni domineerinud Regioonide Euroopa mudel hõlmas eksperimentaalsete valitsemismudelitega seotud poliitikaid ja institutsioonilisi muutusi, mille lähtealuseks olid lähimus- ja partnerluspõhimõtted (vt. Euroopa Komisjon 1997, 1999; Faludi 2006; Loughlin 1996). Olles seadnud sihiks ELi liikmelisuse, võtsid KIE riigid selle paradigma omaks läbi territoriaalsete ja haldusreformide (Baun ja Marek 2006; Brusis 2002; Bruszt 2008; Grabbe 2001; Illner 1997; Illner ja Andrieu 1994; Pálné Kovács 2009; Yoder 2003) (vt ptk 3 ja 6). 2000. aasta Lissaboni strateegia pani aluse neoliberaliseerimise programmile, tuues kaasa ülemineku kohapõhisele arengumudelile, mille aluseks oli endogeenne kasvupotentsiaal (Barca 2009; Euroopa Komisjon 2004; Mendez 2011; Sapir jt. 2003). See jätkub ka käimasoleval perioodil Euroopa 2020 strateegia ning “aruka, jätkusuutliku ja kaasava majanduskasvu” egiidi all (Euroopa Komisjon 2010). ELi regionaalpoliitika edasine tsentraliseerimine ja rangemate finantskontrolli reeglite kehtestamine (Euroopa Komisjon 2013) vähendas tõenäoliselt regioonide rolli poliitika kujundamises. Euroopa 2020 strateegia aluseks on RIS käsitletused ning sellega võeti regionaalpoliitikas suund innovatsioonile ja ettevõtlusele kui peamistele majanduskasvu mootoritele (McCann ja Ortega-Argilés 2013), mistõttu võtsid enamik riike traditsiooniliste territoriaalse sidususe suurendamise eesmärkide asemel vastu strateegiad konkurentsivõime tõstmiseks (Nosek 2017). Seda

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<sup>3</sup> Euroopa Parlamendi ja Nõukogu määrus (EL) nr 1300/2013, 17. detsember 2013, mis käsitleb Ühtekuuluvusfondi ja millega tunnistatakse kehtetuks nõukogu määrus (EÜ) nr 1084/2006.



strateegiat on kritiseeritud seoses territoriaalse sidususe vähenenud rolli ja vähem arenenud piirkondade raskustega kohapõhiste poliitikate edukal rakendamisel (Avdikos ja Chardas 2016).



**Joonis 9.** Ühtekuuluvusfondi piirkonnad 2014–2020 programmiperioodil. Mugandatud Euroopa Komisjoni materjalidest (2014).

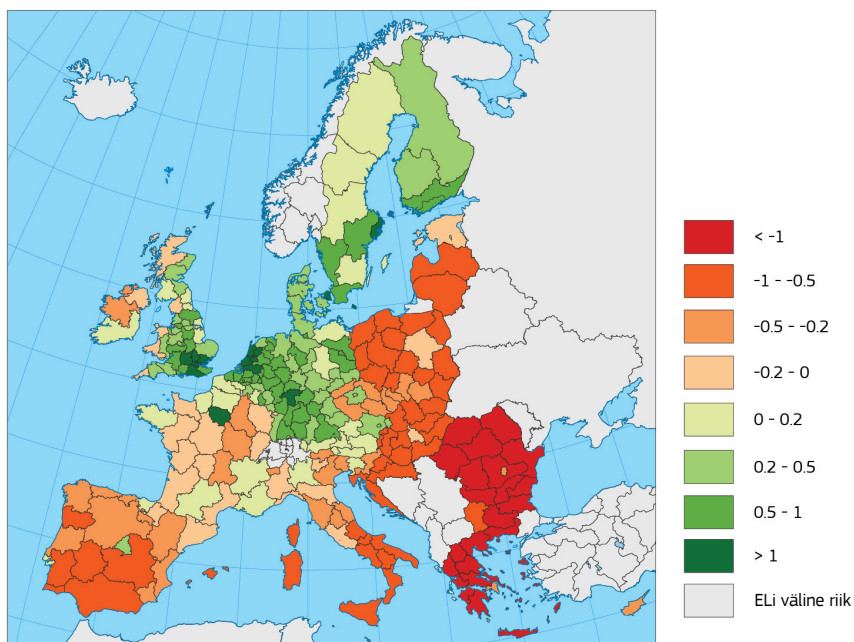
Eespool kirjeldatud poliitiliste prioriteetide ümberseadistamine näitlikustab kuidas nutika spetsialiseerumise (*smart specialization*) teooria kujunes umbes ühe kümnendi jooksul ümber RIS institutsionaliseerunud vormiks ELi poliitikas. Nutikas spetsialiseerumine töötati esialgu välja kui nn alt-üles lähenemine innovatsioonipoliitikale. Selle tuumaks on nn ettevõtluse avastamisprotsess (*entrepreneurial process of discovery*), mille eesmärk on arendada majanduslikku spetsialiseerumist, mis viiks struktuursete muutusteni (Foray jt. 2009, 2011). See oli risti vastupidine innovatsioonipoliitika varasemale praktikale, mis seisnes sarnaste strateegiade dubleerimises naaberregioonides ja -riikides. Seetõttu peaks nutikas spetsialiseerumine olema kohaldatav nii edukates kui ka vähem arenenud piirkondades. Euroopa Liit lõi nutika spetsialiseerumise lähenemise kasutuselevõtuks RIS3 platvormi (*Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialization*), et juhtida ja lõimida ESIF investeeringuid Euroopa 2020 strateegia eesmärkide suunal, eriti teadus- ja arendustegevuse ning info- tehnoloogia valdkondades (Foray jt. 2012). Varasemalt olid poliitikaeksperdid tõrksad eelistama teatud valdkondi, et vältida n-ö võitjate väljavalimist. Kuigi sellel võiks teoreetiliselt olla kasutegureid vähem arenenud piirkondade jaoks,

on RIS3 platvormi kritiseeritud neoliberaalsete väärtuste edendamises, piirates sellega ELi regionaalpoliitika ulatust 2014–2020 programmiperioodil (Avdikos ja Chardas 2016). See seab küsimärgi alla, kas RIS3 platvormi rakendamine oli lõppkokkuvõttes kooskõlas nutika spetsialiseerumise kontseptsiooni algse mõttega. Kuna see tugineb nn alt-üles strateegiale, siis võivad selle edukust mõjutada vähem arenenud piirkondade institutsioonilise võimekuse probleemid.

