

and geographic scale in the centre of understanding infrastructures. In other words, the aim of the paper is to illustrate how sociomaterial infrastructures are integral to the spatial organisation of socioeconomic life. To substantiate this claim, I use the long-term historical transformation of electricity provision in Hungary as an empirical case study.

The history of providing electricity in Hungary is profoundly connected to spatial questions. How did the first (electric) public lighting schemes reorganise urban (and later rural) spaces from the late 19th century on? How was a national electricity network formed together with the socialist state after WW2? How did different electricity systems facilitate spatial integration as well as differentiation, both on the macro and micro levels, through subtle patterns of access, pricing, and organisation? How is the electricity system stretched currently in the wake of both Europeanisation and decentralisation?

All in all, electricity provision in Hungary offers an intriguing case study of the various ways of how historical changes in material infrastructure are connected to spatial transformations, from household levels to supranational networks. In return, the empirical case informs our conceptual thinking of how (social) space and materiality are intertwined.

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## **THE CONCEPT OF AUTOPOIETIC CLOSED SYSTEMS AND THE FUNCTIONING OF THE SPACES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Space is not an autonomous container in which things merely exist, but the concrete manifestation and order of co-existing things. Our choices and actions are not determined by an absolute space or an autonomous superstructure, but by those existing or imagined structures which underlie our ideas and discourses. Each idea (phenomenon, representation) about space is a social construct.

The openness of space implies that relations (configurations, linkages) can be created in a variety of ways and are subject to constant change. Space as a condition of possibility is open, while concrete spatial units are closed entities. The closure of space is explained by the cohesion, interrelatedness and cooperation between its components. Autopoietic systems establish a delicate balance between closure and structural coupling that ensures their self-construction and self-development. Endogenous self-referential spatial and territorial units are self-constructed entities with their own „genetic structure” and logic defining their functioning and guaranteeing their distinction from the environment. Their operation, mainly targeting dynamic self-preservation and self-development is organised in function of the desirable outcome which is also influenced by their capacity to mobilise territorial capital. Self-referential autonomous functioning is a necessary condition for the survival of bottom-up constructed „natural” spatial units.

How can we describe the functioning of the European Union in light of the concept of autopoietic closed spaces? The EU is a federation of relatively autonomous (sovereign, autopoietic, resilient) states whose main interest lies in promoting their proper development. The Eastern enlargement of 2004 was instrumental in serving the interests of the Fifteen. From their perspective, the accession of new members contributed to an enhanced reproduction of the existing system, territorial expansion (“empire building”), without impacting the essence of the Union or their self-identity. The communication of Brussels institutions testifies of this neo-colonising perspective. Since the

„developed West” „redrew the map”, it has assisted Eastern member states on their road towards Europeanisation and democratization, through transferring western institutions and interfering into their political and economic affairs. The core area aims to integrate new member states by relegating them to a peripheral position. The current conflicts partially revolve around the diverging ideas of some new member states which regard „reunification” as the integration of Central and Eastern European member states among the European Union’s key economic, political and cultural constituents also seeking to ameliorate their peripheral position. Significant economic and cultural disparities characterising EU member states pose significant obstacles to deepening integration. The less developed member states strive to use Cohesion Policy funding to promote their functioning and development based on their own self-referential logic. In line with their needs and objectives, they filter and adapt EU expectations in ways that nonetheless remain compatible with the fundamental essence of the EU.

## **CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATIONS IN V4 COUNTRIES**

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The aim of my presentation is to examine cross-border co-operations in the Visegrad Countries, their institutional forms and legal frameworks. My paper focuses on the legal conditions of cross-border relations, I analyse the regulatory-administrative frameworks that impede cooperation and the legal-administrative models of multi-level cross-border governance as well. It has relevance on both international and European levels and gained even more importance in recent years in both EU policies and regional research. Through the permeability of the Union’s internal borders they also create new spatial structures and new forms of governance across the existing administrative borders in accordance with subsidiarity and multi-level governance policies.

In the cohesion policy of the European Union horizontal dimension is getting more and more emphasis. The macro-regional co-operations will react to the interests and challenges of the Member States that the European Union will only ensure a complementary, supporting and coordinating role.

My presentation analyses the Central-European regional Visegrád Cooperation created a new form of co-operation both in the political, economic and cultural spheres in order to focus on transition to democracy, to promote the modern market economy and to implement the Euro-Atlantic integration. Later, the four countries reaffirmed their determination to continue mutual co-operation aimed at achieving a strong, stable, and democratic Europe. In addition, they intended to form a common position on a global level concerning the issue of peace and sustainable development. The V4 Group’s renewed co-operation is thus intended to safeguard their common historical and economic interests; i.e. that the V4 group will be able to effectively represent the interests of Central Europe in the future and the four countries together can constructively contribute to the success of the European Union. By now all V4 countries have reached the Council of the European Union's rotating presidency, and no one can question the added value of its members and the community in this region of Europe. And even though the success of our region is our primary common interest, this can only be reached by maintaining good relations with the Western European Member States.

In this respect, the aim of my presentation is to reveal the legal barriers blocking everyday life which barriers significantly restrict cross-border development organisations’ capacity to act. First, the goal is not only to process these but also to formulate proposals to a comforting settlement of questions of sovereignty and competences. Second, the institutionalisation level of the co-operations will be