

Framing Core-periphery Relations in Germany and Romania ^[Working Title]

- project outline -

by Alexandru Brad, 26.10.2015

supervisors: Prof. Dr. Heidrun Zinecker; Dr. Thilo Lang

The research leading to these results was conducted in the frame of the *Socio-economic and Political Responses to Regional Polarisation in Central and Eastern Europe (RegPol²)* project, coordinated by the Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography, Leipzig/Germany. The project received funding from the People Programme (Marie Curie Actions) of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013/ under REA grant agreement n° 607022.

In the past decade, the majority of the European Union's member states, particularly those in Central and Eastern Europe, have witnessed an accelerated pace of the spatial polarisation of development (see Eurostat, 2015), in spite of regional development policies aiming for the contrary. In addition, the contemporary dominant neoliberal political and economic paradigms within the European Union have the overarching view that core cities and micro-regions (e.g. metropolitan areas) may reasonably develop at the expense of structurally weaker places, with the latter being expected to benefit from positive spillovers stemming from the former (see for instance the 'central place' theory engrained in the German regional development approach - ARL, 2014).

Policy-wise, this approach is advocated on the primacy of competition-generated economic growth, which is expected to be embedded into a preferably medium to long term spatial development strategy (Weck and Reißwenger, 2014: 2169). However, the suitability of such responses to the issues of polarisation and peripheralisation can be brought into question. When looking at Central and Eastern Europe in particular, it is evident that not all national contexts have the tradition, or indeed the capacity to design and implement the required long-term visions. Hence, this very demand for strategy making in matters which appear to exhibit themselves as complex, may I say unsolvable problems (such as 'lagging development', or 'periphery' for instance) is very likely to pose a whole raft of dilemmas concerning the appropriateness of any intended course of intervention, or indeed inaction. This research begins at a time when, following the recommendations of Barca (2009), the European Commission, a key financier of regional development, particularly in the post-communist Central and Eastern Europe, had substan-

tially shifted its main strategy of intervention (i.e. the Cohesion Policy) from a redistributive to a more growth-focused approach. It is also a time when in the response of a financial crisis, neoliberal influences proliferate within development and planning policy institutions, oftentimes in contradiction with the core values underpinning their traditional rationale (Waterhout et al, 2013: 157-8). It is therefore a time when policy relevant actors in these fields are pushed to reimagine the substantive and procedural elements of their work, as well as their identity in relation to it and to each other - a contested dialogical process which forms the object of this research.

2. Research Context

This project seeks to provide a nuanced account of the role of broad, internationally circulated development ideas in research and practice which touch on the nature of the core-periphery relations at a regional (sub-national) scale. This rests upon an analysis that goes beyond grasping intra-regional peripheries as inevitable spatial structures that are shaped through the juggernaut of capitalism (c.f. Smith, 1984). Rather, the focus is on the social (re-)construction of such entities within practices of governance - i.e. practices of networked decision making that transcend state-hierarchical structures.

For well over a decade, the principles advocated by European Union's Cohesion Policy have had a pivotal role in pressing member states to lay the political and bureaucratic groundwork towards facilitating the receipt of structural funds (Ferry and McMaster, 2013: 1522). The work of integrating the substantive, and some of the procedural parts of this investment policy is conducted under an open method of coordination consisting both of soft laws such as declarations, and recommendations, but also through benchmarking - namely best practices, and encouragement of reform, often through financial incentives (Thatcher, 2006: 302). In spite of the non-punitive approach towards their adoption, this process of change had always been inevitable, particularly in development-avid new member states. The reason for this is that the funds instrumented through the Cohesion Policy are bound to be an integral part of members' own development initiatives (as opposed to supporting adjacent programmes), therefore implying that national and European policy goals ought to be aligned. Nonetheless, the extent towards which this process of Europeanising the substance and procedures of national policy traditions in accordance to EU directives, while at the same time keeping in place the heterogeneity of member states' traditions (Hamedinger et al, 2008: 2671) is very often brought under political contestation. This becomes particularly evident when images of the successful 'west' and backward 'east' are invoked, and particularly more so when a deficient democratic accountability of European Union integration (Majone, 2014: 311).

Perhaps the best way to explore the normative dimensions of the 'lagging' concept would be in the light of development theory. The better part of the literature concerned with disparities within the EU sits on the modernisation side, and is by and large inspired by the policy transfer school. This touches on the Cohesion matter by focusing on defining and understanding Europeanisation as a "process of construction, diffusion, and

institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms [...], and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the making of EU decisions, and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, identities, political structures, and public policies". (Radelli, 2003: 30). Most accounts of the working of the Cohesion Policy are hereby concerned with identifying the elements which may hinder or enable principles of effectiveness and efficiency within the broader paradigm of new economic geography. The overarching argument emerging from this position typically claims that peripheries will remain peripheries until they adopt the values, and procedures which would enable a convergence towards their cores.

On the other hand, one could focus on the political dimension of the project, following a dependency-inspired position. This perspective encounters a primordial problem of confining the European Union within normative boundaries, as it is neither a federation, nor a confederation, and even less so a state; rather, it encompasses elements of all, with competencies being constantly under contestation. One of the key principles for our concern with Cohesion is the desire to maintain the heterogeneous characteristic of its territory – hence the open method of coordination. This diverse character is not innate, but rather has to be constructed through region building, by fostering relationships, discourses, and agencies in constructing a spatial entity as a quasi-permanent assemblage (Paasi, 2010; 2012). In the light of this, at a transnational scale, the task for the post-socialist CEE has been framed as an imperative to re-Europeanise by recovering the values, ideals, aspirations, solutions and practices which were lost to Soviet-like systems (Schöpflin, 1989: 27). In Kuus' (2004) view, this not only legitimises waves of European enlargement, but also paves the way towards solidifying a cliché view of Western modernity as the standard of being European, with the East gradually emerging from its unmaturing past (p. 475-6). The European project fundamentally rests on this 'otherness' of the East in producing policy knowledge by stating the imperativeness of reducing regional disparities of economic output. This is done either by advocating policy learning from good practices (most of them to be drawn from the West), or by sustaining research which for its better part continuously reproduces the stigma of backwardness. In some policy domains of CEE countries, this context often renders a perception according to which the current conditions, identities, practices, or traditions are a hinderance, and should be unapologetically discarded in the quest of converging to the modern other. Less talking (i.e. politicising), more doing (i.e. adopting technical solutions, grounding policy in evidence) has hereby become a catchphrase. In addition to this, structural factors determine an influx of forces of capital that are incentivised to explore the differences in terms of wages, fiscal, social and environmental standards – no wonder that the foreign direct investment in the A10 CEE member states has nearly quadrupled between 1995 and 2001 (Bohle, 2006: 73).