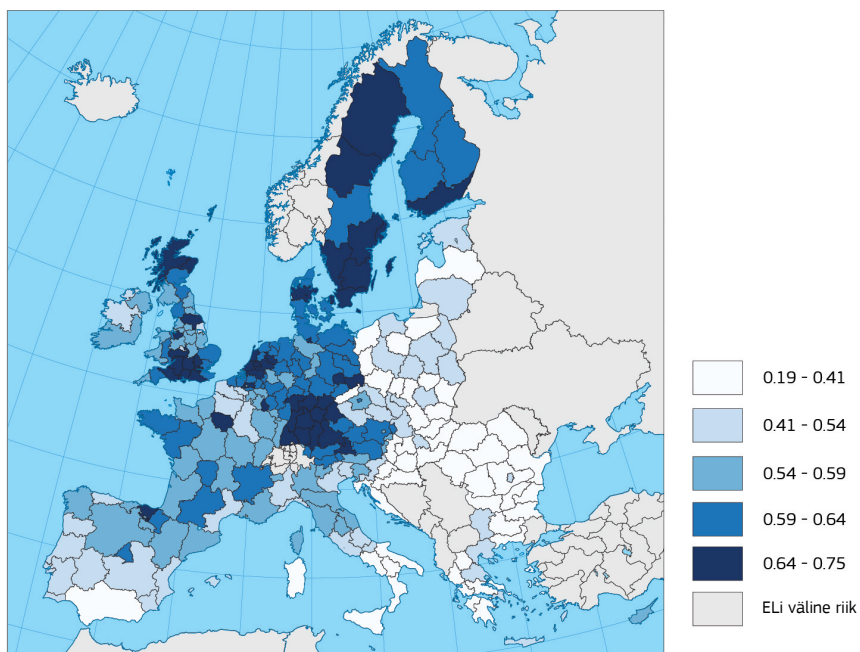
### 9.3.2 Regionaalne areng Kesk- ja Ida-Euroopa riikides

KIE riikides on Euroopa Liidu regionaalpoliitika kontekstualiseerimisel määravaks nende riikide asukoht Euroopa perifeerias ja ka nende suhteline majanduslik, sotsiaalne ja poliitilis-institutsiooniline mahajäämus (vt Euroopa Komisjon 2017). Eespool tutvustatud klassifikatsiooni kohaselt on KIE riigid liigitatud “vähem arenenud piirkondadeks”, v.a. pealinnade piirkonnad nagu Budapest, Bratislava, Praha ja Varssavi. See jaotus peab paika ka kõige värskemate piirkondlike SKP andmete alusel (Eurostat 2016) ning sarnane jaotus joonistub välja ka muude näitajate põhjal, nt majanduslik konkurentsivõime ja inimarengu tase (Joonised 10 ja 11). Selleks, et paremini mõista seda piirkondliku konteksti, keskendub järgnev alapeatükk globaliseerumisega ja ajalooliste arengutrajektooridega seotud ääremaastumise protsesside analüüsile.

ELi regionaalpoliitika on territooriumipõhine ja selle aluseks on ELi ühine statistiliste territoriaal-üksuste liigitus (*Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics*, NUTS), mis määrab kindlaks võrreldavad üksused riikide lõikes. Territoriaalsust käsitletakse läbi poliitilis-institutsioonilise ja sotsiaal-ruumilise perspektiivi. Esimest iseloomustab rahvusriikide süsteem (Anderson ja O’Dowd 1999) ja sellised kesksed ELi põhimõtted nagu mitmetasandiline valitsemine (Faludi 2013) ja lähimuspõhimõte ehk subsidiaarsus (Swianiewicz 2010), samas kui teine puudutab regionaalse identiteedi ja kompleksuse suhtelisi konstruktsioone (Healey 2006; Paasi 2013). EL ja liikmesriikide vahelised suhted toetavad rahvusriikide süsteemi ning toetavad ühtlasi ka võimu jagamist läbi mitmetasandilise valitsemise ja piiriülese koostöö (Perkmann 2007, 1999), olles heaks näiteks ruumiliste piiride häägustumisest (*softening of spaces*) võrreldes piiride tugevdamisega. Samad globaliseerumise jõud, mis olid KIE riikide majanduste kokkuvarisemise peamiseks põhjuseks (Berend 2009), pidid prognooside kohaselt kaasa tooma ka territoriaalsuse osatähtsuse vähenemise (Castells 1996; Ohmae 1995, 1993, 1990), kuid selle asemel on territoriaalsus muutunud tunduvalt keerukamaks ja mitmemõõtmeliseks (Storey 2015). Uusimad ELi meetmed (sh. LEADER ja INTERREG programmid) esitasid väljakutse traditsioonilistele struktuuridele läbi alt-üles ja piiriüleste algatuste, mis võiks pakkuda uusi arenguvõimalusi ka ääremaadele (Chevalier jt. 2013; Perkmann 1999). Viimasel ajal on arengupotentsiaali realiseerimise kontekstis juhitud palju tähelepanu vajadusele suurendada institutsioonilist ja juhtimisalast võimekust (Beer ja Clower 2014; Sotarauta jt. 2012).



**Joonis 10.** ELi piirkondliku konkurentsivõime näitajad, 2013. Mugandatud allikast Annoni ja Dijkstra (2013).



**Joonis 11.** ELi piirkondliku inimarengu näitajad (kvintilid), 2012. Mugandatud allikast Hardeman ja Dijkstra (2014).

Võttes vaatluse alla KIE regiooni ajaloolise konteksti, võimaldab rajasõltuvuse mõiste seletada mitmeid majandusarengu mustreid, mis on seotud plaanimajanduse pärandi mõjuga. RIS loogika kohaselt kuuluvad innovatsioonitõkked ja seega majandusareng sellistesse kategooriatesse nagu õhuke organisatsioon, killustumine ja tardumiseffekt (Isaksen 2001). Paljusid KIE riikide plaanimajanduslikke tööstuspiirkondi on võimalik määratleda vanade tööstuspiirkondadena (Lux 2009), mis kannatavad peamiselt tardumuseffekti tõttu ja millest tulenevalt keskendutakse seal langusfaasi jõudnud väljakujunenud tööstustele (Coenen jt. 2015; Tödtling ja Trippel 2005). Lisaks esineb paljudes KIE piirkondades ääremaadega sarnaseid probleeme, mis tulenevad nende suhetest nii Euroopa kui ka riiklike tuumikpiirkondadega. Sotsialistliku korra majandusliku ja institutsioonilise pärandi tulemusena kujunesid institutsioonilised korraldused, mis on omased nn sõltuvale turumajandusele (*dependent market economy*, DME) (Nölke ja Vliegenthart 2009) ja mida võib pidada vanade tööstuspiirkondade ja ääremaadete keerulise olukorra raskendajatenä. Hiljuti tunnustati RIS erialakirjanduses institutsioonilise toetuse tähtsust, mis on äärmiselt aktuaalne just KIE riikide perspektiivist.

### **9.3.3 Kontseptsioonidest kontekstini: poliitika ülevõtmine ja institutsioonilised muutused**

Rajasõltuvuse teoreetilise raamistiku ning ELi regionaalpoliitika ja KIE riikide uurimiskontekstis on oluline roll ka poliitikate ülevõtmisel (*policy transfer*) ja institutsiooniliste muutuste käsitlustel.

