

ROMAN SZUL : RÉGION, RÉGIONALISME ET UNION EUROPÉENNE.
LA RÉGIONALISATION EN POLOGNE
RÉSUMÉ

L'adhésion à l'UE a modifié la politique régionale et la régionalisation en Pologne. La relation entre le régionalisme national et l'Union européenne est en effet déterminée par quatre facteurs. Le premier est la réduction du rôle traditionnel de l'État nation après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale et la redéfinition des relations entre les États, avec priorité à l'intégration européenne et au régionalisme. Le second est l'effet des fonds de développement régional de l'UE, encourageant la création de régions dans les nouveaux États membres de l'Europe centrale et orientale. Le troisième est la politique de restrictions imposée récemment par l'UE à certains pays (et notamment aussi à l'Espagne), suscitant une radicalisation des mouvements régionalistes (en Catalogne par exemple). Le quatrième est l'existence même de l'UE et la nécessité des négociations européennes, ce qui inhibe les mouvements régionalistes et nationalistes souhaitant se séparer d'un État membre européen tout en restant membre de l'UE.

La relation entre régionalisme et Union européenne peut être qualifiée comme « modérément symbiotique ». Après la Deuxième Guerre mondiale, l'affaiblissement du nationalisme en Europe occidentale a stimulé l'intégration européenne et le rôle du régionalisme. Comme la décentralisation a un effet positif sur le développement économique, l'UE a favorisé la décentralisation et la régionalisation dans les États membres. Les pays d'Europe centrale et orientale ayant adhéré à l'UE en 2004, 2007 et 2013 devaient également suivre cette ligne. La Pologne a donc mis en place une grande réforme territoriale. Néanmoins, les subventions aux régions sont limitées et les régions ne participent guère aux décisions européennes tandis que l'Union européenne s'oppose clairement au régionalisme radical, conduisant au séparatisme.

ILONA PÁL KOVÁCS

THE RISE AND FALL OF REGIONALISM IN HUNGARY

INTRODUCTION

The Hungarian public governance has been a centralized one throughout the 1000 years of its history. This fact appears especially in the role of the meso-level governments. The change in the political system in 1990 maybe for the first time gave Hungary a chance to shape a decentralised governance system. However, the domestic *set* of conditions was not the only factor to determine the government model taking shape in the last decades at every level. Hungary had to make serious efforts to adjust its governance system to the standards formulated by the European Union. The almost permanent reforms of the regional level were mainly justified by the adaptation to the EU cohesion policy. The last few years have brought completely new, centralizing ambitions which ended the former decentralisation period and had a crucial impact also on the fate of territorial governance.

THE HISTORY OF MESO-LEVEL GOVERNANCE OF HUNGARY

The foundations of the Hungarian state, as a guarantee to its belonging to Europe, were laid down by our first king, Stephen, who drew the whole of the country under his reign by expanding lands owned by the King and building out royal counties around the castles. We can thus say that the state power is just as old as the counties are. The head of the county was the governor of the castle or the governor of the county (called "comes"), who governed the domain and the people (Pálné, 2001).

By the early 13th century, the disintegration of the system of royal counties started as a consequence of donating the royal domains to noblemen. The coun-

ties increasingly became the framework for the participation of the nobility in public life. A royal certificate from the year of 1232 gave self-government rights to the county noblemen, and by the end of the century the so-called noblemen's counties became the political self-governments, headed by the lord lieutenant appointed by the king. The organisation of counties gradually expanded in a so-called deconcentrated administrative system subordinated to the king and smaller administrative units, the districts gradually strengthened, too.

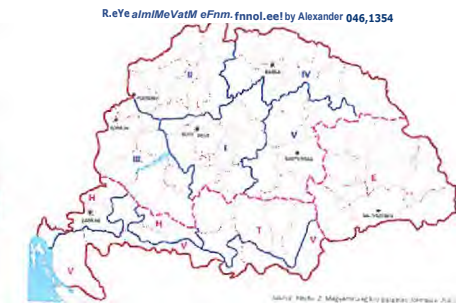
Joseph II, the Habsburg king took overt measures against the Hungarian independence when he eliminated the autonomy of the noblemen's counties and also changed their borders in 1784. In the name of modernisation, Hungary was divided into ten, Transylvania into three districts, with royal lord lieutenants with practically unlimited power. After the death of Joseph II, the system of the districts ceased to exist and the self-governments of the noblemen were restored as a symbol of Hungarian independence.