On the sub-national scale, driven by paradigms of new economic geography coupled with endogenous growth theories, the sub-national region (here taken as an administrative scale nested between the national and local) is represented in the Cohesion policy as the key analytical and strategic unit of intervention (Meyer and Lackenbauer, 2005;

Becker et al, 2010). This salience of the region derives from the polycentric approach of development first embraced in the now extinct European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in the 1990s. Visions of spatial cores and peripheries emerged from a realisation that excessive polarisation in the member states' top performing regions (represented as the infamous 'blue banana' arch that spread from London to Milan via western Germany) might pose a problem both to the Union's capacity to sustain its global competitiveness, but also hinder the development of its internal peripheries (the 'Europe of grapes'). Proposals to respond to this set in stone a paradigm of bottom-up initiative in forming a polycentric settlement structure which advocates for the utilisation of the entire economic potential intrinsic to the Union's regions, advocated through a proxy of territorial cohesion (Faludi, 2010: 114). In response to this allegedly faux approach, the dependency perspective serves to coagulate positions against the neoliberalisation project, mainly holding that claims towards competitively utilising economic potential as advocated by the Cohesion Policy are in essence excuses towards accommodating the needs of an overwhelmingly dependent market economy.

An observation that is most evidently emerging from this short overview is that within Europe, devolution and regionalism are increasing the number and range of centre-periphery relations - i.e. peripheries are increasingly being subordinated to more than one core (Elcock, 2003: 45). It also becomes clear that our thinking ought to transcend the classical thinking of the urban/rural model rooted in economic theory. Models of core-periphery can be found within central urban places (e.g. concentrated poverty, exclusion from housing markets, poor environmental conditions - see While et al, 2013: 2394), and in equal measure exhibit consequences for rural/structurally weak areas (depopulation, lack of economic prospects). Roots for the model are also to be found in the spatial division of labor and production, whereas the peripheral production processes creates peripheral products and core processes are the source of leading products (Hryniewicz, 2014: 237). Equally, it signals a predisposition for exclusion from decision making networks, most of them located in cores. Abstracting to networks, this typically refers to core agents as being directly linked to all other core members and each periphery member as having a single link to one of the core members (Goyal, 2007).

Development is therefore best grasped as a contextualised agency riddled with unintended consequences. My main argument follows that of the critical geography school of thought, namely that development policies coming from somewhere else are particularly predisposed towards reproducing inequitable socio-spatial relations. Hereby within the context created by the EU Cohesion Policy, conditions which would enable a more spatially just response are superseded by proposals for competitive economies.

4. Main and sub research questions

Given that the core aim of this project is to contribute towards a better understanding of the social reproduction of core-periphery relations through practices of policy design and implementation, the questions I pose attempt to grasp the intricate power mechanisms at

play in decision making. Hence, the main object of research is the process of meaning making, as well as the usage of concepts which are intended to be transferred from the EU and adapted to national contexts. Researching these mechanisms of knowledge transfer is relevant, because the power practices in which ideas are adapted and used depend on the knowledge arising from, and informing the practices of (here regional) governance.

Main question: How is the place-based development approach framed within the sub-national policy contexts of EU member states?

Coming from a spatial justice perspective, regional development can be outlined as a moral dilemma: who is development for? Answering this is done across both sectorial and territorial policy domains. When put in the context of core-periphery relations, that is to ask: should policies foster the maximisation of market-driven (more often than not polarised) economic growth, or should interventions which result in the equitable distribution of wealth across regions be carried out? (Dawkins, 2003: 149). While national spatial policies may create structures that are more prescriptive (e.g. a planing system), broad overarching policies, such as the Cohesion Policy, oftentimes contain a mixed message, which leaves it up to decision makers at a local and regional scale to build arguments in favour or against an intended course of action. To ask 'how is framed' is to seek to grasp the dialogical, open-ended process of constructing meanings embedded in the daily practices of policy relevant actors. The focus of framing is on the substance of policy issues, policy actors' identities and relationships, and the policy process itself (van Hulst and Yanow, 2014: 11-12). The goal is to understand how seemingly vague terms forwarded by the Cohesion Policy are applied to, and define the policy context and political momentum towards regional development and planning.

Sub-question 1: What are the conditions that enable the reproduction of inequitable socio-spatial relations within Central and Easter European member states?

This question serves the purpose of guiding an understanding of the studied context. Answering this is centred on a regional development and spatial planning policy review of the German and Romanian national and sub-national contexts.

Sub-question 2: In what way do actors from what are perceived to be peripheral sub-regional places represent themselves and their interests in the process of governance?

It is often the case that when regional development policy is concerned, political actors from peripheries are perceived to be powerless in supra-local decision making arenas (Blowers and Leroy, 1994: 204 in Lang, 2011). However, the context created by the post-2014 Cohesion Policy places a substantial discursive emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity in the decision making process (incidentally, a term borrowed from the German political system). Naturally, given the open method of coordination, the enactment of this ideal beyond the policy text is subordinated to national policy traditions. It is very likely therefore that a tensed duality between regional development policy making and practice, and 'business as usual' (for instance in political interactions, or in spatial planning) develops. The point here is to explore the lifeworld of peripheral policy relevant

actors' interactions both in formal decision making, as well as through day to day practices of discursively utilising and implementing the policy.

