



EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS AND A “EUROPE OF THE REGIONS”

A comparative study of the Committee of the Regions and the Institute of the
Regions of Europe, 2004-2018



Master Thesis

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Abbreviations

CoR Committee of the Regions / European Committee of the Regions

EU European Union

IRE Institute of the Regions of Europe

MEP Member of Parliament

Abstract

Powerful subnational entities are not a new invention; there is a historical pattern that can be discovered in the rise and fall of regions. The concept of a “Europe of the Regions” appeared in the late 1980s to refer to a possible new wave of regionalism. Nowadays, regions are on the rise again, aided by, among others, various European institutions. However, there are few timely relevant and analytical studies that compare the contribution of various institutions to the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”. This gap leads to the research question: *How do the Committee of the Regions and the Institute of the Regions of Europe compare in contributing to a “Europe of the Regions”?* The thesis utilises a wide range of secondary and primary sources including semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the case study institutions and relies on the comparative-historical methodology of the causal narrative. Besides, the study applies the conceptual framework of Max Weber’s bureaucracy theory to compare the efficiency of the institutions. The thesis can deduce that a “Europe of the Regions” has not been realised; however, it gave room to the idea of a “Europe with the Regions” and considerable progress has been made in the field of regionalism to which the examined institutions contributed substantially. The Committee of the Regions has been most active in the European legislative field to be the voice of regions and other subnational authorities in the European legislation-making process. Meanwhile, the Institute of the Regions of Europe is active on a smaller scale and mainly supports practical projects in Eastern and Southeast Europe (also outside of the EU) with no political influence. In line with current findings but contrary to Weber’s theory, the latter, less bureaucratic institute can be considered more efficient in achieving its own goals. The paper presents significant contribution in the field of European regional studies and the workings of European institutions. It also hopes to inspire further research concerning the effect of European organisations on regional mobilisation as well as the efficiency of these organisations.

Key words: regions, Europe of the Regions, regionalism, institutions, Committee of the Regions, Institute of a Europe of the Regions

Introduction

Despite popular belief about the recent nature of the important (and rising) role of regions in Europe, subnational entities were functional geographical and governing units well before nation states were even established. There are countless examples of this; Italy only became a unified country in the 1860s and had consisted of countless city-states, independent republics and principalities that represented considerable regional power.¹ Another case is Spain, where the state of Catalonia is now using its historical past as an influential region to campaign for independence.² Nowadays, regions are on the rise again: there are various regional and cohesion policies, interregional cooperation projects and numerous other ways to aid regions. It is, therefore, clear that powerful subnational entities are not a new invention; there is a historical pattern that can be discovered in the rise and fall of regions.

Before engaging more with the various regional developments in Europe, it is important to note that researchers differentiate between the concepts of regionalism and regionalisation; while the former is considered a top-down process, the latter is seen as a bottom-up initiative.³ The difference noted by Karolina Klecha-Tylec is not necessarily interpreted the same way by all academics; scholars like Stephan Haggard view regionalism as a political process and regionalisation as an economic one.⁴ Despite the lack of unambiguity surrounding the definitions of regionalism and regionalisation, it is unequivocal that both trends have been present in Europe's recent history.

In the past few decades, European countries and institutions paid considerable attention to regions. As early as 1974, the European Commission announced the establishment of the European Regional Development Fund to “finance the growth of its most backward areas”,⁵ referring to a form of economic support directed towards the poorer regions of the then European Economic Community. Over the years, the EU's regional policy has essentially been

¹ New World Encyclopedia (2014): Italian unification. Available online at http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Italian_unification, updated on 2/20/2018, checked on 2/20/2018.

² Mortimer, Caroline (2017): Catalan crisis. Why does Catalonia want independence? Do the majority really support it? Independent. London. Available online at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/catalan-crisis-why-does-catalonia-want-independence-do-people-really-support-it-spain-latest-a8025836.html>, updated on 11/6/2017, checked on 2/20/2018.

³ Klecha-Tylec, Karolina (2017): Regionalism and Regionalisation. A Theoretical Approach. In Karolina Klecha-Tylec (Ed.): The theoretical and practical dimensions of regionalism in east Asia. New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 7–68.; p. 9.