Uus-institutsionalism (*new institutionalism*) pakub institutsiooniliste muutuste analüüsimiseks kolme elementaarset paradigmaatilist lähenemist: ratsionaalse valiku institutsionalism (*rational choice institutionalism*), ajalooline institutsionalism (*historical institutionalism*) ja sotsioloogiline institutsionalism (*sociological institutionalism*) (Hall ja Taylor 1996). Käesolevas uurimuses on lähtutud ajaloolise institutsionalismi teooriast, mis rõhutab strukturalismi ja käsitleb institutsioone korporatiivtasandi reeglite ja praktikate kogumitena. Ajalooline institutsionalism sobib kasutamiseks ka sillana teiste teooriate vahel (Steinmo 2014), eriti selles osas, mis puudutab kognitiivsete ja sotsioloogiliste vaadete lõimimist läbi neljanda lähenemisviisi ehk diskursiivse institutsionalismi (*discursive institutionalism*), mis keskendub tähenduste institutsioonilisele struktuurile läbi diskursuste (Schmidt 2008a,b). Diskursiivne institutsionalism võimaldab laiendada ajaloolise institutsionalismi fookust makrotrendidelt ning põhjalikumalt analüüsida välimisi ja sisemisi muutusi. Käesoleva analüüsi aluseks on ajaloolise institutsionalismi teooria, kuid kasutab ka diskursiivse institutsionalismi elemente, mis võrreldakse empiirilisest materjalist, poliitikaanalüüsist ja ekspertide intervjuudest.

Poliitika on peetud oluliseks piiravaks teguriks tulenevalt nende juriidilisest ja sunnimonopolist (Pierson 2004). Käesoleva uuringu geograafilises ja poliitilises kontekstis iseloomustab ELi ja liikmesriikide vahelisi suhteid eba-

võrdne võimutasakaal ja tingimuslikkus, mis avaldub KIE riikide puhul siirde- ja liitumisprotsessides. Euroopa integratsiooniprotsessi hiliste liitujatena pidid väiksemad ja nõrgemad KIE kandidaatriigid kohanduma olemasolevate mängureeglitega ega saanud osaleda nende väljatöötamises, olles seejuures sunnitud nende reeglitega rohkem kohanduma kui varasemad kandidaadid (Ágh 1999).

Poliitikate ülevõtmist (*policy transfer*) on nimetatud ka eurointegratsiooni mootoriks (Faludi 2014) ning ELi regionaalpoliitika rakendamine KIE riikides on selle protsessi üks põhielemente. Samas on ELi liikmeks astumisele seatud nõuded tinginud ka ajutisi lahendusi (Schimmelfennig ja Sedelmeier 2004) ja pealispindseid praktikaid (Dąbrowski 2014). Euroopastumine kujutab endast sisuliselt seda, mida Dolowitz ja Marsh (2000) nimetavad kombinatsiooniks vabatahtlikust ja pealesunnitult poliitika ülevõtmisest, millest viimane suurendab poliitika läbikukkumise riski. Teiseks kasulikuks mõisteks on poliitika kooste (*policy assemblage*), mis toetab institutsiooniliste muutuste ajaloolis-institutsioonilisi printsiipe (Prince 2010) ja evolutsiooniteooriat, mida on kasutatud varasemates KIE riikide uuringutes (Grabher ja Stark 1997). Teised autorid on samuti kasutanud poliitika ülevõtmise ja kooste mõisteid uurimaks institutsioonilisi reforme postsotsialistlikes siirderiikides (Stark ja Bruszt 1998, 2001) ning sealseid haldus- ja territoriaalreformi nii üleminekuperioodil (Enyedi 1990; Gorzelak ja Kukliński 1992; Horváth 1999; Illner 1997; Illner ja Andriele 1994) kui ka ELiga liitumise ajal (Baun ja Marek 2006; Brusis 2002; Bruszt 2008; Horváth 1999; Pálné Kovács 2009; Pálné Kovács jt. 2004; Yoder 2003). Viimasel ajal on ilmunud uusi uurimusi liitumisjärgse perioodi kohta, mis puudutavad selliseid valdkondi nagu regionaalpoliitika rakendamise muutuv loogika (Baun ja Marek 2017), regionaliseerumise tagajärjed (Brusis 2014; Lysak ja Ryšavý 2018) ja mitmetasandiline valitsemine (*multi-level governance*) (Kull ja Tatar 2015). Seega on poliitika ülevõtmise ja kooste käsitlustel potentsiaali, et kasutada neid käesoleva uuringu selles osas, mis võrdleb institutsioonilisi muutusi.

## 9.4 Metodoloogia ja Andmed

### 9.4.1 Metodoloogia

Käesoleva kvalitatiivse võrdlevuuringu metodoloogia aluseks on rajasõltuvuse mõiste ajaloolis-institutsiooniline teooria, mis uurib poliitikate arengut ja institutsioonilisi muutusi läbi protsesside kaardistamise. Bennett ja Elman (2006) on seisukohal, et juhtumi analüüsi meetod on rajasõltuvuse uurimiseks sobilik. Senised KIE riikide võrdlevuuringud on keskendunud järgmistele institutsioonilistele muutustele: üleminek demokraatialle ja turumajandusele ning erinevad kapitalismitüübid (Stark ja Bruszt 1998, 2001); territoriaalne detsentraliseerimine ja haldusreform (Illner 1999, 1997); ja regionaliseerumine (Yoder 2003). Teised autorid on keskendunud KIE riikide nõ musta kasti avamisele, võttes vaatluse alla grupisisesed variatsioonid (Swianiewicz 2014). Nendes uuringutes

pööratakse rohkem tähelepanu suurematele KIE riikidele, samas kui Balti riike on teistega võrreldes vähem uuritud.

Ajalooline institutsionalism pakub raamistiku, mis sobib teoreetikutele, keda paeluvad institutsioonilised muutused (Thelen 2003), kasutades protsesside kaardistamiseks ja kongruentsi testimiseks (Goldstone 2003; Mahoney ja Rueschemeyer 2003) võrdlevat ajaloolist analüüsi (*Comparative Historical Analysis*, CHA). Samas jääb protsesside kaardistamise meetod reeglina ebaselgeks. Kuigi viimasel ajal on erinevateks uurimiseesmärkideks välja töötatud uusi metodoloogiad (Beach ja Pedersen 2012; Blatter ja Haverland 2012), võivad uued lähenemised osutuda ebapraktiliseks väiksemahuliste-*n* kvalitatiivsete võrdlevuuringute puhul (Kay 2005; Kay ja Baker 2015; Trampusch ja Palier 2016). Hopkin (2010) on avaldanud arvamust, et “puudub alus pidamaks juhtumipõhiseid kvalitatiivseid võrdlevuuringuid aprioorselt metodoloogiliselt “pehmeteks”, eriti arvestades, et see lähenemine võib pakkuda teatud hüpoteesidele palju põhjalikumaid ja komplekssemaid vastuseid” (lk. 300).