Sub-question 3: How is regional development practiced at a sub-regional scale?

Here I share the view that spatial and development policies are not predominantly technocratic interventions created in a vacuum of values (as initially put forward by Böhme et al., 2004, later expanded by Dabinett and Richardson, 2006). If this is the case, what does their implementation entail then? As recent paradigmatic turns in the Cohesion Policy emphasise the primacy of place-based development, there is a pressing need to critically understand the potentials and constraints associated with this endogenous form of strategy making. The point here is to consider the role of local actors in the process of making and implementing strategies at a micro-regional and local scale. To what extent does this exercise of governance-driven participation re-produce the dominance of local and regional elites (Warren, 2009)? The direction of this question is twofold. First I seek to develop an understanding of how actors from what are perceived to be peripheral areas represent themselves and their interests in the process of governance (mostly with reference towards supra-local strategy making). Second, I seek to explore the interactions around the implementation of concrete projects at a local scale (e.g. repairing a road, providing workforce training, sustaining small / medium enterprises).

5. Theoretical approach

In this section, I sketch the foundations for an argument that advocates a practice-oriented analytical approach for studying the process of designing policies which seek (and claim) to shape intra-regional core-periphery relations. I explain the implications of following a practice approach in the concepts which inform my work: framing, spatial relations, and governance. I follow Haughton and Counsell (2004) on viewing the role of the region not as a given scale for analysis, but rather as a proxy through which supra-local core-periphery relations are enacted, from the perspective of wider contestations inherent in the policy process: scales, methods, politics of governance (p. 47). Given this, the initial claim upon which I build my thesis is that *the process of framing development policies is entangled in practices of governance (hence transcending state-hierarchical structures, and very likely enacting some form of socio-spatial core-periphery relation) which are embedded in national traditions and which are shifted (or re-framed) by responses to dilemmas.*

Perhaps it is best I first clarify what frames and framing are. Developed within the American pragmatist current in the 1970s, frame analysis was epistemologically promoted as an attempt to account for the central role of values and action in the world of policy making. The rationale here is to provide the analyst with a means of critically engaging with the assumptions, beliefs, and aspirations which make up a particular intervention, or policy proposal (Wagenaar, 2011: 84). Frames in essence provide an understanding of how people perceive and construct reality, and what they value to be important; they

serve as a foundation for action in the situation at hand (Laws and Rein, 2003: 173). *Framing* is a perspective that deliberately seeks to overcome the meaning realist character which frame analysis has by and large turned towards (i.e. the preoccupation of many scholars with detecting frames). Hence, framing is the process of constructing, putting in practice, and shifting frames, in an ongoing process in which actors seek to construct “a model of the world - reflecting prior sense-making - and a model for subsequent action in the world” (van Hulst and Yanow, 2014: 7). This process is seen to be par excellence dialogical, in the sense that problem definitions emerge from situations where policy actors apply their own priorities, focusing on particular aspects of the situation at hand, naming and categorising phenomena. In this project, framing is used as a means of analysing the policy work undertaken at the edge between national traditions and the field rendered through the European Union’s open method of coordination, through ideas in common currency, provisions made in other policy statements, or terms served as constituting ‘good practice’ in policy circles.

Implementing this dynamic approach to policy research rests on a practice-oriented perspective on spatial relations and governance, which I will brief in the following.

Spatial relations

Given the dynamic approach to policy research, a good way to approach spatial relations is through the lens of peripheralisation, as a means of (re)producing the marginalisation of peripheries, either from core economic activities, decision making, or discourse (Hörschelmann et al., 2015: 16). The fundamental distinction here is that the former is the fluid, processual dimension which outputs the latter. This insight rests on an argument which grasps the human understanding of space as being the outcome of a relational and social dialogical construction (Massey, 2009: 16-7) – in essence, grasping and intervening in the construction of space is a never-ending agency. This is not to deny the importance of the Cartesian dimension of space, but rather to view it itself as an element which, through its natural and artifactual qualities, contributes towards the very process of framing the human construction of meanings. That said, planning and development policies do not only function as territorial administrative tools (as viewed for instance in the ‘territorial governance’ paradigm), but also enact a performative dimension of shaping a web of ‘soft spaces’ through conceptual language - e.g. hubs, corridors, gateways, or polycentric networks of places (cf. Committee on Spatial Development, 1999; Haughton et al., 2010).

This aspirational endeavour of grasping space provides the foundations for the social construction of places, both as images of what they are perceived to be, but also of visions of what they should become. Hence, image building transcends administrative jurisdictions, sectors, and levels of governance by being a collective work, carried out both by agents from the inside and outside any given place - be it locality or region (Healey, 2010). The perspective from which actors frame places does, to my mind, determine the action that they will be inclined to follow. When referring to region-building, Paasi (2010) places the framing exercise in wider social practices. Hence, he goes to argue, sta-

tistical-administrative frames are the most common, as bureaucrats seek to harmonise spatial thinking by providing entities which can be scrutinised and compared. On the other end of the scale, places are being framed in relation to political, cultural, economic, and power relations, as the outcome of social practices and discourses (p.2297-8).

The juxtaposition of those various strands of meanings ascribed to space leads towards two potential understandings. First, we encounter a well established analytical and discursive dichotomisation of places as being 'central/booming/successful', 'peripheral/lagging/marginal', or tending towards centrality (see for instance the world systems theory developed by Wallerstein, 1974). This reification of socially constructed spatial attributes, while providing clarity to complex realities, has long been criticised to contribute (whether intendedly or not) towards the establishment and reproduction of spatial divisions by layering societies (and implicitly human agency) into nested hierarchical scales (Marston et al, 2005: 422). The implication is that a whole raft of development agendas are primarily driven by technocratic, reactive solutions, concerning themselves primarily with fostering growth (Williams et al, 2009: 17). The caveat of such positions which sustain the gradual convergence of cores and peripheries (such as World Bank, 2009 or previous iterations of the European Cohesion Policy), is that they overlook the social, environmental, and power aspects that enable such inequalities to exist in the first place (Lawson, 2010).