⁴ Haggard, Stephan (1993): ‘Comment’, in Frankel, Jeffrey A.; Kahler, Miles (Eds.) (1993): Regionalism and rivalry. Japan and the United States in Pacific Asia. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (A National Bureau of Economic Research conference report). pp. 48–49.

⁵ European Commission (2015): European Regional Development Fund turns 40. Available online at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/newsroom/news/2015/03/european-regional-development-fund-turns-40, checked on 2/20/2018.

an investment policy aimed at bringing about the convergence of regions; however, it was not explicitly focused on the rising role of regions compared to nation states. This idea, namely the concept of a “Europe of the Regions” referring to a situation when subnational entities overtake the role of nation states, only emerged later on.

Although regional policies have been present for some time already, the idea of a “Europe of the Regions” only appeared in the late 1980s, early 1990s and this emergence has been attributed to various factors. One of the causes mentioned in literature is the much-emphasised principle of “subsidiarity” by the EU (which states that powers shall be “exercised as close to the citizen as possible”⁶, i.e. at the lowest possible governance level) which motivated smaller actors like the stateless peoples of Europe (including Catalonia) to strive for more power in policy-making through, for instance, regional offices in Brussels.⁷ According to Peterson, it is subsidiarity that “provides the intellectual underpinning for a ‘Europe of the Regions’”.⁸ As a contributing complementary reason, the inefficiency of the nation states can be named: according to John Newhouse, they are “too big to run everyday life, and too small to manage international affairs”.⁹ There has been talk of the fall of the nation states and the erosion of their powers by the European integration process and, following and somewhat parallel to this, the rise of the importance of regional actors.¹⁰

Despite the clear broad idea behind the concept, there is considerable debate about several aspects of a “Europe of the Regions”: its exact conceptualisation, the extent to which a “Europe of the Regions” is an accomplished objective, and the role EU institutions have played in the shaping of a “Europe of the Regions”. Considering the specificity of the last question, this thesis elaborates on it and the surrounding academic debate in the subsequent chapter.

Benito Giordano and Elisa Roller interpret the concept as a result of additional emphasis on the subnational actors in the European decision-making and see the creation of the Committee of the Regions in 1994 as a landmark event marking the shift of power within the

⁶ European Parliament Information Office in London (2018): The principle of subsidiarity. European Parliament. London. Available online at <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/unitedkingdom/en/education/teachingresources/howeuworks/subsidiarity.html>, checked on 2/20/2018.

⁷ Luedtke, Adam (2005): A Europe of the Regions. Rhetoric or Reality? In *Int Studies Review* 7 (1), pp. 101–103. DOI: 10.1111/j.1521-9488.2005.00470.x. p. 101.

⁸ Peterson, John (1994): Subsidiarity. A Definition to Suit Any Vision? In *Parliamentary Affairs* 47 (1), pp. 116–132. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.pa.a052452. p. 129.

⁹ Newhouse, John (1997): Europe's Rising Regionalism. In *Foreign Affairs* 76 (1), pp. 67–84. DOI: 10.2307/20047910. p. 64.

¹⁰ Borrás-Alomar, Susana; Christiansen, Thomas; Rodríguez-Pose, Andres (1994): Towards a ‘Europe of the regions’? Visions and reality from a critical perspective. In *Regional Politics and Policy* 4 (2), pp. 1–27. DOI: 10.1080/13597569408420896. pp. 1–2.

EU.¹¹ Although they admit that the Committee of the Regions possesses few powers, its establishment still marks a milestone regarding the role of regions. The authors see the importance of the concept of a “Europe of the Regions” in legitimising the role of regional authorities in European decision-making. However, it is clear that this new concept related to subnationalism does not appear the same way and to the same extent in all of Europe, proving that a “Europe of the Regions” has not been homogenously achieved across the continent.

A book by José María Magone titled *Regional Institutions and Governance in the European Union*, although it collects works discussing the difficulties of the current multi-layer decision-making, emphasises that “[t]he emergence of the “Europe of the Regions” is no longer a catchword, but an important reality in the European Union”,¹² supported by the theory of multilevel governance in which, according to authors like Gary Marks, “supranational, national, regional, and local governments are enmeshed in territorially overarching policy networks”.¹³ According to Magone, the trend of moving away from the previously known state-based governance methods towards a more flexible network where subnational actors play a larger (parallel) role has become reality.