#### 9.4.2 Empiiriliste andmete analüüs

Käesoleva uurimistöö raames on vaatlusalusteks riikideks Tšehhi, Eesti ja Ungari, eesmärgiga tagada variatiivsust postsotsialistlike riikide kohordis, mis tegid üheaegselt läbi poliitilis-majandusliku ülemineku ja ELiga liitumise protsessid. Vaatlusalused juhtumid hõlmavad kahte Visegradi grupi riiki, mis kuulusid Nõukogude Liidu mõjusfääri (Tšehhi ja Ungari) ning ühte Nõukogude Liidu poolt okupeeritud Balti riiki (Eesti). Kooskõlas Hopkini (2010) seisukohtadega väiksemahuliste-*n* kvalitatiivsete võrdlevuuringute kohta, on need kolm riiki sobivad pakkumaks sissevaadet institutsiooniliste muutuste olemusse ja erinevustesse, mis võivad potentsiaalselt omada mõju ELi regionaalpoliitika rakendamisele ja tulemustele. Võrreldavate ELi ja riiklike materjalide-andmete ja poliitikaekspertide kättesaadavus võimaldas uuringu läbiviimise käigus koguda võrreldavaid andmeid kõigi kolme riigi kohta. Tulenevalt rõhuasetusest välis- tekkelistest makrotasandi šokkidest institutsioonilisele korraldusele lähtuvad käesolevas uurimistöös kasutatud meetodid ajaloolise institutsionalismi teooriast ning lisaks, tulenevalt empiirilise materjali olemusest ning konkureerivatest ideedest regionaalpoliitika kujundamise ja rakendamise kohta, ka diskursiivse institutsionalismi teooriast.

Uuringu esimene faas hõlmas ELi regionaalpoliitika erialakirjanduse läbitöötamist ja riiklike programmidokumentide sisuanalüüsi, mis puudutasid kolme programmiperioodi alates KIE riikide liitumisest ELiga (2004–2020). ELi ja riiklike regionaalpoliitika programmidokumente analüüsiti territoriaalse sidu- suse ja regionaalse ebavõrdsuse vähendamise strateegiate perspektiivist (Tabel 11 ja 12).

**Tabel 11.** Olulisemad aruanded ELi regionaalpoliitika kohta KIE riikides

<b>Aasta</b>	<b>Dokumendi Nimi</b>	<b>Autor</b>
1997	Agenda 2000: for a stronger and wider Union	Euroopa Komisjon
1999	ESDP – European Spatial Development Perspective	Euroopa Komisjon
2003	An Agenda for a Growing Europe: Making the EU Economic System Deliver (Sapir Report)	Sapir <i>et al.</i>
2004	Facing the challenge: The Lisbon strategy for growth and employment (Kok Report)	Euroopa Komisjon
2005	Working together for growth and jobs – A new start for the Lisbon Strategy (Barroso communication)	Euroopa Komisjon
2009	An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy (Barca Report)	Barca
2009	The White Paper on Multi-level Governance	Committee of the Regions
2010	Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth	Euroopa Komisjon
2014	Investment for jobs and growth: Promoting development and good governance in EU regions and cities (Sixth Cohesion Report)	Euroopa Komisjon

**Tabel 12.** Regionaalpoliitika rahastamisvahendid Tšehhi Vabariigis, Eestis ja Ungaris 2004–2006, 2007–2013 ja 2014–2020 programmiperioodidest

<b>Struktuurivahendite programmiperiood</b>	<b>Regionaalpoliitika instrumendid</b>	<b>Tšehhi Vabariik</b>	<b>Eesti Vabariik</b>	<b>Ungari Vabariik</b>
<i>2004–2006</i>	Community Support Framework	Jah	Ei	Jah
	Operational Programme (National)	5	1	5
	Operational Programme (Multiregional)		-	-
	Operational Programme (Regional)	1	-	-
<i>2007–2013</i>	National Strategic Reference Framework	Jah	Jah	Jah
	Operational Programme (National)	6	2	7
	Operational Programme (Regional)	8	-	7
<i>2014–2020</i>	Partnership Agreement	Jah	Jah	Jah
	Operational Programme (National)	7	1	6

Teises etapis koguti võrdlevuuringu tegemiseks vajalikke kvalitatiivseid andmeid. Lähtuvalt poliitika ülevõtmise uuringutes soovitatust (vt Dolowitz ja Marsh 2000) võeti fookusesse peamised osalejad, kasutades eesmärgipärast ja ahelkaasamismeetodit, mis sarnanes eliidiintervjuudega protsesside kaardistamise faasis (Tansey 2007), hõlmates juhteksperti igast vaatlusalusest riigist. Pool-struktureeritud intervjuude materjalid on toodud väitekirja lisades. Kõik intervjuud on salvestatud ja transkribeeritud ning intervjuude tulemused on esitatud tabelis 13.



**Tabel 13.** Intervjuude tulemused. Vastajate nimekiri ja valdkonnad, intervjuu kestus

Riik	ID-kood	Profiil	Asukoht	Kestus (t.mm,ss)
Ungari Vabariik (n = 10)	H1	Riigiametnik (riiklik tasand)	Budapest	1.12,34
	H2	Riigiametnik (riiklik tasand)	Budapest	1.16,58
	H3	Akadeemik	Pécs	55,49
	H4	Akadeemik	Pécs	1.27,04
	H5	Poliitik (riiklik, regionaalne, maakondlik tasand)	Békéscsaba	1.11,36
	H6	Riigiametnik (riiklik tasand)	Budapest	1.18,32
	H7	Poliitik (riiklik, maakondlik, kohalik tasand)	Anonüümne	45,29
	H8	Akadeemik	Békéscsaba	1.52,20 *
	H9	Akadeemik	Békéscsaba	1.52,20 *
	H10	Akadeemik; Poliitik (regionaalne, maakondlik tasand)	Békéscsaba	1.22,16
Eesti Vabariik (n = 5)	E1	Akadeemik	Tartu	–
	E2	Akadeemik	Tallinn	47,44
	E3	Riigiametnik	Tallinn	1.01,15
	E4	Praktik	Tartu	–
	E5	Akadeemik	Tallinn	–
Tšehhi Vabariik (n = 4)	C1	Akadeemik	Praha	1.20,29
	C2	Akadeemik; Riigiametnik	Praha	48,49
	C3	Akadeemik	Praha	59,42
	C4	Akadeemik	Pardubice	1.15,00

\* ühisintervjuu

## 9.5 Analüüs ja Järeldused

### 9.5.1 Uuringu kokkuvõte

Empiiriline analüüs heitis valgust erisustele riikliku regionaalpoliitika ja institutsionaalse arengu osas nii üleminekuperioodil ning samuti enne ja pärast ELga liitumist. Järgnevalt esitatakse kokkuvõtvad ülevaated.