In the so-called Reform Age before the revolution in 1848, the counties were subject to considerable debates. Many argued that the role of the counties was important as a guarantee of national independence and of the liberty of the settlements. Others considered the counties as the biggest obstacle in the way of a bourgeois transformation and a modern, centralised public administration.

The revolutionary legislation in 1848 regarded the county organs as bastions of constitutionality, but they intended to democratise the feudal institution into a system based on the representation of the people. Finally there was no time to adopt the act because of the events of the war of independence. The arbitrary measures taken after the war of independence were much like the reform attempts by Joseph II. Hungary was divided into five districts, with complete eradication of the autonomy of the counties. The counties were led by lord lieutenants, and the districts by administrative chiefs.

The Habsburg-Hungarian Compromise in 1867 opened the way for the consolidation of public administration. Acts on the counties and municipalities were created and regional administration was fitted into the integrity of state control. This was the period when the establishment of the so-called deconcentrated public administration took a strong impetus, subordinate to relevant certain ministries. In the Horthy era following the civil democratic revolution

of 1918 and the council republic of 1919, regional administration was built on two pillars: local governments and the special branches of state administration. In this period, centralising tendencies became more and more dominant. The territory and division of the counties were seriously affected by the Trianon Peace Treaty closing World War I. Out of the 63 counties only 33 remained in Hungary, and among them only 10 untouched, in the original shape. In 1923 the so-called 'broken counties (some of which were now beyond the state borders after the peace treaty) were integrated, setting the number of the counties at 25 (Figures 1,2,3, Hajdú, 2005). County organs were partly elected and partly delegated. The counties were led by lord lieutenants, appointed by the head of state, who were given a more and more significant political role. A strong hierarchy was formed between the various government actors and levels. The county self-governments were inspected by the lieutenant governors, the villages and towns by the district administrators. Between the two world wars territorial governance was taken over by the penetrating deconcentrated administration directly subordinated to the central power.



R Figure 1

T Figure 2

E Figure 3

On the whole, the self-government sector gradually weakened as opposed to the deconcentrated state administration. Another special feature of the historical development of spatial administration in Hungary is that it existed under foreign oppression for centuries, it followed foreign patterns, and modernisation in the form of regionalisation was often blocked by the fact that a foreign ruler wanted to introduce it. Paradoxically, this feature of state organisation continued after World War II when the Soviet council model of regional administration was introduced. In 1950 the so-called Council Act practically eliminated the rights of the independent local governments in regional decision making and created a hierarchical territorial governance system. The power logic of the model is clearly reflected by the definition of the council system, claimed by the administrative ideologists of the communist party: "local councils are not the organs of local power but local organs of [state] power" (Beér, 1951). In this system, the key decision-makers were the county councils that had to assert central and local interests at the same time. The counties had direct personal influence on local policy and they were responsible for the allocation of development resources to municipalities according to their own priorities and likings. The borders of the counties changed in 1949 and their number has been 19 without any change since then.

It can be argued that the counties have remained dominant units of the Hungarian state for a thousand years, but their content, borders and numbers have continuously changed. In certain periods they were clearly the frameworks of decentralisation and the opposition to central, and sometimes foreign oppressive, power. At the same time, the counties were from the very beginning the targets and means of centralisation as well. This is the main explanation for the painful struggle about the decision about the meso level after the political changes.