However, many authors disagree. For instance, Gary Marks *et al.* examine the possible reasons for and modes of regionalism in the EU by presenting five theses for analysis. While confirming that political factors matter more in driving regionalism than resource-based ones, the authors make it clear that they do not argue for a “Europe of the Regions” where independent regions run the EU.¹⁴ Instead, they use the term “Europe with the Regions” which entails that regional governments demand power *alongside* states instead of eroding the central governments’ powers. Other authors such as Hendrik Vos, Tine Boucké and Carl Devos also support the terminology of a “Europe with the Regions” instead, following a similar argument to that of Gary Marks *et al.* and discuss multilevel governance where the European, the national and the subnational governance systems operate in an intertwined and parallel way.¹⁵ The term

¹¹ Giordano, Benito; Roller, Elisa (2016): Catalonia and the ‘Idea of Europe’. In *European Urban and Regional Studies* 9 (2), pp. 99–113. DOI: 10.1177/096977640200900201. pp. 100–101.

¹² Magone, José M. (2003): *Regional institutions and governance in the European Union*. Westport, Conn., London: Praeger, checked on 1/13/2018. p. 1.

¹³ Marks, Gary (1993): ‘Structural Policy and Multilevel Governance in the EC’, in A. Cafruny and G. Rosenthal (eds.) *The State of the European Community, Vol.2: The Maastricht Debates and Beyond* (Harlow: Longman), pp.402–403.

¹⁴ Marks, Gary; Nielsen, François; Ray, Leonard; Salk, Jane E. (2016): Competencies, Cracks, and Conflicts. Regional Mobilization in the European Union. In *Comparative Political Studies* 29 (2), pp. 164–192. DOI: 10.1177/0010414096029002002. p. 186.

¹⁵ Vos, Hendrik; Boucké, Tine; Devos, Carl (2002): The Conditio Sine Qua Non of the Added Value of Regions in the EU. Upper-level Representation as the Fundamental Precondition. In *Journal of European Integration* 24 (3), pp. 201–218. DOI: 10.1080/07036330220152187. p. 202.

was suggested by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks in 1996 who argue that there is little proof for the true realisation of a “Europe of the Regions” considering the territorial disparities in different parts of Europe, especially when one compares the substantial role of the Spanish Autonomous Communities and the weak regional governments of a country like Ireland.¹⁶

Without mentioning a “Europe with the Regions”, William M. Downs states that there is little evidence of the fading away of central governments which is what the concept of a “Europe of the Regions” suggests.¹⁷ However, he acknowledges the role of regions and the growing importance of regionalism (enhanced by various factors such as social stimulation and validation, the capacity of regional institutions as well as resources). Instead of a “Europe of the Regions”, Downs sees Europe’s regions’ competence in their capability to use the European integration process for transnational learning and to create a “Europe of Regions and Citizens”.¹⁸

The perhaps most well-known opponent of the idea of a “Europe of the Regions” is Michael Keating; in several of his works, he claims that the concept is far from reality. In his work on the invention of regions in 1997, he states that the nation state has never been the sole policy-maker in Europe in the past, and that the political hierarchy has not changed through the erosion of the states’ role.¹⁹ In addition, Keating does not consider regionalism as a “wave sweeping across Europe”²⁰ but more as a geographically diverse and sporadic process for which reason one cannot talk about a “Europe of the Regions”. In his work 20 years later, he argues that the concept of a “Europe of the Regions” was most popular in the 1990s and that movement started declining afterwards.²¹

Following academic debate regarding a “Europe of the Regions”, it becomes clear that although researchers are divided on the issue, the salience of the question still persists. While numerous academics refer to a “Europe with the Regions” instead, it is not yet a decided fact to abandon the idea of a “Europe of the Regions”, not even in academic literature. Also, some of the aforementioned authors (and many more), even though they do not believe in the realisation

¹⁶ Hooghe, Liesbet; Marks, Gary (1996): “Europe with the Regions”. Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union. In *(None)* 26 (1), pp. 73–92. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.pubjof.a029841.