In response to this, a second dimension posits that such hierarchies are transcended by the mobile nature of the people and capital which form and reform space as they move (Hannam et al: 216). The insight here, in the process of making policies which are deemed to be 'good' insofar they accommodate such flows, is to acknowledge that peripheralisation can lead to the very exclusion of peripheral actors from such development networks (Herschel, 2011: 98). Analyses of practices of regional governance must therefore account for who governs, and how power is exercised in deciding what varieties, institutions and resources frame, address and answer the questions of what kind of local and regional development and for whom (Pike et al, 2007: 1266). I might be alone in thinking that this is in fact not so much a turn towards grasping "international inter-governmental coordination, and national and decentralised decision making structures coordinating and integrating their relationships within multi-level institutional structures operating across a range of scales" (ibid), as Pike and his colleagues advocate, but rather an analytical move in the direction of spatial justice. This would push the analysis towards dealing with the spatial manifestation of inequity, rather than spatial inequality, leading to questions concerning access to the decision-making processes, and actors' ability to react in the face of this. It is this power-related dimension, and the process of contesting, and shaping it which informs my understanding of core-periphery relations.

Drawing on this it is perhaps inescapable that we are presented with a thin balance between technical and political elements which construct the political dimensions of the policy community. Both are interrelated, and both are, to variable degrees, framed through, and in turn re-frame the practice of policy networks engaged in (intra-)regional governance. Both strands of frames contain substantive, procedural, and identity ele-

ments in them (van Hulst and Yanow, 2015). Hereby, traditional, normative models governance are contained as mere frames amongst others (whether good or bad, place-based or multi-level, participative or technocratic).

Governance

This last point leads me to consider the third theoretical anchor of my thesis: governance. As good an overarching definition of governance as any is the following: “governance can be used to describe any pattern of rule that arises either when the state is dependent upon others or when the state plays little or no role” (Bevir, 2007: 364). This particular paradigm of conducting public affairs emerges in a broader, normative conceptualisation of governance based on narratives that highlight the dismantling of traditional national state-hierarchical institutions (see for instance Rhodes, 2000). In its broadest sense, the governance literature seeks to explain the *mode* of coordination between governmental and non-governmental actors in the governing process (Howlett, 2011: 36). As an overarching feature, the momentum of the so-called ‘hollowing out of the state’ does lead to what are perceived to be irreversible shifts of diffusing political deliberations and decision-making powers to constantly shifting networks of private, semi-private, and transnational organisations (Mayntz, 1999). Nonetheless, in spite of this quasi-global tide of transforming the role of the state, the adoption and adaptation of the governance paradigm in various policy fields and territories is an ongoing, contingent process (Newman, 2005: 8-10). This is to say that in some policy domains, government structures contained within the nation state (whether through central or regional governmental bodies) may very well continue to hold a central role in exercising regulatory and strategic power (whether explicitly acknowledged, replicated through informal practices, or reproduced through mechanisms of power). My impression is that by alluding to reifications of their self-advocated structures, models of governance oftentimes overlook the manifold of relations between (sub-, and supra-) state and non-state policy relevant actors by reducing the very process of decision making and power to a zero-sum game (for markets to prevail, the remit of the state needs to be shrunk).

When viewed through the lens of practice, governance is best employed in its conceptual dimension, one which I intend to use as a tool for guiding my analysis of policy making and implementation practices across state, market, and reflexive self-organised (cf. Jessop 2002) spaces of coordination. The focus on practice brings about a number of challenges, as the concept itself is elusive and lacks a unified theoretical account. At its simplest, from a policy-analytical perspective, practice can be grasped as stabilised agency - a product of individuals' capacity to internalise and perform upon meanings (Bevir and Rhodes, 2010: 73-5). The practice scholarship attempts to break the ties between this capacity to act and the limits imposed by a-priori structures formulated through explicit rules (Schatzki, 2001: 17). Some of the most influential works in this field are given by Giddens and Bourdieu. Giddens (1984) highlights the duality of structure, grounded in the premise that actors derive a sense of ontological security by contributing towards the recreation of predictable routines (p. 50). Through this, Giddens highlights

that structure both produces practices, but is also reproduced at the level of practice itself, as opposed to a set of orders pushed upon actors from above (Giddens, 1984: 374-6). Grounding his work in empirical rather than philosophical work, Bourdieu (1990) on the other hand, integrates practices in the notion of habitus. Through this, he emphasises the simultaneous interplay between actors' disposition and the structure of demands within which they operate when constituting human activity (p. 90-1). Bourdieu's key insight here is that action is a social phenomenon of its own kind, boasting internal logics, origins, and demands, yet not always conforming to previously agreed rules (Wagenaar and Cook, 2003: 146). This contingent interconnectedness between structure and agency paves the way towards a dynamic, process-oriented approach of understanding the means by which (policy relevant) actors internalise, reconstitute, or challenge a system of shared practices by drawing upon it as a tool within a wider set of available resources (Ortner 1984: 158; Barnes, 2001: 26). To put it in Rein's (1983) terms, practices (or frames, according to the terminology which he had later codeveloped with Donald Schön) not only prescribe action preferences, but rather serve as a nexus which integrate theory, activities, interests, purposes, facts, and values (p. 99).