THE POLITICAL CHANGEOVER AS A CHANCE FOR REGIONAL DECENTRALIZATION

The political changeover led to a fundamental transformation not only in the model but also in the territorial structure. The Act on Local Governments, enacted in 1990, brought about a completely new situation in the spatial distribution of power. Instead of the former counties municipalities became the key elements of the local government system. Freedom and independence from central government were the focal point and value of the Hungarian model. The legislators of the Hungarian local government model made conscious efforts to eliminate all compulsory and hierarchic aspects. This ambition put an end to the centuries-long dominance of the counties. Referring to democracy and autonomy, the 1600-some former local councils were replaced by more than three thousand municipalities. Due to the fragmentation and the lack of willingness to associate, the system became more expensive and in many cases operates with very low levels of efficiency and quality. The other structural change was the almost total elimination of the county's power. The lack of competencies and resources went together with the weak political legitimacy of county assemblies due to the indirect model of their election. Using this power vacuum the central government and the ministries in particular established their own "bridge-head" positions at meso-level. The increasing direct influence of the central government on the territorial level contradicted the original philosophy of letting local and regional issues be controlled by the elected self-governments.

It can be stated that the Act on Local Governments has played an extremely important part in the construction of the Hungarian democratic state structure. Local communities were given a wide scope of competencies and autonomy and therefore they have become important schools of democratic political learning. However, the structure of the local government model has not proved to be suitable and sustainable for the consequent decentralization of governance system. Weakening of the elected county governments has led to a massive increase in the influence of the central government. Correction of the original model has proved to be difficult.

The Act was amended in 1994, but the reinforcement of the county governments did not take place, primarily because of the resistance of the municipalities, especially of cities of county rank and the lack of consensus among the political elite. The next decades were spent by repeated reform attempts to rescale the territorial administration motivated rather by external EU pressure than by internal recognition of the need for stronger meso-level government. Although the European Union in general considers public administration as a national affair, on the other side it has established a fairly influential regulation for using the Structural Funds. The principles of subsidiarity and partnership of EU cohesion policy have contributed to the emerging or strengthening of the regions and made them vital factors in the multilevel governance, however not with the same consequences in Eastern Europe (Bache et al. 2011). Behind the slogan of regionalism, however, varied intentions, values and even concepts of geographical configurations are detected.

The Act on Spatial Development in 1996 aimed to adapt to European regionalism did not result in a positive turn concerning the positions of the counties. A great dilemma was whether the approximately 160 micro-regional units (NUTS4), the 19 counties (NUTS3) or the seven macro-regional units (NUTS2) should be the main action place of regional policy (Figure 4). The legislator decided to establish special institutions (so-called development councils) at all three territorial tiers. This conglomeration of development councils contributed to the fragmentation of development resources, the competition among the tiers, and conflicts evolving due to a lack of clear division of labour. What is most important, the real 'European macro (NUTS2) regions could not become central actors in regional policy and also eroded the position of the 19 county self-governments. The parallel institutional structures and the jungle of competing geographical (regional, county and micro-regional) units did not result in strengthening the meso-level as a whole.



Figure 4

2002 meant a new turn in the position of county governments, when the new government announced a radical programme of regionalisation, that is, the election of regional governments from 2006. The ambitious government programme was not realised, and although some drafts were developed, the process did not reach the political decision-making phase. The government re-elected in 2006 made attempts again at a comprehensive reform of the Constitution and the Local Government Act, but it failed to gain the requisite support by two thirds in parliament. After the unsuccessful reform package, a dominant trend of 'regional centralisation' appeared. By the end of 2006, the government prescribed regional reorganisation of the deconcentrated public administrative organs in the counties. The merger of county organisations on a regional scale meant only a change of name plates without a real change in functioning. A special charm of 'regional integration' was the designation of the seats of regional public administrative organs. The cities (county seats) aspiring at housing the headquarters of regionalised deconcentrated organisations competed with each other and could achieve that the official seats of different types of

organisations were spread in various towns of their regions. This phenomenon is just one of the evidences that regions were artificial units, so it was the new boundaries and seats that were in the focus of political debate rather than the power consequences.

The regionalisation of regional policy was also laden with contradictions. Although the NUTS2 regions became the most influential units having professional development agencies with skilled staff and some experience in partnership cooperation, with EU accession the entire institutional system of national development policy lost its positions, including the regional level. The Hungarian management system of EU Structural Funds set up in 2004 became strongly centralised. Each operational programme, even the so-called regional operational programme was managed by the National Development Agency. The regional development councils and agencies were not granted decision-making positions and were only endowed with a certain intermediary and advisory role. Arguments in favour of centralised management have undoubtedly existed, the European Commission having no trust in regional institutional capacities did not insist on regionalised management. It is still quite contradictory that the process of regionalisation, officially supported by both the EU and the national government, was halted after 2004. Strong centralisation and the marginalisation of regional stakeholders in decision-making hardly augmented the number of advocates for regional reform. Even the second programming period starting in 2007 did not bring any changes and the regions remained very weak actors in the EU cohesion policy, and the strong power of the centre remained. The story leads us to the conclusion that the territorial reform cannot and should not be exclusively handled as a part of the European adaptation process and made subordinate to the needs of regional policy.