¹⁷ Downs, William M. (2002): Regionalism in the European Union. Key Concepts and Project Overview. In *Journal of European Integration* 24 (3), pp. 171–177. DOI: 10.1080/07036330220152204. p. 172.

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 175.

¹⁹ Keating, Michael (1997): The Invention of Regions. Political Restructuring and Territorial Government in Western Europe. In *Environ Plann C Gov Policy* 15 (4), pp. 383–398. DOI: 10.1068/c150383. p. 383-384.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 396.

²¹ Keating, Michael (2017): Europe as a multilevel federation. In *Journal of European Public Policy* 24 (4), pp. 615–632. DOI: 10.1080/13501763.2016.1273374. pp. 620-6.21.

of a “Europe of the Regions”, fall short of proposing the alternative of a “Europe with the Regions”. Therefore, this thesis keeps its focus on the discussion of a “Europe of the Regions”.

Nevertheless, it is clear that there are huge disparities between the regions of various countries within Europe. While the concept is not the most important for countries with weak regional powers, it remains a prominent topic for European affairs in general. Although the role of various European decision-making bodies has been somewhat discussed by researchers (as follows in the subsequent chapter), there is still limited knowledge available on the activities of other institutions and organisations and the impact they have had on shaping a “Europe of the Regions”. Further, even though there is plentiful information about the Committee of the Regions (CoR), one of the most prominent institutions for representing regions, the research on the organisation is either outdated or incomplete. In addition, there are plenty of smaller but nonetheless influential European institutions that are not widely discussed and the public is not aware of their contribution. Such an organisation is the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE) a bottom-up initiative working with a small but efficient team in order to aid subnational actors in European matters.

There is even less literature on the comparison of institutions such as the CoR and IRE. Many papers, such as the ones cited above, focus on either the concept of a “Europe of the Regions” in general, without extensively discussing the exact role of institutions, or they provide a more descriptive article regarding some of the European organisations concerning regionalism. There are few if any timely relevant and analytical studies that compare the contribution of various institutions to the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”. This gap leads to the research question of this very thesis, which is: *How do the Committee of the Regions and the Institute of the Regions of Europe compare in contributing to a “Europe of the Regions”?*

Based on the academic debate around the topic, there are four connected sub-questions that deserve further examination. The first sub-question relates to the conceptualisation and definition of a “Europe of the Regions” and it seeks to compare how the concept is viewed by the examined institutions. Do they agree with either side of the debate regarding its definition, desirability and feasibility (and if so, which one) or do they interpret the concept in a different way? The second sub-question addresses the similarities and differences between the two institutions’ reactions to a couple of phenomena related to regional affairs in Europe. By examining the questions of the rise of direct representation as well as the diversity among European regions, the thesis aims to not only present concrete answers but also draw

conclusions about the institutions themselves and their involvement in regional matters. The third sub-question focuses on the roles and strategies of these organisations and how the case study institutions relate to each other. Naturally, the two organisations play rather different roles as predetermined by their characteristics and positions in European policy-making; nonetheless, they are both actively working towards a Europe where regions play a larger role. The fourth and final sub-question is directed at the various challenges and achievements in connection with a “Europe of the Regions” and how (differently) the examined institutions reflect on these. This sub-chapter seeks to investigate whether the two case study institutions perceive the same obstacles and acknowledge the same achievements and what they see as the reason for both.

These questions, naturally, lead to certain hypotheses. As a general assumption, the thesis hypothesizes that although the examined organisations have made considerable contributions, a “Europe of the Regions” has not been realised nor is it a feasible or desirable goal by European institutions.²² The hypothesis connected to the first sub-question states that a “Europe of the Regions” is defined the same way by the examined organisations – as an interesting and once popular idea (and still actively discussed by some in 2010)²³ that faded away since it was neither feasible nor desirable. Instead, the already mentioned “Europe with the Regions” is a more accepted concept relating to the establishment of the aforementioned multilevel governance. The second sub-hypothesis leads to the assumption that the CoR and IRE are prone to view the aforementioned patterns rather similarly and both are in favour of the direct representation of regions in Brussels through regional offices and encourage the utilisation of diversity among European regions. The third sub-hypothesis assumes that although the institutions may share the ultimate objective (following from the first sub-hypothesis), their intermediate goals and their paths are vastly different due to various factors, meaning that their roles differ greatly. While the CoR is expected to play a more substantial and official role as an advocate of the inclusion of regions in (European) governance, IRE is more involved in smaller-scale, more practical initiatives and solutions. The interaction and cooperation between the two institutions is expected to be on a more ideological and not a concrete basis. The fourth sub-hypothesis expresses that the institutions acknowledge largely the same achievements and perceive mostly