Artikkel (1) annab ülevaate territoriaalsusest ja valitsemisest KIE riikides, lähtuvalt nende positsioonist globaalses ja Euroopa perifeerias, tuues esile territoriaalsuse poliitilis-institutsionaalsed ja sotsiaal-ruumilised perspektiivid, mis kujundavad KIE regioonide kontseptualiseerimist ja pakkudes uusi suundi edaspidisteks valitsemise uuringuteks nõrga regionaalse institutsionaalse võimekuse kontekstis.

Artikkel (2) võrdleb territoriaalse sidususe riiklikke strateegiaid majandusarengu ja regionaalse ebavõrdsuse perspektiivist analüüsides regionaalpoliitika alusdokumente. Kaardistades neid arenguid läbi ELi liikmelisuse kolme programmiperioodi nii Tšehhi, Eesti kui Ungari osas, õnnestus tuvastada erinevaid tõlgendusi ELi regionaalpoliitika eesmärkidest. Üldiselt, Tšehhi strateegiaks oli suurendada majanduslikku konkurentsivõimet suhtes Euroopa tuumikuga kooskõlas riikliku sidususe strateegiaga. Eesti seadis sihiks kiire majanduskasvu, võttes suuna rahvusvahelistele turgudele IKT valdkonnas, järgides samuti riiklikku sidususe strateegiat. Ungari järgis strateegiat, mille keskmes oli tööjõud, tõstes majanduslikku arengutaset läbi tööhõive, sh. regionaalse sidususe mõõde. Kõik kolm vaatlusalust riiki näitasid üles ühtsust poliitika suunitluselt majanduslikele sihtidele lähtuvalt Euroopa 2020 tõhustamise strateegiast. Sellegipoolest, erinevused riiklikes tõlgendustes ELi regionaalpoliitika olemusest, ELi tõhustamise protsesside laiemas kontekstis, viitavad sellele, et tarvis oleks põhjalikumat võrdlevuuringut poliitikakujundamise institutsioonidest. See tõdemus andis suunised edasisteks sammudeks käesoleva uurimistöö raames.

Artikkel (3) analüüsib empiirilisi andmeid Eestist ja Ungarist uurimaks regionaalpoliitikaga seotud institutsionaalseid muutusi alates 1990. aastatest. Võrdlev analüüs viitas ühisele ajajoonele institutsionaalses arengus nii üleminekuperioodil kui ka enne ja pärast ELiga liitumist, mis olid suuresti mõjutatud eurointegratsiooni protsessidest. Esile tõusid sellised teemad nagu siseriikliku regionaalpoliitika detsentraliseerimine, regionaliseerumine ja retsentraliseerimine, kuid samal ajal olid riikide lõikes täheldatavad lahknevused institutsionaalse arengu osas. Kuigi nii Tšehhis kui Eestis leidsid aset detsentraliseerimisprotsessid, siis jäi Eestil suuresti vajaka regionaalarengu võimekusest ja struktuurid, mis loodi keskvalitsuses liitumiseelse toetuse haldamiseks jätkasid tööd riikliku arengustrateegiaga ELi regionaalpoliitika rakendamiseks pärast liitumist. Ungaril on pikk regionaalarengu ajalugu, mis sai alguse juba kommunismiperioodil ja oli üks esimesi KIE riikide seas, mis võttis ette reformid regionaliseerumisprogrammi rakendamiseks. Sellegipoolest, pärast ELiga liitumist viisid EL nõuded regionaalpoliitika retsentraliseerimiseni. Kui nüüd võrrelda Eestit ja Ungarit, siis Eestile on institutsionaalne stabiilsus kasuks

tulnud, samas kui Ungaris on ebastabiilsus ja nõrgenenud institutsionaalne võimekus osutunud kahjulikuks. Need tulemused viitavad, et eurointegratsiooni reformid ei viinud alati soovitud tulemusteni ja et institutsionaalsed lahendused ei ole alati iseenesest piisavad toetamaks ELi regionaalpoliitika eesmäärke.

Artikkel (4) uuris ELi regionaalpoliitika mõju regionaalarengule KIE riikides, leides et SKT inimese kohta tõusis nii nominaalselt kui ka protsendina ELi keskmisest. Analüüsi käigus leiti lähenemist KIE ja kõrgemalt arenenud Euroopa regioonide vahel. Autoripoolseks sisendiks oli ülevaade KIE riikide regionaalarengu ajaloolisest kontekstist. Tulemused näitasid, et regionaalpoliitikal oli positiivne mõju ajaloolistele arengusuundadele ja see mängis ka olulist rolli KIE riikide majanduste muutmisel pakkudes uusi finantsinstrumente ja uusi temaatilisi eesmäärke regionaalarenguks traditsiooniliselt mahajäänud piirkondades. Samas näitasid erinevat tüüpi piirkondade erinevad tulemuslikkuse mustrid, et ELi regionaalpoliitikal oli erinevates piirkondades erinev potentsiaal. Soovitati jätkata kohapõhist arengut ja nutikat spetsialiseerumist, üritades samal ajal vältida välisabist sõltuvusse jäämist, pakkudes välja vajaduse kaasata institutsionaalset tuge, alternatiivseid rahastusallikaid ja strateegiaid säilitamiseks ELi rahastatud investeeringuid pikas perspektiivis.

Artikkel (5) võrdles regionaal/ühtekuuluvuspoliitika ja innovatsioonipoliitika arengut kolme KIE riikide seisukohalt olulise perioodi lõikes: Regioonide Euroopa, Lissaboni strateegia ja Euroopa 2020 strateegia. Analüüsi tulemusena leiti, et ELi regionaalpoliitika kasvav fookus konkurentsivõime tõstmisele viitas regionaal- ja innovatsioonipoliitikate lähenemisele. Leiti, et enne ELiga liitumist puudus KIE riikides sihtotstarbeline innovatsioonipoliitika, kuid need ilmusid koos Lissaboni strateegiaga erinevates riikides erineva tempoga. Arvestades, et taolised innovatsioonipõhised kasvustrateegiad kalduvad toetama arenenumaid tuumikpiirkondi ääremaade arvelt, mida on traditsiooniliselt toetanud just regionaalpoliitika, võib seda lähenemistrendi käsitada kui edasist regionaalset polariseerumist KIE riikides. Tulevaste programmiperioodide raames oleks soovitatav selgelt eristada regionaalpoliitika majanduslikke ja muid eesmäärke, et paremini aduda erinevate meetmete mõju.