RETURN TO THE LEGACY OF CENTRALISATION

A new period began with the ambitions of the right-wing government gaining power in 2010 in overall terms and also in relation to territorial public administration. Overtly defying the previous neo-liberal civil philosophy, Hungary

can currently witness the centralising and nationalising efforts under the banner of the 'good' (neo-Weberian) state. No doubt, the government had to do something with this geographically confused, financially and professionally weakening territorial governance in order to cope with the emerging economic crisis. The new government passed a new Constitution, as a symbol of the beginning of a new political era, claiming that the original (neoliberal and decentralised) model created 20 years ago was only temporary and unsuccessful in coping with the problems and providing long term vision for the country. The new Constitution drafted a picture of a much stronger, 'illiberal' state. It is no miracle that the new law on local governments adopted in 2011 moved also towards weaker and centrally more controlled model of local government system. The position and status of self-governments in a strong and centralised state underwent serious modification. In the meantime, the government refrained from regionalisation in structural aspects with the stabilisation of the old counties as the meso-level of governance. The NUTS2 regions remained only statistical units having no any institutions and tasks. It is important to emphasise that the county has survived only on a geographical scale and not as elected county self-government since it has lost almost all competences, assets and power.

CONCLUSIONS

This is the end of 20 years long history of decentralisation in Hungary, which was mostly identical with the failed experiment of making the meso level a strong self-government. Without a strong meso tier, the governance system tends to be centralized having no counterbalance against the ever centralizing efforts of the national governments. This story outlined above leads to the conclusion that the territorial reform cannot and should not be exclusively handled as a part of the European adaptation process and made subordinate to the needs of regional policy. Adaptation to the European Union is thus one, but not the only and not even the most stable basis for regionalization. The main problem is that in the spirit of regionalism Hungary was not able to decentralise its

public power system. The reason is that the driving forces of regionalisation were only external and the domestic political commitment to decentralize power is missing.

REFERENCES

- Bache, J.-Andreou, G.-Atanasova, G.-Tmosic, D. (2011): Europeanization and multi-level governance in South East Europe: The domestic impact of EU cohesion policy and pre-accession aid = *Journal of European Public Policy* 18/1: 122-141.
- Beér, J. (1951): *Helyi tanácsaink államhatalmi jellege* (The public character of the local soviets) = *Állam és Igazgatás*. 11-12. 593-606.
- Hajdú, Z. (2005): *Magyarország közigazgatási földrajza* (Geography of Hungarian public administration). Dialog Campus, Budapest-Pécs
- Pál Kovács, I. (2001). *Regional Development and Governance in Hungary*. Discussion Papers 35. CRS HAS, Pécs

~

SUMMARY

Hungary has been a centralized country throughout 1000 years of its history. 1990 was the first time Hungary had a chance to shape a decentralised system while making serious efforts to adjust it to the standards of the European Union and its "cohesion policy": The parallel institutional structures and the jungle of competing geographical and administrative (regional, county and micro-regional) units did not allow the strengthening of the meso-level as a whole. By the end of 2006, the government prescribed regional reorganisation of the deconcentrated public administration organs in the counties. The merger of county organisations on a regional scale did not mean a real change in the functioning. The regions were artificial units, so the new boundaries and seats

were rather in the focus of political debate. The regionalisation of regional policy was laden with contradictions. Although the NUTS2 regions became the most influential units having professional development agencies with skilled staff, the entire institutional system of national development policy lost its positions, including the regional level. The new government passed a new constitution, as a symbol of the beginning of a new political era, claiming that the original (neoliberal and decentralised) model created 20 years ago was unsuccessful in coping with the problems and in providing a long term vision for the country. The government refrained from regionalisation stabilizing the old counties as the meso-level of governance. The NUTS2 regions remained only statistical units without any tasks. Here ended 20 years of decentralisation.