²² This hypothesis relies on the more radical definition mentioned (but not supported) by Downs, whereby regions replace nation states in their role in governance. Downs, William M. (2002): *Regionalism in the European Union. Key Concepts and Project Overview*. p. 172.

²³ Meeting Rimini (2010): *Meeting Rimini - Europe of the Regions*. Rimini, Italy. Available online at <https://www.meetingrimini.org/eng/default.asp?id=846&item=5041>, checked on 4/4/2018.

the same problems in the way of European regionalism but the way and the extent to which they are affected by them are, given their role, quite different.

The main analysis of the paper includes both an inter-case comparison between the two European institutions as well as an in-depth within-case study. This clarifies the need for one of the comparative-historical methods which are especially designed in social sciences to allow for an in-depth but at the same time comparative, contrasting investigation of the matter at hand.²⁴ Out of the various available methods, I decided for the narrative, more specifically the casual narrative which entails an exploratory research that is intended to investigate the differences and the similarities between the actors or cases while also offering “insight into causal processes”, helping to discover causal connections.²⁵ This means that the thesis focuses on the detailed exploration of both organisations’ operations, then contrasting these against each other while helping to discover what might cause the differences and similarities.

In addition to the analysis of the questions and sub-questions presented above, a conceptual framework is applied to the information gathered to gain further insight into the underlying workings of the two institutions, namely that of organisational efficiency. According to Max Weber, the famous German sociologist and political economist, “bureaucracy constitutes the most efficient and formally rational way in which human activity can be organized”.²⁶ In his theory, Weber establishes six characteristics of an ideal bureaucracy, which are: fixed scope of activity, hierarchical organisation, written documentation as a base of action, expert training, devotion of officials and the following of general rules by management.²⁷ These features mostly apply to the majority of modern organisations and also to the CoR as a top-down hierarchical organisation; this cannot be entirely said about IRE (or, better said, about its network), a bottom-up initiative with loose hierarchy. Therefore, in line with Weber’s theory of an ideal bureaucracy, IRE should be less efficient in achieving its objectives than the CoR since it lacks the bureaucracy that would maximise the efficiency.²⁸ This is contradicted by some postmodern theories that claim that the lack of such formalisation translates into increased flexibility of non-bureaucratic organisations; this, for instance, could result in higher efficiency.

²⁴ Lange, Matthew (2013): ‘Chapter 1: Comparative-Historical Methods: An Introduction’, in: Lange, Matthew (2013): *Comparative-Historical Methods*. Los Angeles: SAGE. p. 11.

²⁵ Ibidem. p. 12.

²⁶ Swedberg, Richard.; Agevall, Ola (2005): *The Max Weber Dictionary. Key Words and Central Concepts*. Stanford: Stanford Social Sciences. Available online at https://books.google.hu/books?id=_c3Mcnh8hCgC. p. 20.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 24.

²⁸ Hatch, Mary Jo; Cunliffe, Ann L. (2013): *Organization theory. Modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives*. 3rd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press. p. 25.

This logic contrasts that of Weber's regarding bureaucracy and could mean that IRE as an organisation functions more efficiently than the CoR.²⁹ The question of efficiency and bureaucracy recurs in the paper and further details are presented to conclude on the matter.

