Regions without legitimacy

European influence on region-building in CEE

Ilona Pálné Kovács

Centre for Regional Studies of Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Introduction

Shaping the structure and functioning of public administration belong to the circle of national competences, but the public administrations of the member states undergo a strong Europeanization process (D'Orta 2003), relying on the interactions of different tiers (multilevel governance) and on the elaboration of common procedural and professional standards (Cardona, 1998, Olsen 2003, Goetz, 2006).

EU regional policy has crucial impact on national public administrations (Bovaird et al 2002) especially in Eastern-Central European countries primarily by their strong motivation to acquire development resources. The so called Europeanization and conditionalism were generated directly by the management regulations of the Structural Funds (Hughes et al 2004).

According to the European principles of subsidiarity/regionalism the regions were included into the Union's decision-making processes and as a result they became the most virulent factors of multilevel governance (Bache 1998).

The paper introduces the development of territorial administrations and the systems of regional development policy management in three member states (first of all in Hungary based on the author's own research experience and relying on literature and information from the less detailed in Poland and Slovakia). Further, we discuss the dilemmas of the rescaling administrative meso level, dealing with the emerging conflicts between local government system and the new partnership networks caused by the Europeanization process of territorial governance. The paper also deals with the barriers of adaptation to external models in Central and Eastern Europe, where traditions of decentralisation and regional identity are lacking. The analysis of concrete examples will highlight that the applied models of convergence may be fairly varying, and that structural changes do not necessarily lead to an optimal outcome.

Finally we outline some recommendations concerning how European Union could contribute to regionalisation in CEE.

Changing role of meso-level administration in Europe

The 1980s and 1990s brought in the spirit of Europe of regions significant decentralisation and regionalisation reforms in many member states (Larsson et al, 1999, Keating, 2004). The driving forces of regionalisation were not exclusively the structural funds, but regionalisation was often motivated by cultural, ethnic and historical factors, as well as the motivation of modernisation, economy of scale or political decentralisation. The literature distinguishes therefore between bottom up and top down regionalisms (Keating, 2004).

The Euroepan Commission by introducing the NUTS system and different categories of development objectives pushed national governments to designate eligible areas at the regional level. This phenomenon launched a series of reforms in the territorial structure of the meso-tier governance and the establishment of new, larger administrative tiers or the amalgamation of former units. Therefore, the most important accelerator encouraging regionalisation was the Structural Funds *(*Keating 1998*).*

According to the regulations of the Structural Funds and the Maastricht Treaty, the European adaptation of the principles of subsidiarity and partnership took place. The principle of partnership challenged the national public administrative systems. The necessary involvement of external resources and partners strengthened horizontal relationships as opposed to vertical ones, shifting form government to governance.

Strengthening the meso-level, however, not always means decentralisation in political sense. The central state often prefers the regionalisation of state administration. We may declare that the phenomenon of regionalism and regionalisation is not identical with political decentralisation and not dependant on the geographical scale of new administrative units, either (table 1).

Table 1. The subnational administrative division in the member states

Country	Sub-national administrative units				Lower-intermediate level			NUTS division		Municipalities
	N	Name	Status*	Size (thousand)	N	Name	Status*	NUTS 2	NUTS 3	
Austria	9	Bundesländer	member state	912				9	35	2381 Gemeinden
Belgium	3	Régions	member state	3468	10	provinces	self-government	10	43	589 Communes
Bulgaria	28	Oblast	deconcentrated organ	259				6	28	264 municipalities 3850 mayoralities
Cyprus	6	districts	deconcentrated organ	132					–	614 municipalities
Czeh Republic	14	Kraje	self-government	730				8	14	77 okresy 6249 obec
Denmark	5	Regioner	self-government	1097					15	98 municipalities
Estonia	15	Maakonnad	self-government	87					5	227 municipalities
Finland	6	Laanit	deconcentrated	874	20	maakunnat	association	5	20	82 Seutukunnat 446 Kunnat
France	26	Regions + DOM	self-government	2464	100	departments	self-government	26	100	36378 municipalities
Germany	16	Länder	member state	5148	429	Kreise	self-government	41	439	13176 Gemeinden
Greece	13	Periferies	deconcentrated	825	52	nomoi	self-government	13	51	1034 Dimoi
Hungary	20	Megyék+Bp	self-government	497				7	20	3145 municipalities
Ireland	8	Regional authority regions	deconcentrated	520	26	counties	self-government	2	8	3440 Wards
Italy	20	Regioni	self-government	2907	110	provincia	self-government	21	103	8100 Comuni
Latvia	33	Rajoni	deconcentrated	68					6	536 pagasti
Lithuania	10	Apskritys	deconcentrated	357					10	60 Savivaldybe 515 Seniu¯ nijos
Luxembourg	3	Districts	deconcentrated	162	13	cantons	deconcentrated		–	13 Cantons 118 communes
Malta	6	Distretti	deconcentrated	67					2	68 Kunsilli
Netherlands	12	Provincies	self-government	1387				12	40	489 Gemeenten
Poland	16	Województwa	self-government	2406	379	powiaty	self-government	16	45	2478 Gminy
Portugal	7	Regiôes	deconcentrated	534				7	30	308 municipalities 4261 civil parishes
Romania	42	Judete	self-government	530				8	42	3136 comune
Slovakia	8	Kraje	self-government	682				4	8	79 okresy 2928 obec