Following Tully (2008), a practice-oriented approach to governance employs a flexible language of provisional description which allows for a dialogical relation to political problems as they are raised in, and animate the concrete struggles of actors engaged in the policy making process (p.21). This anti-foundationalist perspective views governance not as an innate structure, but rather as an emergent of the “forms of reason and organisation through which individuals and groups coordinate their various activities, and the practices of freedom by which they act within these systems, either by following the rules of the game, or striving to modify them” (Tully, 2008: 21).

Within this practice-oriented theoretical paradigm, Bevir and Rhodes (2010) develop an interpretive mode of policy analysis which at its core is concerned with decentering the very notion of governance. Being primarily developed on insights emerging from the governmentality school developed by Foucault, they seek to attribute the construction of meanings beyond the functional remit of the state. Foucault's contribution to new understandings of the practice of power as a nexus for producing reality, and objects of truth (Foucault, 1991: 194) was indeed pivotal to the emergence of a whole strand of social sciences, it is in some places patchy. However, one of the consequences of Foucault's take on the prevalence of power is the nesting of society into a vertical hierarchy, one in which individuals submit to the discourses cultivated by the state with certain degrees (if any) of resistance (Rainbow, 1984: 208-9). When this perspective is operationalised in the context of governance, the state is inevitably placed at the centre of all social interaction, meaning that individual and interpersonal conduct will sooner or later come under the influence of its norms (Walters, 2012: 51-2).

Decentering governance hereby focuses on the emergence, contestation, and shifting of modes of governance is explained as being the outcome of “contingent constructions of several actors inspired by competing webs of beliefs and associated traditions” (Bevir and Rhodes, 2010: 92). The notion of decenteredness emerges as a response to the analytical

shortcomings of the traditional accounts of network governance and metagovernance. Bevir and Rhodes (2010) view networks as being the outcome of practices driven by actors who draw on their values in assigning meanings to a given situation, rather than by impersonal forces (such as path dependency, or markets' logic). On the other hand, in response to the metagovernance paradigm, decentered theory challenges the idea that the state was, or ever could be an overarching structure that can exercise control over the management and performance of networks, institutional design, or the possibility of public authorities to shape network outputs (cf. Sørensen and Torfing, 2007). Rather, it adopts the view that state activity had always been the outcome of a diverse array of practices which more often than not operate within fuzzy boundaries between itself and civil society, in a manner which escapes the control of the centre.

Briefly outlined, the rationale for this actor-centered approach is primarily driven by the heterogeneous nature of the European Cohesion Policy project. Such an approach brings forth the the potential tensions resulting from the very nature of adopting, or working against the place-based approach. Where local interests collide, conflict resolution is unpredictable, particularly in contexts where democratic traditions are in the making and not well established. This contingency of agency, the breaking of organisational hierarchies into overlapping, loosely linked sets of relations in the governance of places (Healey, 2010: 226), coupled with the wickedness of spatial processes recommend a practice-driven decentered analysis of EU-driven development policies and projects.

6. Methodological approach

This study is based on an interpretive policy analysis approach. The principal aim of working under this paradigm is to move beyond identifying and describing communities of interpretation around specific policy issues and the understanding of what goes wrong (or right) in implementing them, to an exploration of communities of 'doing', and the specific practices that are entailed in the communication of policy meanings (Hajer, 1993). An interpretive methodology typically employs qualitative research methods with the aim of situating meaning at the centre of the analysed social constructions (Furlong and Marsh, 2010: 200). It is important to note that such research is carried in a dynamic setting which cannot be subjected to much control. Hence, interpretive researchers and participants alike are actively involved in interpreting the lived world through their own set of beliefs, social position, or experiences (Chamraz, 2006: 15).

I guide this analysis by drawing on principles of grounded theory as initially developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and expanded later, in particular by Chamraz (2006). This approach leads to the generation of theory by systematically analysing the conceptual categories that emerge from social data research. The substantive theory that results from such a study does not seek to be generalised, but is rather used to understand the manifestation of a particular social phenomenon, in this case the process of framing intra-regional core-periphery relations within policy communities. The benefits of using

grounded theory is the data-driven research that stems from it. This is important, as this project intends to study processes of peripheralisation (rather than solely resuming to peripheral spaces), while seeking to avoid the reproduction of dominant discourses which label peripheries as being backward places (e.g. by adopting the GDP/capita measurement).

Before explaining the use of methods to be used within the broader methodological set, I'd like to briefly outline the areas that are to be studied. From a policy perspective, I am working at the level of managing authorities that make and finance regional development programmes in Germany and Romania. The two countries were primarily chosen at the outset for their differences. While Germany is a country with a strong federal tradition, incorporating well established regional development and planning policy systems which had by and large succeeded in responding to ensuring a well balanced level of territorial development, Romania is considered to be one of the under performers on the matter, with growing intra- and inter- regional disparities. Here, in spite of efforts to devolve power to local authorities and create a regional tier of government, the state thus far operates under a heavily centralised structure, with a dense array of oftentimes redundant policies which are seldom delivered (Ionescu-Heroiu et al., 2013). Comparing the German and Romanian contexts hence provide this study with a setting to explore the different nuances, conflicts, and powers of constructing and acting upon meanings in regional policy making.