The analysis and the eventual response to the research question is based on multiple cases, namely two European institutions dedicated to regional matters. One of the selected institutions for the analysis is the Brussels-based European Committee of the Regions or Committee of the Regions, an EU body founded in 1994 that essentially serves as "the EU's assembly of regional and local representatives".³⁰ This institution was selected not only because of its unique and crucial role in representing subnational actors in European affairs, but also because of its well-known nature and the existing abundant information about its activities. Discussing the question of a "Europe of the Regions" is unimaginable without analysing the impact of the Committee of the Regions. The other chosen institution is the Institute of the Regions of Europe (IRE), a small but influential organisation founded in 2004 in Salzburg that acts as a platform where subnational actors from all European countries (not exclusively EU member states) can communicate and collaborate on various matters.³¹ It is an independent non-profit institution which is dedicated to strengthening European regions. It is not yet widely known and there are hardly any academic papers analysing its role but it works towards similar goals as the CoR. These common objectives combined with the rather different characteristics of the two organisations (such as the size and nature of the institution as well as the level of publicity) provide an excellent basis for a comparative analysis. No more cases were chosen out of feasibility concerns. The time frame of the analysis is between 2004 and 2018, since 2004 was the first year when both organisations already existed so a thorough comparison is impossible for the previous years.

In order to achieve a comprehensive and rich analysis, a wide range of sources are used. Many secondary sources, some of which were mentioned earlier, make up the academic debate centred around the idea of a "Europe of the Regions" and are also used throughout the rest of the thesis. Articles and scientific papers about the CoR are extensively used thanks to the abundant literature about the institution. In the case of the other institution, IRE, it is not possible to rely on such a large number of publications about the organisation since there are

²⁹ Ibid. pp. 93-96.

³⁰ Committee of the Regions (2015): Mission statement. Brussels. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Documents/Mission%20statement/EN.pdf>, checked on 2/20/2018.

³¹ Institute of the Regions of Europe (2018): Mission Statement. Berlin/Heidelberg. Available online at http://ir000044.host.inode.at/de/wp-content/uploads/Mission-Statement_Long_2018.pdf.

almost none. However, both organisations were visited where I conducted extensive research in the libraries and archives of the institutions. There are also other primary sources including material such as the magazines published by IRE and the press releases of the CoR that are used throughout the thesis.

Importantly, I also conducted interviews with the representatives of the organisations to gain a better understanding of said institutions. The interviews were semi-structured (i.e. interviews with a set of pre-determined questions and a clear structure but with possibility to follow “topical trajectories”³² and the freedom to explore particular themes of which the interviewee has more in-depth knowledge or in which he/she has more interest). This method was flexible enough to accommodate the interviewee’s specific expertise on a certain sub-topic but it still provided the interview with a structure which made the information gathering and structuring easier. At the CoR, I interviewed Mrs. María Lozano, an administrator at the organisation since 2013 and an expert of regional matters due to her 16-year long career related to regionalism. She has extensive knowledge on the issue of regionalism both from the aspect of regions and from the institutional point of view, since she spent over 12 years as the director of Navarra EU office and has worked at the CoR both as a subsidiarity coordinator and, now, as a member of the thematic SEDEC Commission (Commission for Social Policy, Education, Employment, Research and Culture) within the institution.³³ At IRE, I conducted an interview with the founder of IRE Prof. Franz Schausberger, the former *Landeshauptmann* (governor) of the Salzburg region in Austria. He has been a political figure since the late 1970s onwards in Austria and filled the position of governor of Salzburg from 1996 till 2004, following which he established IRE. He has also been an active figure related to the CoR, first as Chairman of the Committee of the Regions’ Commission for Constitutional Affairs and European Governance, then as the Vice-President of the European People’s Party in the Committee. He also acted as the Rapporteur for the Committee’s Opinion on Enlargement strategy and main challenges in 2014-2015.³⁴ Further, I interviewed Mmag. Dr. Joachim Fritz, the Secretary General of IRE who has been with the organisation since its foundation in 2004. Before that, he worked in several positions including the Directorate-General for Internal Market of the European

³² Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2008): Qualitative Research Guidelines Project. Semi-structured Interviews. Princeton. Available online at <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>, updated on 6/5/2008, checked on 2/20/2018.

³³ Lozano, María (Ed.) (2018): LinkedIn profile of María Lozano Uriz, PhD. Available online at <https://www.linkedin.com/in/mar%C3%ADa-lozano-uriz-phd-18030017/>, checked on 4/6/2018.