Slovenia	58	Upravne enote	deconcentrated	35					12	**193** obcine **6000** naselja
Spain	19	Communidades	self-government	2131	50	Provincias	self-government	19	50	**8108** municipios
Sweden	21	Län	self-government	431				2	21	**290** Kommuner
United Kingdom	37	Counties	self-government	1647				37	133	**318** Communes **10679** Wards
Average				*1065*						

Status: Where we stated the local governmental/elected status it could be also paralelly deconcentrated unit as well. Sometimes the number consists the capital as well.

Difficulties of adaptation in the new member states

The new East-Central-European democracies faced a twofold challenge in the 1990s:

– First, not only the adaptation to the general model of Western democracies was required, but also and parallel the consideration of national characteristics and historical roots was necessary.

– Second, the new democracies, on the other hand, were to find a state administrative, institutional model which is able to match the requirements of "acquis communautaire".

In the spirit of conditionalism the adaptation process was controlled fairly strictly but at the same time financially supported by the EU Commission (Hughes, et al 2004). The new member states with completely different administrative culture and strong historical heritage of centralisation could hardly integrate the new, strange elements of governance. The time pressure also hindered the learning process but also pushed the "pupils" imitating to real performance. We can therefore assume that the regional reforms carried out in the new members belong to the top down type of regionalisation.

Historically regionalised Poland

Although, Poland has traditions in regional scale, but has no traditions in the real decentralisation. In the course of the delimitation and naming of new regions the aspects of territorial identity and traditions were fully neglected (Sagan 2007). Poland followed a fairly ambitious model of adaptation to European regional policy. As a result of hard efforts Poland implemented comprehensive territorial reforms and introduced new self-government units at regional and county levels in 1998. As regards the reform process and the problems of implementation, although development policy was among the rationales of the reform, no decision was made with respect to this domain during the reform process (Emilewicz and Wolek 2002). Although during the preparation phase the hottest debates were on the number and the delimitation of regions (originally 12 regions were planned but due to the strong opposition it was finally increased to 16), competencies became the key elements in assessing the success of decentralisation. The new regions were not equipped with competencies and funds, in other

words region building was in fact not accompanied by the decentralisation of competencies (Regulskí 2003*).*

In Poland traditionally there is a dual structure of public administration at regional level. The governmental office is headed by the voivod and the self-government by the marshal. The regional assembly is empowered to adopt the development strategy for the region. The marshal is the key institution responsible for the preparation of a regional development strategy. The voivod as a representative of central government is responsible for the transfer of public finance flows to the region. Further, the voivod, as the head of the voivodship office is the representative of the Minister of Economy in the region. He and his office acts as an intermediary between central government and regional self-government.

The biggest contradiction in the fact is that the reallocation of tasks from the national to the regional level was not accompanied by the reallocation of sufficient resources. Further decentralisation and stronger dominance of representative organs against central state administration were expected, approaching the accession to the European Union. Thus with reference to the first experiences of managing Structural Funds we must conclude that the formal adaptation was completed but unfortunately without having solved the problem of power decentralisation. Still, considering the investigated countries Poland was the one, which can report on a number of positives developments. In Poland during the first programming period (2004-2006) 40% of EU funding was allocated to regional operative programs. As compared with the other new member states this was actually the highest proportion (Bachtler and McMaster 2008). At the same time the management of the ROPs was centralised in the ministry responsible for regional policy. The situation slightly changed during the next programming period as a result of the stronger regional pressure. In Poland 16 ROPs were formulated and they are managed regionally by the self government and the voivod's office, although the central control remained unchanged (Bachtler and McMaster 2008).