The authorities considered are the NUTS II North-West Regional Development Agency (NW Region) in Romania, and the NUTS I Free State of Saxony in Germany. The areas in question are not fixed, and will be reviewed following a period of exploratory fieldwork. The aim of doing this initial work is to explore the salient issues of development in the two entities through the policy relevant actors' eyes, and to explore both the relevance of the theoretical consideration which underpin their choosing, as well as those upon which the study is constructed. Amongst the initial reasons for considering the NW Region and Saxony are the following: first, in terms of GDP/capita (an indicator used extensively to measure the level of development in the framework of the Cohesion Policy) the regions are not at any extremes – neither the richest, nor the poorest in their national contexts; instead, the NW Region ranks 3 in Romania, while Saxony ranks 2 in Eastern Germany. Second, both regions have a socialist past, and have been confronted with similar processes of economic restructuring, policy transition, demographic challenges, and urban shrinkage. Third, the spatial model of the regions, as acknowledged in policy documents is in broad terms similar, with the NW Region featuring Cluj-Napoca as a city of regional importance (ADR-NV, 2015: 22), while the German counterpart also acknowledges the more advanced development of Leipzig when compared to Dresden and Chemnitz (Staatministerium für Wirtschaft Arbeit und Veerkher, 2014). Fourth, as a consequence to the last point, both regional policies adhere to the principle of promoting metropolitan zones as key drivers of economic growth, relying on the so-called 'spread effects' to extend their benefits. Read in a different light, this move towards establishing metropolises comes with a further concentration of power (both in terms of decision mak-

ing, and economic capacity) in those centres. At a normative level, this power imbalance is fostered through, but also challenged by the Cohesion Policy. The aim of exploring the equity of the decision making process the two regions is given by them being situated in contexts which handle long-term strategic planning differently.

The principal method I plan to use is qualitative interviewing, as a means of entering the participants' world through their own experience. Typically, this generates stories about a particular process, which can then be used to further the understanding of the researched domain, while also challenging my own initial beliefs on the topic. To inform my work at the outset, I draw on the advice given by Weiss (1994). I aim to sample respondents in accordance to their expertise (i.e. role within the regional / local authorities), and their privileged access to the object of the research (i.e. policy actors who are at the frontline of the policy making or implementation process - either members of the public, NGOs, or businesses, according to the cases) (cf. Weiss, 1994: 17). The design of the interviews will be unstructured, based on themes, rather than a predetermined set of questions. The aim of doing this is to have the interview guided by participant's answers, while my role will be to monitor the quality of the data, ask questions where answers seem to be vague and contain generalisations, or progress to a new theme when the current one is exhausted. A key factor which grants the reliability of data collected by using this particular style of interviewing is the establishment of a good interview partnership (Weiss, 1995: 55; 150). I will therefore seek to hold the interviews in a manner and setting which is preferred by the participant, and only record the conversations (to have them transcribed) where participants would feel comfortable in doing this. Where participants prefer not to be record, I will treat the data as a field note.

An equally valuable, albeit secondary means of collecting data is through participant observation, and informal discussions. It is very likely that given the placements I will be undertaking, I will be attending meetings, formal or informal discussions, or engaging with participants in a less structured manner. These interactions will be used in two ways. First, they will inform the themes which are to be approached in individual interviews. Second, they will be part of the data itself as field notes, and will be used when analysing and interpreting the fieldwork.

To analyse the data, I plan to use a constructivist approach to grounded theory, as outlined by Charmaz (2006). The initial stage following the transcription of the interviews is coding – a technique which seeks to synthesise segments of data with a descriptor that moves the data a from concrete statements to an analytic interpretation (Charmaz, 2006: 43). The initial coding to be used will be the question suggested by Weiss (1995): “what is this an instance of?” (p. 154). The preferred unit of data will be the ‘incident’ – ranging from parts of sentences, to full sentences, and in some cases paragraphs. Following that, in the focused coding stage, the initial codes which best represented the data will be selected to describe larger units of data (Charmaz, 2006: 60-3). These codes are seen to emerge from comparing units of data between them, but also with initial codes. Doing so provides an initial analytical train of thought for interpreting

the data. This stage is inextricably linked to memo-writing, as the focused codes change while new insights are to be gained from the data resulted.

The principal practical implications of following this methodology as it is here described are twofold. First, the research conducted within this project avoids the pre-definition of analytical categories. Second would be to acknowledge that interviews at best generate a storyline, perhaps at face value riddled with anecdotes and vague statements. The job of the interpretive researcher here is to unpack the values underpinning these positions by comparing it to others, in order to build an account of the event from varied perspectives. Doing this feeds into the research aim of exploring the process of framing core-periphery relations in regional policy, while also signalling why a particular process stagnates, why policy fails, or what the unintended consequences of a course of actions are. Last, it is crucial that data analysis and fieldwork go hand in hand, complementing each other as research progresses. This iterative process is carried out until what is called 'theoretical saturation' is reached - that means that new data does not add to the substance of existing knowledge.

References

- AGENȚIA DE DEZVOLTARE REGIONALĂ NORD-VEST (ADR-NV). (2015). *Planul de Dezvoltare al Regiunii Nord-Vest 2014-2020*. Available online: http://www.nord-vest.ro/Document_Files/Planul-de-dezvoltare-regionala-2014-2020/00001724/7r238_PDR_2014_2020.pdf [Accessed 13th of May 2015].
- AKADEMIE FÜR RAUMFORSCHUNG UND LANDESPLANUNG (ARL). (2014). *Positionspapier aus der ARL 96. Leitbilder und Handlungsstrategien der Raumentwicklung in Deutschland 2013*. Available online: shop.arl-net.de/media/direct/pdf/pospaper_96.pdf [Accessed 14th of March 2015].
- BARCA, F. (2009). *Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy. A place-based approach to meeting European Union challenges and expectations*. Brussels: European Communities.
- BARNES, B. (2001). Practice as collective action. In: Schatzki, T. R., Knorr-Cetina, K., Von Savigny, E. (Eds.). *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. Psychology Press.
- BEVIR, M. (2006). Governance. In: Bevir, M. (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of governance*. Sage Publications.
- BEVIR, M., RHODES, R. A. (2010). *The state as cultural practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- BECKER, S. O., EGGER, P. H., VON EHRLICH, M. (2010). Going NUTS: The effect of EU Structural Funds on regional performance. *Journal of Public Economics*, 94(9), 578-590.
- BOHLE, D. (2006). Neoliberal Hegemony, Transnational Capital and the Terms of the EU's Eastward Expansion. *Capital & Class*, 30(1), 57-86.
- BÖHME, K., RICHARDSON, T., DABINETT, G., JENSEN, O. B. (2004). Values in a vacuum? Towards an integrated multi-level analysis of the governance of European space. *European Planning Studies*, 12(8), 1175-88.
- BOURDIEU, P. (1990). *The logic of practice*. Stanford University Press.
- CAMPBELL, H. (2005). The Darker Side of Local Communities: Is this the Real World of Planning?. *Planning Theory and Practice*, 6(4), 517-41
- CHARMAZ, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.
- COMMITTEE ON SPATIAL DEVELOPMENT. (1999). *ESDP European Spatial Development Perspective. Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the European Union*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- DABINETT, G., RICHARDSON, T. (2005). The Europeanization of spatial strategy: Shaping regions and spatial justice through governmental ideas. *International Planning Studies*, 10(3-4), 201-18.
- DAWKINS, C. J. (2003). Regional development theory: conceptual foundations, classic works, and recent developments. *Journal of planning literature*, 18(2), 131-172.
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION. (2010). *Europe 2020. A European strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*.
- EUROPEAN UNION. (2011). *Territorial Agenda of the European Union 2020. Towards an Inclusive, Smart and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions*. Available online: Brussels, European Union. Available from: http://www.espon.eu/export/sites/default/Documents/Publications/Monitoring/TerritorialMonitoringReport/ESPON_MONITORING_REPORT.pdf [Accessed 24th of February 2015]