Artikkel (6) naasis Eesti ja Ungari empiiriliste andmete juurde, analüüsides ELi regionaalpoliitikaga seotud institutsionaalseid muutusi läbi ajaloolis-institutsionaalse prisma. Institutsionaalse arengu periodiseerimise aluseks võeti olulise tähtsusega pöördepunktid: üleminekuperiood 1989/1991; liitumiseelne periood pärast liitumislepingute allkirjastamist 1998. aastal; ja liitumisjärgne periood pärast regionaalpoliitika rakendamata asumist 2004. aastal. Töös on kirjeldatud institutsionaalsete muutuste mehhanismid. Ungari oli heaks näiteks järkjärgulistest muutustest ja institutsionaalsest kihistumisest, kuna institutsionaalsete muutustega käis kaasas sotsialistlik pärand. Seevastu kui Eestit iseloomustasid nõukogude võimu *event sequencing*, reaktsioonid ja tagasilöögid, mille tagajärjel loodi uued institutsioonid uute tegijatega. Liitumiseelset perioodil alanud eurointegratsiooni protsessid käivitasid uued institutsionaalsed muutused Ungaris, aga mitte Eestis. ELiga liitumine langes kokku regionaalpoliitika radikaalse reformiga (Lissaboni protsess), mis katkestas taaskord institutsio-

naalse arengu trajektoore, mille tulemuseks oli Eestis ruumiliselt ignorantne poliitika ja Ungaris regionaliseerumisprotsesside tagasipööramine. Institutsionaalne prisma pakub alternatiivse vaatevinkli ELi regionaalpoliitikale asjaomaste reformiarutelude käigus, mis kipuvad keskenduma sisule ja hindamisraamistikele. Näidates ära poliitika mõju institutsioonidele, rõhutab uuring nende olulist rolli regionaalpoliitika tulemustes ja legitimeerimisel.

### 9.5.2 Implikatsioonid rajasõltuvuse jaoks

Eespool kirjeldatud institutsionaalse arengu suundade valguses võimaldab ajaloolis-institutsionaalne lähenemine analüüsida KIE riikides toimunud institutsionaalsete muutuste erinevaid mehhanisme. Need hõlmavad *event sequencing* (Pierson 2000b) ning reaktsioone ja tagasilööke (Mahoney 2000) Tšehhis ja Eestis ning institutsionaalset kihistumist (Thelen 2003) Ungaris, kus toimusid olemasolevate institutsioonide järk-järgulised reformid, mis olid alguse saanud 1980. aastatel ja jätkusid üleminekuperioodil. Arvestades erinevaid protsesse näib, et Ungari on enim kannatanud institutsionaalse ebastabiilsuse tõttu järgnenud kümnenditel, samas kui Eestile, olles ette võtnud radikaalsema reformi, sai osaks ELi regionaalpoliitika suurim mõju, mis puudutab riiklikku sidusust ja edusamme valitsuse töös (Euroopa Komisjon 2017). Ka Tšehhi puhul on täheledatav võrdlemisi hea tulemuslikkus, kuigi traditsiooniliselt oli neil madalaim ebavõrdsuse näitaja grupis (Copus ja Noguera 2010).

Regionaalse ebavõrdsuse perspektiivist ei saa vaatlusaluste riikide näidete põhjal väita, et institutsionaalsed muutused aitasid pikas perspektiivis olukorra paranemisele kaasa, mida võib pidada eesmärgiks, arvestades, et need institutsionaalsed muutused algatati selleks, et rakendada regionaalset ebavõrdsust vähendavaid poliitikaid. Tõepoolest, ELi regionaalpoliitika raames aset leidnud tsentraliseerimine lükkab ümber detsentraliseerimise teoreetilised postulaadid ja ELi varasemad põhimõtted (nt. Regioonide Euroopa ajastu) ja käesolev uurimistöö ei üritanud analüüsida institutsionaalsete muutuste alternatiivseid stsenaariume. Selle valguses ei saa väita, et regionaalne ebavõrdsus ei oleks süvenenud ilma nende muutusteta. Sellest tulenevalt seisneb käesoleva töö panus rajasõltuvuse teoreetilistesse käsitutesse selles, et keskmises ja pikas perspektiivis on võimalik saavutada institutsionaalne stabiilsus läbi radikaalsete reformide ja see ei ole ilmtingimata seotud järk-järguliste muutustega.

### 9.5.3 Järeldused

Käesolevas väitekirjas analüüsiti Euroopa Liidu regionaalpoliitikat ja institutsioonilisi muutusi KIE riikides, täites sellega teadmiste lünka, mis on tekkinud nende riikide ELiga liitumisele järgnenud perioodil. Võttes aluseks rajasõltuvuse ja rajainnovatsiooni mõisted ning lähtudes ajaloolise ja diskursiivse institutsionalismi teooriatest, kaardistati selles töös poliitikaanalüüsi meetodit kasutades ELi regionaalpoliitika sisemise loogika muutumist ja selle tõlgendusi

KIE riikide tasandil Tšehhi, Eesti ja Ungari näidete varal. Analüüsi tulemusena selgus, et ELi regionaalpoliitikal on olnud KIE riikide institutsioonidele nii-öelda rada kujundav mõju, toetades detsentraliseerimist ja regionaliseerumist liitumiseelsel perioodil ja tsentraliseerimist liitumisjärgsel perioodil. Sellel on olnud omad negatiivsed tagajärjed regionaalarengu poliitilis-institutsioonilistele aspektidele nagu institutsiooniline stabiilsus ja võimekus, mida tuleks arvestada regionaalpoliitika edasisel reformimisel. Tabelis 14 on toodud käesoleva uuri-  
muse erinevates etappides tehtud peamised järeldused.

**Tabel 14.** Kokkuvõte järeldustest

Uurimisküsimused	Järeldused	Artikkel
<i><b>Raamistik:</b> Milline on KIE riikide regionaalpoliitika poliitilis-institutsiooniline kontekst? Milline on regionaalse ebavõrdsuse olukord enam kui 25 aastat pärast sotsialistliku süsteemi lagunemist? Millised institutsioonilise pärandi elemendid mõjutavad regionaalset ebavõrdsust?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIE riikide ühised post-sotsialistlikud poliitilis-institutsioonilised ja majanduslikud kontekstid ei kajasta nende riikide omavahelisi erinevusi, mis avaldusid pärast iseseisvuse taastamist.</li> <li>Hoolimata nende riikide majanduste lõimumisest ELiga viimase kümnendi jooksul, on regionaalne ebavõrdsus KIE riikides kasvanud, järgides sotsialismi-eelse industrialiseerumise käigus kinnistunud arengumustreid.</li> <li>KIE riigid hõlmavad majanduskasvu seisukohalt eripalgeliste poliitiliste ja majanduslike näitajatega piirkondi, alates kõrgelt arenenud pealinnadest (Tšehhis, Eestis ja Ungaris) ning lõpetades institutsiooniliselt nõrkade, vähem arenenud ääremaadega (Eestis ja Ungaris)</li> </ul>	I, II, IV
<i><b>Struktuur:</b> Mis on olnud ELi regionaalpoliitika peamised pöördepunktid (st otsustavad momendid) sotsialismijärgsel ajastul?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIE riikide liitumisperioodi vältel on ELi regionaalpoliitika fookus ümber suunatud oma algselt heaolu ümberjagamise funktsioonilt poliitikaks, mille sihiks on majanduskasv. Olulisemad verstapostid: Regioonide Euroopa strateegia (1990d; regionaliseerumine ja mitmetasandiline valitsemine, mille eesmärk oli toetada demokratiseerumist ja arendada institutsioonilist võimekust), Lissaboni strateegia (2000; rahvusvahelise konkurentsivõime tõstmine ja vähem arenenud piirkondade arengu toetamine, hiljem koha-põhise arengu fookusega); Euroopa 2020 (2010; innovatsioonil põhinev majanduskasv, nutikas spetsialiseerumine).</li> </ul>	III, V, VI