Concluding we wish to state that historical traditions in terms of geographical scale could have supported the Polish regionalisation, but the reforms were with no respect to these, moreover they even generated powerful conflicts among the towns of the regions. Refilling the regions with autonomous power and resources was an even harder task. The process of regionalisation was in fact accelerated by the European accession and the constraint of treating the economic crisis. At this place we must mention that the relative success of the regional reforms is closely connected with the stronger civil traditions and the historical roots of the scale, and also the capability of the new regional governments to exert pressure on the central government in the interest of continuation of decentralisation (Emilewicz 2002, Sagan, 2007).

Slovakia –dilemmas of nation and region

Slovakia became an independent state in 1996 making explicit centralizing efforts, quite understandable in view of its nation building ambitions. Behind the new spatial structure hidden political intentions were to be detected, like the partition of territories settled by Hungarian minorities (Mezei and Hardi 2003*)*. After 1996 the territory of Slovakia was divided into 8 large state administrative regions and 79 districts. The seats and borders of the administrative regions were in some cases appointed and delimited on the basis of political considerations directed to the Hungarian minorities. Ministries were powerful enough during the 1996 reforms to maintain the network of deconcentrated organs (Bucek 2002*)*.

In 2001 decision was made on the direct election of county self governments in the former eight state administrative regions. However, the transformation of counties into self-governmental units was slowly progressing, especially in terms of allocation of competencies and financial resources, as it was usual in post-communist countries (Bryson and Cornia 2004).

Establishing the institutional system of regional development was characterized by conceptual changes and by various uncertainties in terms of public administrative spatial division. The 4 NUTS2 regions rely on county/districts-division, the NUTS3 level is equivalent to the eight counties, so the NUTS division completely differs from the administrative division, indicating that there was no stable vision on the territorial division of the country.

The institutional system of regional development is, in practical terms, the network of regional development agencies set up by the government in the year 2000 (Rehak 2007). Slovakia established so-called regional managing and monitoring committees and their secretaries in the NUTS2 regions, and their task is to participate in the management of the Structural Funds. Within the NUTS3 counties, the management of development policy and the adaptation of development programmes are the responsibility of county assemblies**.** However, managing authorities and monitoring committees operate at this tier too (Ficza 2004*)*.

In the first programming period Slovakia had no regional operative programmes demonstrating that the accelerated modernisation required centralised control. In the recent programming period 8 regional operative programmes were established (instead of the 4 in the NUTS2 regions) (Batchler and McMaster 2008). This solution clearly implies that the number and borders of regions are still unstable. Moreover, the actual managing authorities of these pro-

grammes remained in the central tier questioning from the very beginning the authenticity of regional decentralisation (Rehák, 2007).

Thus what we experience is that in Slovakia the establishment of meso-tier administration is fairly loaded with uncertainties deriving from the lack of historical traditions, regional cohesion and identity. The European cohesion policy and the establishment of NUTS2 regions could not counteract the lack of all these. The institution system managing the Structural Funds is centralised, the regional system is fragmented and lacking resources, although the chance for regionalisation is dependent on the reinforcement of regional governance capacities. The regional identity of the local society theoretically supporting political decentralisation is absent, and the ethnic segregation does not really support the strengthening of regional identity.

Hungary- top down regionalisation- regions without legitimacy

The Hungarian example produces the most explicit evidence on the fact that top-down regionalisation, adapting to external expectations can not expect lasting success. Lacking internal political support and professional consensus regional structures remain fragile.

The county has been traditionally a very strong unit of the Hungarian public administration. The Act on Local Governments, enacted in 1990, brought about a completely new situation in the spatial distribution of power. Instead of the former medium-level county organization municipality became the key element of the local government system. The lack of competencies, means and resources were accompanied by unstable political legitimacy and distrust towards county assemblies. This change led to the strong centralization of the entire public administrative system.

The weakening of the democratically elected medium-level governments (counties) contributed to the increasing influence of the central government. The Hungarian state's shape is similar to a sand-glass, with a too strong (wide) top and a too strong (wide) bottom, causing many functional and democratic deficits.