- EUROSTAT. (2015). *GDP at Regional Level*. Available online: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/GDP_at_regional_level
- ELCOCK. (2003). Networks, centres and peripheries: Strategic planning in a European Region. *Regional and Federal Studies*, 13(3): 44-65.
- FALUDI, A. (2010). *Cohesion, coherence, cooperation: European spatial planning coming of age?*. London: Routledge.
- FERRY, M., MCMASTER, I. (2013). Cohesion policy and the evolution of regional policy in Central and Eastern Europe. *Europe-Asia Studies*, 65(8), 1502-1528.
- FOUCAULT, M. (1991). *Discipline and Punish: the birth of a prison*. London, Penguin.
- GIDDENS, A. (1984). *The constitution of society: Outline of the theory of structuration*. University of California Press.
- GLASER, B., STRAUSS, A. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. London: Weidenfield & Nicolson.
- GOYAL, S. (2012). *Connections: an introduction to the economics of networks*. Princeton University Press.
- HAJER, M. (1993). Discourse coalitions and the institutionalization of practice: the case of acid rain in Great Britain. In: Fischer, F., Forester, J. (Eds.). *The argumentative turn in policy analysis and planning*. London: Duke University Press (pp. 43-76).
- HAMEDINGER, A., BARTIK, H., WOLFFHARDT, A. (2008). The Impact of EU Area-based Programmes on Local Governance: Towards a 'Europeanisation'? *Urban studies*, 45(13), 2669-87.
- HANNAM, K., SHELLER, M., URRY, J. (2006). Editorial: Mobilities, immobilities and moorings. *Mobilities*, 1(1), 1-22.
- HAUGHTON, G., COUNSELL, D. (2004). *Regions, spatial strategies and sustainable development*. London: Routledge.
- HEALEY, P., DE MAGALHAES, C., MADANIPOUR, A., PENDLEBURY, J. (2003). Place, identity and local politics: analysing initiatives in deliberative governance. In: Wagenaar, H., Hajer, M.A. (Eds.). *Deliberative Policy Analysis: Understanding Governance in the Network Society*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (pp. 60-87).
- HEALEY, P. (2010). *Making better places: The planning project in the twenty-first century*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- HERRSCHEL, T. (2011). Regional development, peripheralisation and marginalisation—And the role of governance. *The role of regions*, 85-102.
- HOWLETT, M. (2010). *Designing public policies: Principles and instruments*. Routledge.
- IONESCU-HEROIU, M., NEAGU, M., ȚARĂLUNGĂ, N., ORTIZ, P., PETROVICI, N., MOLDOVAN, C., PĂUNESCU, E. (2013). *Enhanced Spatial Planning as a Precondition for Sustainable Urban Development*. Available online: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/2013/12/18875200/romania-enhanced-spatial-planning-precondition-sustainable-urban-development-vol-1-2-full-report> [Accessed 22nd of July 2015].
- JESSOP, B. (2002). Governance and meta-governance in the face of complexity: On the roles of requisite variety, reflexive observation, and romantic irony in participatory Governance. In: *Participatory Governance in Multi-Level Context* (pp. 33-58). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