This shows that territorial reforms cannot and should not be exclusively handled as a part of the European adaptation process and made subordinate to the needs of regional policy. Adaptation to the European Union is not a stable basis for regionalization. The main problem is that Hungary was not able to decentralise its public power system because the driving forces of regionalisation were only external without domestic political commitment to decentralize power.

PÁLNÉ KOVÁCS ILONA: A RÉGIÓKTÜNDÖKLÉSE ÉS BUKÁSA MAGYARORSZÁGON (UGYANAZOK A GYÖKEREK) ÖSSZEFOGLALÁS

Magyarország ezer éves történelme során centralizált állam volt. A rendszerváltás után, 1990-ben nyílt először lehetőség arra, hogy az Európai Unió normáihoz igazodás és a kohéziós politikának megfelelés jegyében decentralizált rendszer épüljön ki. A párhuzamos intézményi struktúrák és az egymással versengő földrajzi és közigazgatási egységek (régiók, megyék, kistérségek) valószínűleg dzsungele alakult ki, ami nem engedett teret a középszint megerősítéséhez. 2006 végére a kormány a dekoncentrált megyei szintű közigazgatási szerveket regionális alapon szervezte át. A megyei szervek regionális fűzőja azonban nem járt a működés átalakításával. A régiók mesterségesen létrehozott

egységek voltak; az új határok és székhelyek folyamatos politikai viták tárgyát képezték. A regionális politika regionalizációja ellentmondásokkal volt terhes. Bár a NUTS2 régiók — jól képzett személyzettel működő professzionális fejlesztési ügynökségeik révén — a legbefolyásosabb egységekként emelkedtek ki, a nemzeti fejlesztési politika egész intézményrendszere pozíciót veszített, többek között regionális szinten is. Az új kormány az új politikai korszak nyitányát is jelképező új alkotmányt fogadott el, és kijelentette, hogy a 20 évvel ezelőtt létrehozott eredeti (neoliberális decentralizált) modell nem volt képes kezelni a problémákat és nem tudott hosszú távú jövőképet mutatni az országnak. A kormány a regionalizáció helyett a régi megyéket stabilizálta a kormányzás közép-szintjeként. A NUTS2 régiók csupán kiüresedett statisztikai egységekként léteznek feladatok nélkül. Véget ért a 20 éves decentralizáció.

Míndez világosan jelzi, hogy a területi reformokat nem lehet és nem is szabad kizárólag az európai integrációs folyamat részeként, a regionális politikának alávetve kezelni. Az Európai Unióhoz való alkalmazkodás nem teremt szilárd alapot a regionális fejlődéshez. Magyarország fő problémája, hogy nem sikerült decentralizálnia az államhatalmi rendszert, mert a regionalizációt csupán külső hajtóerők mozgatták, a belpolitika nem köteleződött el a hatalom decentralizációja mellett.

ILONA PAL KOVÁCS: AUFSTIEG UND FALL DER REGIONEN UNGARNS - IDENTISCHE WURZELN ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ungarn war während seiner tausendjährigen Geschichte ein zentralisierter Staat. Erst nach der Wende, im Jahre 1990 ergab sich die Möglichkeit, im Rahmen der Anpassung an die Normen der Europäischen Union and der Befolgung der Auflagen der Kohäsionspolitik ein dezentralisiertes System aufzubauen. Es entstand ein wahrer Dschungel aus institutionellen Parallelstrukturen and miteinander konkurrierenden geografischen and Verwaltungseinheiten (Regionen, Landbezirke, Kleinregionen), der einer Stärkung der mittleren Ebene keinen Raum ließ. Bis Ende 2006 hat die Regierung die de-