In 2002 the government announced brave reforms within public administrative sector, planning the establishment of directly elected regional self-governments by the year 2006. The objective of the reform was to finish the decade-long debate on the counties by transferring territorial power to the regions, eliminating in this way the self-governance status of the counties. This programme proved to be too ambitious since regions are artificial formations in Hun-

gary, the regional identity of the Hungarian society is obviously very weak. The civil society did not evolve and political institutions were not established at the regional level. Consequently, the democratic control over the regional bodies, as well as over the relationships of these bodies to the electors and the social or political institutions would have been very weak. There was a danger that a forced regionalisation will become an instrument in the hands of not the local, but the central power. The government however, in the cycle 2002–2006 did not prepare or submit any legal acts on the regional reform using the excuse that the reform probably would not have gained the support of the parliamentary opposition.

Preparing for the accession one chance to stabilize the 'meso' was the legislation on regional policy. The act on regional development was passed in 1996 bringing basic changes in the territorial power structure (Pálné 2001). The institutional system of regional development in Hungary is not based on the territorial public administration or local government system. It was simply impossible to integrate regional policy into this fragmented administrative structure lacking a strong territorial/meso tier.

So called development councils were set up consisting of members delegated by local governments, economic chambers etc. A great dilemma was whether the micro-regional (NUTS4), county (NUTS3) or the regional (NUTS2) level should be the main action arena of regional political intervention and institutional system. The answer was based on fairly pragmatic arguments. The legislator decided to establish special institutions at all three territorial tiers causing the fragmentation of development resources, competition among the tiers due to the lack of clear division of labour. The three territorial tiers and their fairly complicated institutional system were unable to counterbalance the weight of the central government.

The accession in 2004 caused shock and disappointment. Referring to the "weak regional capacity", the European Commission insisted on the centralised management of Structural Funds, therefore the regional institutions (regional development councils) have almost completely lost their former role. The management authorities were integrated in the central government, the regional actors only received co-operative functions. Hungary had to realize that the EU does not insist on the active role of the regions, it does not want to take risks with decentralised structures. The adaptive pressure of accession pushed the country towards centralisation and neglecting the regions, whereas the previous decade was characterised by regionalism and decentralisation.

Summarising we can conclude that Hungary attempted to adapt to the challenges of European regional policy. This adaptation process was only formal and did not contribute to the real decentralisation. So we are in the situation that we have several meso-tiers and several types of regionalised institutions, but the system as a whole remained centralised.

Bottom up region-building in South Transdanubia

Getting closer to the actors involved in the process of regionalisation the paper introduces some empirical research results conducted in South Transdanubia one of the seven Hungarian NUTS 2 regions.

The researches started from the assumption that without the support and involvement of local actors the region-building from the top can not succeed. We have investigated the networks of local actors, institutions in two periods, in 2003 (ADAPT 5. Framework programme) and in 2007 (OTKA-Hungarian Scientific Research Fund) following the theory of policy network elaborated by Rhodes (1997).

Without going into the details we will summarize the characteristics of the networks investigated in order to give empirical evidences for dangers of slavish adaptation to external patterns and failures of one-sided top down "modernisation".

In the framework of the ADAPT programme we investigated the institutionalised actors of regional policy looking for the most important nodes of the network (ADAPT, 2001, We have found that the actors created and controlled by the central government have key role in mobilising other actors. The whole network was fairly closed, exclusive, the civil and business actors were pushed to the periphery, there was no democratic control over the functioning of regional decision-making, the elected politicians within the local governmental bodies had only indirect influence and information.

The great majority of these institutions take part in the work of the county and regional level development councils as delegated members. Legal regulations connect them closely with each other and they form a network - both horizontally and vertically.

In the literature, the essence of the policy network approach is primarily defined as focusing on the institutions and their interrelatedness *(*Rhodes, 1997*)*. In the course of our study we also endeavoured to interpret the nature and shaping of the networks both inside and outside the region. It is characteristic of the institutional system of Hungarian regional policy and of the developing connections of the participants that they are heavily dependant on policy

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changes, which is effected mainly through legal regulation. This means that the actors are less able to gain influence based on their own personal characteristics and connections, their means and positions are dependant upon their status defined by law.

The analyses showed that the partnership organisations and the elected municipalities have the most integrating role in regional policy. As a whole, the network has a strong public character, the civil and the economic actors are peripheral elements of the networks.