Uurimisküsimused	Järeldused	Artikkel
<p><b>Analüüs (I):</b> Kuidas tõlgendavad KIE riigid ELi regionaalpoliitika põhimõtteid oma riiklikes strateegiadokumentides? Millised rajasõltuvuse ilminguid esineb riiklikes poliitikadiskursustes?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tšehhi, Eesti ja Ungari tõlgendasid Lissaboni strateegia konkurentsivõime arendamisele suunatud fookust oma riiklike eesmärkide kontekstis (teenuste kvaliteedi tõstmine Tšehhis; teadus ja tehnoloogia Eestis; põhioskused ja tööhõive Ungaris), hõlmates ka Euroopa 2020 strateegia innovatsioonipüüdlusi.</li> <li>Tšehhi ja Eesti eelistasid riiklike lähenemisstrateegiaid, samas kui Ungari eelistas nii lähenemist kui ka ebavõrdsuse vähendamist. Need erinevused avaldasid mõju territoriaalse sidususe idee rakendamisele KIE riikide regionaalpoliitika alusena.</li> <li>Erinevusi ilmnes ka innovatsioonistrateegia käsitlustes, kus Eesti oli varajane omaksvõtja ning Tšehhi ja Ungari viivitajad, jättes mulje, et seda rakendati peamiselt ELi tingimuste täitmiseks.</li> </ul>	II, V
<p><b>Analüüs (II):</b> Mis on olnud KIE riikides peamised pöördepunktid (st otsustavad momendid) regionaalpoliitikaga seotud institutsioonilises arengus? Millist mõju omasid need riiklikele institutsioonidele?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>KIE riigid on läbinud kolm institutsioonilise muutuse perioodi, mis on seotud territoriaalsete ja haldusreformidega: post-sotsialistlik siirdeperiood (detsentraliseerimine), liitumiseelsed ettevalmistused (regionaliseerumine, ELi lähimuspõhimõtte omaksvõtt) ning ELi liitumisele järgnenud muutused (re-tsentraliseerimine). Erinevalt Tšehhist ja Ungarist, mis rakendasid erinevaid regionaliseerumise strateegiaid, ei olnud Eestil kohustust regionaliseeruda.</li> <li>Tšehhi ja Eesti puhul avaldus see institutsioonilises stabiilsuses, mis kasvas välja inertsust põhjustavast institutsioonilisest kompleksusest, mis omakorda tulenes vähemus/koalitsiooni-valitsuste piiratud võimalustest seada ambitsioonikamaid eesmärke ning neoliberalistliku maailmavaate järjekindlast domineerimisest. Ungari puhul avaldus see institutsioonilises ebastabiilsuses, mis kasvas välja sagedastest poliitilistest muutustest, mis võimaldasid institutsioone reformida. ELi regionaalpoliitika meetmete rakendamise võimekus on vastavuses institutsioonilise stabiilsusega.</li> </ul>	III, VI

Uurimisküsimused	Järeldused	Artikkel
<i>Tõlgendamine: Milline on olnud ELi regionaalpoliitika institutsiooniline mõju?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Valitsemise kvaliteet kannatab KIE riikides institutsioonilise stabiilsuse ja võimekuse osas, mis on olulised tegurid ELi regionaalpoliitika elluviimisel ning selle terviklikkuse ja legitiimsuse tagamisel regionaalarengu peamise vahendina.</li> <li>• ELi regionaalpoliitika fookuse ümbersuunamine neoliberaalsetele väärtustele on esile toonud selle ebasobivuse sotsiaalsete ja poliitiliste probleemide lahendamiseks ülitseentraliseeritud KIE riikides.</li> <li>• Tšehhis võib institutsioonilisest keerukusest ja inertsist tulenev stabiilsus takistada programmide tõhusust, osalust ja koostööd kvaliteetsete projektide väljatöötamisel.</li> <li>• Eestis on institutsiooniline stabiilsus pärast siirdeperioodi radikaalseid reforme andnud võrdlemisi hea tulemuse, kuigi see on saavutatud läbi tseentraliseeritud juhtimise ja poliitikatega, mis ei arvesta regionaalsete eripäradega ega lahenda ebavõrdsusest tulenevaid probleeme.</li> <li>• Ungaris on institutsiooniline ebastabiilsus ja arvatav rahaliste vahendite/projektide väärkasutus poliitilistel eesmärkidel ohustamas ELi regionaalpoliitika legitiimsust.</li> </ul>	III, VI

Lisaks eespool toodud järeldustele vajavad täpsustamist sellised mõisted nagu territoriaalne sidusus, et jõuda selgusele riigisest ebavõrdsust ignoreerivate riiklike lähenemisstrateegiate sobivuses. Lisaks tõusetub süvenenud tseentraliseerimise tingimustes küsimus mitmetasandilise valitsemise rolli ja toimimise osas ELi poliitikate rakendamisel. Sihiks seatud majanduskasvu eesmärk on juhtimas tähelepanu kõrvale muudest Euroopa aluspõhimõtetest nagu mitmetasandiline valitsemine ja kohalik demokraatia, eriti pärast seda kui liitumisega seotud reformide raames loodi KIE riikides ELi regionaalpoliitika elluviimiseks pealtnäha vajalikke struktuure, mis samas nõrgestasid riigisest struktuuride terviklikkust. RISile omane alt-üles lähenemine ja nutikas spetsialiseerumine võib küll avaldada neoliberaliseerivat mõju ELi regionaalpoliitikale, kuid see võib samas hakata vastu töötama tseentraliseerumisele. Samas ei oleks vähem arenenud piirkondades siiski lähiplaanis lootust “võitudeks”. Uusi toetusmeetmeid, mida vähem arenenud piirkonnad vajavad oma institutsioonilise arengu parendamiseks, võiks jaotada nutika spetsialiseerumise loogikast lähtuvalt. Praktikas

ohustab aga nutikat spetsialiseerumist endiselt ülalt-alla juhtimise oht, eriti KIE riikides.