zentralisierten Verwaltungsbehörden der Landbezirksebene auf regionaler Basis neu organisiert. Mit der regionalen Fusion der Landbezirksbehörden ging aber keine funktionelle Umstrukturierung einher. Die Regionen waren künstlich aufgestellte Einheiten; die neuen Grenzen and Verwaltungssitze führten zu stündigen politischen Diskussionen. Die Regionalisierung der Regionalpolitik war von Widersprüchen belastet. Obwohl sich die NUTS2-Regionen — auf Grund ihrer mit gut ausgebildetem Personal arbeitenden professionellen Entwicklungsagenturen — als die einflussreichsten Einheiten hervortaten, wurde die Position des gesamten institutionellen Systems der nationalen Entwicklungspolitik unter anderem auch auf regionaler Ebene geschwächt. Die neue Regierung verabschiedete — auch als Symbol für den Auftakt in eine neue politische Ära — eine neue Verfassung and erklärte, dass das 20 Jahre zuvor eingeführte ursprüngliche (neoliberal and dezentralisiert ausgerichtete) Modell die Probleme nicht zu lösen vermochte and dem Land keine langfristige Zukunftsvision bieten konnte. An Stelle der Regionalisierung stabilisierte die Regierung die alten Landbezirke als die mittlere Ebene des Regierens. Die NUTS2-Regionen existieren lediglich als ausgehöhlte statistische Einheiten, ohne Aufgaben. Die 20jährige Geschichte der Dezentralisierung ging zu Ende.

All dies zeigt deutlich, dass territoriale Reformen nicht ausschließlich als Teil des europäischen Integrationsprozesses, der regionalen Politik unterstellt behandelt werden können bzw. dürfen. Die Anpassung an die Europäische Union schafft keine stabile Grundlage für die regionale Entwicklung. Das Hauptproblem Ungarns besteht darin, dass es nicht gelungen ist, das System der Organe der Staatsmacht zu dezentralisieren, da die Regionalisierung nur von äußeren Kräften vorangetrieben wurde, die Innenpolitik hat sich der Dezentralisierung der Macht nicht verschrieben.

**ILONA PÁL KOVÁCS : GRANDEUR ET DECADENCE DES REGIONS EN HONGRIE.
RÉSUMÉ**

La Hongrie a pendant toute son histoire a été un État centralisé. Après le changement de régime en 1990, elle a pu construire un système décentralisé conforme aux normes de l'Union européenne et à sa politique de cohésion. Un vrai labyrinthe de structures institutionnelles a été mis en place avec des unités géographiques et administratives concurrentes (régions, départements, micro-régions), ce qui a empêché le renforcement du niveau intermédiaire. Fin 2006, le gouvernement a réorganisé les unités administratives déconcentrées du niveau départemental sur une base régionale, mais ceci n'a pas modifié le fonctionnement les régions sont restées des unités artificielles. La régionalisation a été pleine de contradictions. Bien que les régions NUTS2 aient émergé — avec leurs agences de développement professionnelles et un personnel bien formé — comme les unités les plus importantes, l'ensemble du système institutionnel de la politique de développement national a perdu son importance, au niveau régional également. Le nouveau gouvernement a adopté une nouvelle constitution symbolisant l'avènement d'une nouvelle ère politique, déclarant le modèle (néolibéral et décentralisé) créé il y a vingt ans incapable de gérer les problèmes. Face à la régionalisation, le gouvernement a confirmé les anciens Comitats en tant que niveau intermédiaire de l'administration. Les régions NUTS2 ne sont plus que des unités statistiques sans contenu. Les vingt années de décentralisation sont terminées. Ceci montre bien que les réformes territoriales ne peuvent et ne doivent pas être traitées uniquement comme partie du processus de l'intégration européenne, soumises à la politique régionale. La conformité à l'Union européenne ne crée pas une base solide au développement régional. Le problème de la Hongrie est que, sans motivation intérieure, elle n'a pas réussi à décentraliser le pouvoir de l'État.

**PÉLDÁK A HATÁRON ÁTNYÚLÓ REGIONÁLIS
EGYÜTTMŰKÖDÉSRE****EXAMPLES OF TRANSBORDER REGIONAL
COOPERATION****EINIGE BEISPIELE VON GRENZÜBERGREIFENDER
REGIONALER ZUSAMMENARBEIT****QUELQUES EXEMPLES DE COOPERATION
RÉGIONALE TRANSFRONTALIÈRE**