The special feature of the networks is the geographical cohesion. Actors within the same counties have stronger connections with each other than with those in other counties. Another conflict among the spatial units is the lack of decision concerning the regional centres, as the government did not regulate the issue of the location of NUTS 2 regions' seats. The competition of the candidate towns definitely weakens internal cohesion. These elements suggest that the endogenous cohesion of the artificially created macro regions is weak, and the counties and micro-regions within the regions –although poorer both in institutions and social capital - have more organic and denser networks than the regions themselves.

The participation in development councils significantly increases the influence of the leaders of certain organisations. For example, the chairmen of the county general assemblies are the chairmen of the county development councils (as required by the law) as well as members or chairmen of the regional development council, and they may at the same time be members of the National Development Council and in some cases they are members even in the National Parliament. In addition there are further collective forums offering them membership. Such "cumulative mandates" create key individuals, whose influence is significantly stronger than that of the organisation from which the mandate originates. The delegating organisations often have difficulty in controlling the actions of individuals with multi-membership in each decision-making forum.

The democratic deficit is increased by the phenomenon that the development councils generate extremely weak publicity. Councils as autonomous organisations are allowed to regulate their operation on their own and experience shows that thy have no real wish for intensive publicity, and unfortunately the average citizen is not seriously interested in the activity of these organisations. Partnership and the management of the Structural Funds thus carry some dangers for the traditional institutions of democracy (Olsson, 2001).

We have repeated the survey three years later financed by the OTKA fund. This period belongs to the years immediately after the EU, accession, assuming that regionalism will produce improvement in the framework of Europeanised regional policy and political environment. Our results show similar situation to the former, although the actors already accepted the aim of regional administrative reform and did not question the delimitation and the seat of the regions which were previously hot topics, explained by the missing regional cognition and identity. The answers below show that the political elite still connects the region-building with the EU but has less illusions concerning the political profit of the reform.

Table 2. Opinions on regional reform
(1 –does not agree at all; 2 – rather less agrees; 3 –rather agrees; 4 – fully agrees)

	Civil	higher education	economic organisation	leader of a medium	Politician	Regional development	Occasional	local government.	Totally
The relationships to the EU are easier to organise in the regional level	3,41	3,21	2,94	3,27	2,78	3,12	3,10	3,17	**3,16**
Regions have no traditions	3,42	2,79	3,50	3,92	2,68	2,92	3,17	2,94	**3,15**
The reform causes too much malfunctions	3,11	3,07	3,06	3,25	3,11	2,92	3,22	3,47	**3,13**
There is no cohesion within the region	3,29	2,83	3,22	3,50	3,05	2,79	3,06	3,00	**3,08**
Decision-making is distant	2,84	2,66	3,18	3,33	2,89	2,52	3,03	3,11	**2,89**
The reform results in centralisation	2,80	2,93	2,82	2,64	3,00	2,36	2,65	2,94	**2,76**
Political elite has little knowledge on the region	2,98	2,67	3,25	2,75	2,33	2,12	2,84	2,39	**2,69**
Regions are the causers of significant macro-political conflicts	2,63	2,59	2,56	3,55	2,72	2,64	2,55	2,72	**2,68**
Region is more efficient in terms of management	2,82	2,82	2,47	2,55	2,63	2,92	2,36	2,53	**2,66**
Public services can be organised more effectively	2,80	2,75	2,60	2,45	2,37	2,68	2,43	2,89	**2,64**
cheaper public administration	2,75	2,63	2,00	2,58	2,26	2,88	2,00	2,69	**2,49**
development problems can be treated in this scale	2,61	2,29	2,28	2,58	2,05	2,68	2,48	2,78	**2,48**
Regions made the peripheral county border problems treatable	2,61	2,43	2,17	1,75	2,47	2,60	2,37	2,82	**2,45**
The borders of the regions are questionable	2,60	2,61	2,06	2,00	2,06	2,12	2,35	2,44	**2,35**
Regional reforms offer a chance for the refreshment of political elite	2,36	2,24	1,94	2,00	2,37	2,56	2,31	2,53	**2,32**
The seat of regions are controversial	2,74	2,14	1,88	2,00	2,39	1,88	2,57	1,76	**2,27**
Smaller municipalities can find their role and chances of	2,28	2,04	1,56	1,42	1,84	1,88	2,01	2,00	**1,97**