- KUUS, M. (2004). Europe's eastern expansion and the reinscription of otherness in East-Central Europe. *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(4), 472-489.
- KÜHN, M. (2015). Peripheralization: theoretical concepts explaining socio-spatial inequalities. *European Planning Studies*, 23(2), 367-78.
- LANG, T. (2011). Regional development issues in Central and Eastern Europe: shifting research agendas from a focus on peripheries to peripheralisation? In: Eröss, Agnes; Karacsonyi, David (Eds.). *Geography in Visegrad and Neighbour Countries*. Budapest: MTA Földrajztud Kutatóint.
- LAWS, D., REIN, M. (2003). Reframing practice. In: HAJER, M. A., WAGENAAR, H. (Eds.). *Deliberative policy analysis: understanding governance in the network society*. Cambridge University Press. 172-206.
- LAWSON, V. (2010). Reshaping economic geography? Producing spaces of inclusive development. *Economic Geography*, 86(4), 351-360.
- MARSTON, S. A., JONES, J. P., & WOODWARD, K. (2005). Human geography without scale. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 30(4), 416-432.
- MASSEY, D. (2009). Concepts of space and power in theory and in political practice. *Documents d'anàlisi geogràfica*, (55), 15-26.
- MAJONE, G. (2014). *Rethinking the Union of Europe Post-crisis: Has Integration Gone Too Far?*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- MAYNTZ, R. (1999). New Challenges for Governance Theory, *Beleid & Maatschappij* 26(1): 2-13.
- MEYER, D., LACKENBAUER, J. (2005). EU Cohesion Policy and the Equity-Efficiency Trade-Off: Adding Dynamics to Martin's Model. In: 45th Congress of the European Regional Science Association (pp. 23-27).
- MINISTERUL FONDURILOR EUROPENE. (2015). *Stadiul absorbției Fondurilor Structurale și de Coeziune pe fiecare Program Operațional: 30 iunie 2015*. Available online: http://www.fonduri-ue.ro/res/filepicker_users/cd25a597fd-62/rezultate/std_abs/Raportare_PO_30.iunie.2015.pdf [Accessed 7th of July, 2015].
- NEWMAN, J. (2005). *Remaking governance: peoples, politics and the public sphere*. Bristol: Policy Press.
- ORTNER, S. B. (1984). Theory in Anthropology since the Sixties. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 126-166.
- PAASI, A. (2010). Regions are social constructs, but who or what 'constructs' them? Agency in question. *Environment and Planning A*, 42(10), 2296-2301.
- PAASI, A. (2013). Regional planning and the mobilization of 'regional identity': from bounded spaces to relational complexity. *Regional Studies*, 47(8), 1206-1219.
- PETRAKOS, G. (2012). Integration, spatial dynamics and regional policy dilemmas in the European Union. *Discussion Paper Series*, 18(2): 27-40.
- PIKE, A., RODRÍGUEZ-POSE, A., & TOMANEY, J. (2007). What kind of local and regional development and for whom?. *Regional studies*, 41(9), 1253-1269.
- RABINOW, P. (1991). *The Foucault Reader*. London: Penguin.
- RADELLI, C. (2003). The Europeanisation of Public Policy. In: FEATHERSTONE, K., RADELLI, C. (Eds.). *The Politics of Europeanisation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press (pp. 23-27).

- REIN, M. (1983). Value-Critical Policy Analysis. In: Callahan, D. and B. Jennings (Eds.). *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis*. New York: Plenum Press, pp. 83–112.
- RHODES, R.A.W. (2000) ‘Conclusion: transforming British government – the governance narrative’, in Rhodes, R.A.W. (Ed.). *Transforming British government, vol 1: Changing institutions*. Basingstoke: Macmillan, pp 254–66.
- SCHATZKI, T. R., KNORR-CETINA, K., & VON SAVIGNY, E. (2001). *The practice turn in contemporary theory*. Psychology Press.
- SCHÖPFLIN, G. (1989). Central Europe: Definitions Old and New. In: Schöpflin, G., Wood, N. In *Search of Central Europe*. Cambridge: Polity.
- SEMIAN, M., & CHROMÝ, P. (2014). Regional identity as a driver or a barrier in the process of regional development: A comparison of selected European experience. *Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift-Norwegian Journal of Geography*, 68(5), 263-270.
- SMITH, N. (1984). *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space at the Wayback Machine*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- SØRENSEN, E., & TORFING, J. (2007). *Theories of democratic network governance*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- STAATMINISTERIUM FÜR WIRTSCHAFT ARBEIT UND VEERKHER. (2014). *Operationelles Programm des Freistaates Sachsen für den Europäischen Fonds für regionale Entwicklung (EFRE) in der Förderperiode 2014-2020*. Available online: http://www.strukturfonds.sachsen.de/download/OP_EFRE_Sachsen_2014-2020.pdf [Accessed 23rd of May 2015].
- THATCHER, M. (2006). European Regulation. In: Richardson, J. (Ed.). *European Union: power and policy-making*. London: Routledge.
- TULLY, J. (2008). *Public Philosophy in a New Key. Volume 1: Democracy and Civic Freedom*. Cambridge University Press.
- VAN HULST, M., & YANOW, D. (2014). From Policy “Frames” to “Framing” Theorizing a More Dynamic, Political Approach. *The American Review of Public Administration*, 0275074014533142.
- WALLERSTEIN, I. (1974). The rise and future demise of the world capitalist system: concepts for comparative analysis. *Comparative studies in society and history*, 16(04), 387-415.
- WALTERS, W. (2012). *Governmentality: critical encounters (Vol. 3)*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- WARREN, M. E. (2009). Governance-driven democratization. *Critical policy studies*, 3(1), 3-13.
- WAGENAAR, H., COOK, S.D.N. (2003). Understanding policy practices: action, dialectic and deliberation in policy analysis. In: Hajer, M. A., Wagenaar, H. (Eds.). *Deliberative policy analysis: understanding governance in the network society*. Cambridge University Press.
- WAGENAAR, H. (2014). *Meaning in action: interpretation and dialogue in policy analysis*. London: M.E. Sharpe.
- WATERHOUT, B., OTHENGRAFEN, F., SYKES, O. (2013). Neo-liberalization processes and spatial planning in France, Germany, and the Netherlands: An exploration. *Planning Practice & Research*, 28(1), 141-59.
- WECK, S., BEISSWENGER, S. (2014). Coping with Peripheralization: Governance Response in Two German Small Cities. *European Planning Studies*, 22(10), 2156-71.

- WEISS, R. S. (1994). *Learning From Strangers: The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. New York: The Free Press.
- WHILE, A., GIBBS, D., JONAS, A. E. (2013). The competition state, city-regions, and the territorial politics of growth facilitation. *Environment and Planning A*, 45(10), 2379-98.
- WILLIAMS, G., METH, P., & WILLIS, K. (2014). *Geographies of developing areas: the Global South in a changing world*. Routledge.
- WORLD DEVELOPMENT REPORT 2009. (2009). *Reshaping Economic Geography*. World Bank.
- ZACHA, J., KOMORNICKI, T., BÖHME, K., ŚWIĄTEK, D., ŻUBER, P. (2014). Territorial keys for bringing closer the territorial agenda of the EU and Europe 2020. *European Planning Studies*, 22(2), 246-267.