Tulenevalt erialakirjanduses tõstatatud vajadusest pöörata regionaalarengu ja eriti regionaalpoliitika analüüsis rohkem tähelepanu poliitilis-institutsioonilisele mõõtmele, pakub käesolev uurimus edasiseks uurimistööks kahte perspektiivi. Esiteks, olles analüüsinud institutsioonilise korralduse arengulugu KIE riikides läbi ajaloolise institutsionalismi prisma, võiks edasine töö KIE riikide regionaalarengu poliitilis-institutsioonilisele mõõtme uurimisel liikuda edasi sotsioloogilise institutsionalismi ja diskursiivse institutsionalismi teooriatega, uurimaks võimu ja agentsuse rolli regionaalpoliitika eesmärkide seadmisel ja projektide elluviimisel ääremaa piirkondades. Teiseks, edasine uurimistöö regionaalarengu poliitilis-institutsioonilise mõõtme osas võiks pöörata tähelepanu sarnasuste kaardistamisele lähtuvalt kapitalismi tüpoloogiate (VoC) teooriast, leidmaks paralleele majandussüsteemide, valitsemise, regionaalpoliitika ja üldise arenguga. Arendades neid teemasid edaspidises uurimistöös, oleks võimalik lähendada uus-institutsionalismi ja kapitalismi tüpoloogiate (VoC) teooriaid, mis võiks omakorda pakkuda tarvilikke teadmisi nii KIE riikide endi kontekstis kui ka ääremaade regionaalarengu kohta üldisemas plaanis. Konkreetsemalt regionaalpoliitikale keskenduvatele uurijatele võiks aga huvi pakkuda võimalus uurida nutika spetsialiseerumise strateegiaid nõ institutsiooniliselt nõrkades piirkondades ja võrrelda neid võimekamate piirkondadega nii lühemas kui ka pikemas perspektiivis, võttes arvesse ka kapitalismi tüpoloogiate teooria institutsioonilisi elemente.



## CURRICULUM VITAE

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### Education

2018—... Doctor of Philosophy, Economics, School of Economics and Business Administration, University of Tartu, Estonia  
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2014—... Doctor of Philosophy, Economic Policy, University of Economics, Prague, Czechia  
2010–2013 Master of Science, Sustainable Urban Planning and Design, KTH Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm, Sweden  
2002–2007 Bachelor of Commerce, Sauder School of Business, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

### Employment

2014–2017 Researcher, MEPCO s.r.o., Prague, Czechia  
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2011–2013 Research Assistant, School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada  
2009–2010 Evaluation Assistant, Evaluation Studies Unit, Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada  
2007–2009 Research Assistant, School of Population and Public Health, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada

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### Tunnustused

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### Keeleteoskus

Inglise keel (emakeel), Prantsuse keel (väga hea), Rootsi keel (algaja)

# ANNEX: RESEARCH TOOLS

## Annex 1.1 Interview Consent Form



### Consent Form

Project title: **Path dependence and path innovation of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe**

Name and Position of the Researcher: Bradley Loewen  
Early Stage Researcher, ITN RegPol<sup>2</sup>  
PhD student, University of Economics, Prague  
Researcher, MEPCO s.r.o.

Contact Address of the Researcher: MEPCO s.r.o.  
Spálená 108/51  
CZ-110 00 Prague

#### Please initial box

☐

I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.

☐

I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) in a specialist data centre and may be used for future research.

#### Please tick box

Yes

No

☐☐

I agree to the interview being audio recorded.

☐☐

I agree to the use of anonymised quotes in publications.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

This project is part of the ITN "Socio-economic and Political Responses to Regional Polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe (RegPol<sup>2</sup>), coordinated by the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography. RegPol<sup>2</sup> received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme under REA grant agreement n° 607022.

## Annex 1.2 Project Information Sheet



### Path dependence and path innovation of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe

*ITN RegPol² – Socioeconomic and political responses to regional polarization in Central and Eastern Europe*



#### INFORMATION FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

##### Project Overview

Amidst the Europeanisation of spatial planning and streamlining of regional policy to meet EU strategies and objectives, policy content becomes more homogeneous while producing varying outcomes across regions. Taking an institutionalist perspective, this research investigates the effects of path dependent political-institutional contexts on regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe – with cases in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary – where the increasing focus of policy on competitiveness and growth, alongside various crises, has led to increasing regional polarisation and peripheralisation.

##### Objectives

- To critically investigate political-institutional contexts of regional policy in CEE, specifically in the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary
- To describe and compare path dependent processes affecting regional policy
- To identify path divergences and institutional factors leading to policy success

##### About the Author

**Bradley Loewen** is an Early Stage Researcher in the multinational research project, "ITN RegPol² – Socio-economic and political responses to regional polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe." He is a researcher at MEPCO, the International Advisory Centre for Municipalities, and doctoral candidate at the University of Economics in Prague, Czech Republic.

##### Methodology

The study consists of: (1) a theoretical review of concepts related to the production and reinforcement of regional polarisation and peripheralisation; (2) a review of EU and national policy documents; and (3) semi-structured interviews with regional policy experts. The interviews will provide the basis for qualitative analysis of political-institutional contexts and therefore constitute the largest part of the study. Interviews will take place under informed consent. Respondents will be asked to describe their experiences on the following themes around regional policy in their region/country:

- **Europeanisation of regional policy** | Regional policy in the preparation for EU accession (e.g. transition and pre-accession periods, PHARE, IPA, etc.) and subsequent programming periods (2004-2006, 2007-2013, 2014-2020); policy transfer and models of 'best practices'
- **Territorial cohesion** | The role of the EU concept of territorial cohesion in regional policy, perspective towards spatial inequalities in regional development; interpretation of related concepts
- **Neoliberalisation of regional policy** | Shift in policy aims over time towards increasing competitiveness and growth; implications for regional policy and policy-making
- **Power relations and policy-making** | Regional autonomy, power relations and decision-making structures in setting regional policy aims

As experts on regional policy, respondents will also be asked to describe their current and past roles, ways of working, and personal experiences with institutional structures.

For more information, visit [www.regpol2.eu](http://www.regpol2.eu) or contact [bradley.loewen@mepco.cz](mailto:bradley.loewen@mepco.cz).

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## Annex 1.3 Prepared Interview Questions



### Path dependence and path innovation of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe

#### Interview Questions

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Institution:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Position(s):** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Dates of Employment:** \_\_\_\_\_

THEME	QUESTION
ROLES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What has been your role in the sphere of regional policy?</li> <li>What has been your institution's role in regional policy?</li> </ul>
TIMELINE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What were the key turning points or milestones of regional policy since the 1990s?</li> <li>When did these turning points occur?</li> <li>How did these milestones affect your institution and regional policy-making?</li> </ul>
STRATEGY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What have been the dominant strategies of regional policy since the 1990s?</li> <li>What has been your institution's view towards spatial inequalities in regional development? How does it compare with your personal view?</li> <li>What have been the major successes of regional policy?</li> <li>What have been the major failures of regional policy?</li> </ul>
EUROPEANISATION OF REGIONAL POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How did EU accession and membership change regional policy-making in your institution?</li> <li>What challenges and opportunities did this bring?</li> </ul>
TERRITORIAL COHESION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has the concept of territorial cohesion been used in regional policy to address regional inequalities?</li> <li>How has this changed over time? When?</li> </ul>
NEOLIBERALISATION OF REGIONAL POLICY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How has your institution dealt with the EU's increasing focus on competitiveness and growth?</li> <li>What implications has it had for regional policy?</li> </ul>

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