	Civil	higher edu-cation	eco-nomic or-ganisa-tion	leader of a me-dium	Poli-tician	Re-gional devel-op-ment	Occa-sional	local gov-ernment.	To-tally
interest enforcement better within the frameworks of the region.									
Due to their size regions are significant counterbalances to the central government	1,77	1,86	1,67	1,67	1,63	1,79	1,87	1,94	**1,79**
Regions are to large	2,11	1,43	1,83	1,40	1,47	1,38	1,69	1,56	**1,68**
The population can better identify with regions than with counties.	1,75	1,66	1,22	1,17	1,58	1,44	1,26	1,33	**1,47**

The closeness and the inner structure of the network however remained almost the same. In spite of the partnership principle prescribed by the regulation of Structural Funds the network was dominated by public actors mainly by those with empowerment stemming from the top (parties, ministries) and those created by the central government being dependent on the central finance. The other dominant group within the network are local mayors having already learned the techniques of application for SF, they use the region as a framework, tool to get money and not as a framework of strategic leadership.

Table 3. Average intensity of institutional connections

	Civil or-ganisa-tion.	leader in higher education	economic organisation.	leader of a medium	politician	regional develop-ment .	state admin-istra-tive organ	Local politi-cian	total
Civil organisation	2,63	2,31	2,32	2,59	2,92	2,80	2,16	**3,02**	2,56
Leader in higher education	**2,96**	**3,95**	2,91	2,88	**3,04**	**3,07**	2,91	**3,25**	3,13
Economic organisa-tion	2,75	2,88	**2,95**	**3,08**	**3,29**	**3,16**	2,84	**3,28**	2,97
Leader of a medium	**3,04**	**3,03**	**2,96**	**3,31**	**3,46**	**3,32**	**3,05**	**3,44**	3,16
Political parties	1,51	1,68	2,53	2,71	**3,38**	2,64	1,48	**3,03**	2,15
Regional develop-ment	2,74	2,46	**3,03**	**3,06**	**3,34**	**3,50**	2,37	**3,24**	2,87
State administrative organ	2,36	2,84	2,31	2,08	**3,32**	**2,95**	2,64	**3,05**	2,68
Local politician	**3,42**	**3,07**	**3,20**	**3,42**	**3,88**	**3,82**	**3,37**	**3,85**	**3,47**
Total	2,67	2,78	2,77	2,89	**3,33**	3,16	2,60	**3,27**	2,87

The ties and centres of the network reflect the immanent spirit of the Structural Funds' management. As mentioned above the region-building process paradoxically was almost stopped after the accession due to the fairly centralised institutionalisation of regional development.

The clear contradiction between the centralised management of SF and the declared ambition of the government to implement regional reform raises the question: which policy is honest?

Table 4. The Structural Funds
(1 –does not agree at all; 2 – rather less agrees; 3 –rather agrees; 4 – fully agrees)

	Average	standard deviation
The management of Structural Funds is bureaucratic	3,40	0,76
The management of Structural Funds allows lobbying	3,21	0,85
The management of Structural Funds is strongly centralized lives no space for the regions	3,08	0,96
The management of Structural Funds is intransparent	3,01	0,95
The managemenr of Structural Funds is as the EU requires	2,60	1,05
The management of Structural Funds is convenient, efficient, and in the adequate proximity to those concerned	1,97	0,82

The other topic related to the state of art of regionalisation has strong relevance concerning the multilevel governance in Europe. It is evident that the position of regions was strengthened during the nineties when in the spirit of Europe of regions, many institutions were established in order to insert the regions into the European governance system (COR, thematic networks etc). South Transdanubia, as a European region, also had the ambition of being represented in Brussels. The story started before the accession when the former EU ambassador in Budapest initiated the opening of the House of the Hungarian Regions in Brussels. This period was successful due to activity and European prestige of Hans Beck and the generous financing by the central government. We can say that Hungarian regions were pushed into the European scene by external forces but later, as the external support disappeared, Hungarian regions tried find their own, different ways splitting from the common "incubator".

The most Western region having good contacts with Styria joined to Styrian Office in Brussels. South Transdanubia stayed a little in the former common house but the person representing the region was recalled decreasing the time in Brussels for one week a month. Recently the office of the regional representation is rent together with a neighbouring Croatian region, Baranya-Slavonia.

The person delegated to Brussels is the employee of the regional development agency. At the beginning he tried to make contacts with the most important actors, institutions in the region in order to help them with information, transferring contacts etc. Later the forums held for the

regional institutions became formal, unvisited and the delegate got into vacuum since missing real commissions and empowerment or any interest on behalf of the region.

Explaining the Brussels failure the delegate considered the facts which contributed to the failure in Brussels. The money disappeared from Brussels following the introduction of shared responsibility for the Structural Funds in 1999. Meanwhile the centralisation of the domestic management of the Structural Funds also took place, therefore regional institutions became almost empty in terms of competences and resources and this emptiness caused the loss of interest on behalf of regional actors. Without background the delegation almost lost its original mission. Recently, the new strategy is to help the Croatian neighbour but the chance is not convincing.

Conclusions

We can conclude that the EU's regional policy has proved to be crucial motivation for regional restructuring national public administrations. The new challenges could be answered however by functional adaptation as well since several member states were successful in the absorption of Structural Funds without dramatic structural territorial changes. Despite this fact the modernisation of national public administrations and local governments has been typically carried out in the form of structural reforms in Europe during the last decades (Wright 1997).

The adaptation of Central and Eastern European countries is moving on in fairly contradictory way. The accession countries have formulated and established their territorial public administration parallel to the institutions of the regional support system of the European Union. The territorial harmonization of the two systems is not in every case successful and the replacement of traditional public administrative units by new, larger ones is a difficult task. Alongside structural changes, organisational changes, functioning and behaviours often remain unchanged and structural reforms may be inefficient. This means that "radical" reforms implemented on the surface reshaped only the structure but not the content, not the values and attitudes of the civil servants (Lazareviciute and Verheijen 2000). On the other hand as O'Dwyer's paper states, the situation and interest of the parties, the domestic political considerations have also crucial impact on the content and design of the reform, sometimes overwriting the European principles (O'Dwyer, 2006).

Generally, the logic of partnership in European regionalism has been used as a tool rather than a target. It has become a tool of centralization, the resource distribution alongside clique in-

terests, bypassing the directly elected self-government bodies and the publicity. Literature often cites the opinions indicating the negative effects and consequences of partnership, corporate institutions, associations, ad hoc groupings and informal networks (Olsson 2001*)*. The transparency, the direct participation may easy be violated especially when the regional and local self-governments and the civil society are not strong enough. We have to agree with the Scott's opinion that "regionalization has more generally been exploited by elites to legitimize and/or defend their political and economic power (Scott, 2009, p 249) and it is not a response to urgent popular demands" (ibid p 250).

We have to count with the phenomenon that the future of regionalism is not so clear even in the enlarged Europe. The distrust of the EU's Commission towards the Central and Eastern European regions shows that the renaissance of regionalism will not be necessarily continued in the twenty first century. The future of the Structural Funds beyond 2013 is an even more open question, and hereby the European emphasis of the regional dimension too. We can read opinions in the recent literature based on empirical results of the last decade that "a Europe of Regions" still less a Europe with the regions, had failed to materialize" (Elias, 2008 p. 485).

However all these do not exempt the CEE countries from the responsibility of treating the meso tier decentralisation as a priority of the modernisation of their governance, as an important element of European "good governance".

Independently from the future of Structural Funds and European regional policy, regionalism is important from the point of view of democratic governance, counterbalancing the dominance of national/ central government, getting closer to the citizens and the modernisation of public services. Regionalism is not the question of the scale, but rather the question of decentralisation. CEE countries incline to imitate regionalism creating new geographical scale so they need external motivation also to use regionalism for real decentralisation.

European institutions have to be more consequent insisting on the idea of Europe of regions in a sense of insisting on the presence of regional actors in the multilevel governance system:

§   Strengthening the role of CoR
§   Supporting networks of regions to act at European level
§   Supporting pilot programmes in order to prepare regional reforms
§   Promoting the region-building in CEE countries not only through the management of Structural Funds but other community policies also using the logic of OMC.

§ Accepting the fact that national public administrations can be different but "to require" the democratic legitimacy of regional partners instead of loose understanding of partnership principle.

§ On the other hand the EU has to take into consideration that New Member States have many particularities which make sense, the "variable geometry" approach as it was suggested concerning the EU urban programmes as well (Chorianopoulos, 2002). The uniform regulation could lead to the misfit of "European" and domestic structures.

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