³⁴ Institute of the Regions of Europe (2018): Board of Directors. Institute of the Regions of Europe. Salzburg, Austria. Available online at <http://ir000044.host.inode.at/de/about-us/board-of-directors/>, checked on 4/6/2018.

Commission at College d'Europe.³⁵ He has been overseeing all projects and undertakings of IRE and, therefore, has detailed practical knowledge of the workings of the organisation.

Clearly, while all these resources proved to be invaluable for my research, they have to be treated with a certain level of criticism: institutions, especially ones that are not yet widely recognised, may overstate their own role and present themselves as influential actors, even if that is not necessarily the case. This is especially true for the information acquired during the interviews; they are an incredibly valuable but also a somewhat subjective source of information that can be distorted by memory bias and personal bias.³⁶ For this reason, information gathered from these sources must be treated with care; however, they should by no means be disregarded only due to the nature of the source since plenty of material and knowledge otherwise unknown can be extracted. Where possible, other sources that may be considered more objective are used for comparison.

Despite the abundance of already existing literature on the topic of regionalism and a “Europe of the Regions”, this study fills the gap regarding the impact of European institutions (besides the governing bodies of the EU) on shaping a “Europe of the Regions”. The study is academically relevant due to not only its methodology (i.e. the chosen case studies) and its use of sources (the combination of expert opinions and other primary sources) but also due to its conceptual framework of Weber’s bureaucracy and efficiency theory. It compares a renowned EU institution with an organisation yet hardly known in academic circles that has the same broad objectives as the former. This comparative study offers the opportunity of an in-depth analysis of how and to what extent these organisations contribute to a “Europe of the Regions”. Besides its valuable contribution that fills a gap in the academic debate, this thesis is also relevant for our society: it helps academics and policy-makers better recognise the trends related to regionalism. In the end, it is clear that regionalism is a recurring phenomenon but this study helps to partially answer the question what path Europe will follow: multilevel federalism (as described by Keating mentioned above), the rise of regions and the fall of nation states or a combination of both? This knowledge also enables decision-makers to identify the remaining gaps and determine future goals for policies affecting the regions in Europe.

³⁵ Institute of the Regions of Europe (2018): Team. Institute of the Regions of Europe. Salzburg, Austria. Available online at <http://ir000044.host.inode.at/de/about-us/our-team/>, checked on 4/6/2018.

³⁶ In his book *The pursuit of history*, John Tosh talks extensively about how interviews can provide less than precise and truthful information. This is partly because the interviewee’s memories are not perfect recordings of past events; they are influenced by other experiences, affected by nostalgia and other emotions or otherwise biased. Tosh, John (2010): *The pursuit of history*. 5th ed. Harlow: Longman. pp. 303-304.

Following this introduction, the rest of the thesis is constructed thematically. The first chapter provides a summary on the recent history of institutions in European regionalism to elaborate further on one of the questions of the academic debate. The following chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the aforementioned institutions and is divided into four sub-chapters, corresponding to the aforementioned four sub-questions. The final chapter concludes the findings of the study, addresses the thesis' limitations and points out areas for further research.

1. A brief history of European institutions and regionalism

Before diving into the details of the various European institutions' roles in aiding regionalism and the idea of a "Europe of the Regions", it is worth briefly discussing the importance of diversity, i.e. the lack of a homogenous European polity. In line with what was also briefly explained in the Introduction, numerous papers state that there were (and still are) substantial differences between the attitudes of nation-states towards regionalism, resulting in different forms of governance.^{37, 38} In addition, Cesáreo R. Aguilera de Prat (among others) argues that there are huge economic, geographical, cultural and political differences that translate into different interests and, therefore, strategies of regions.³⁹ These differences mean that even if institutions have played an important role in developing regions and shaping a "Europe of the Regions", their impact is often limited and regional developments are also characterised by other factors external to the works of these organisations and EU bodies.

When discussing the intertwined history of European institutions and regionalism, it becomes evident that regionalism is not a separate phenomenon solely directly affected by European institutions. It is also strongly connected to the idea of European integration which has always been surrounded by substantial (academic) debate. Authors have formed groups around two main theories, namely intergovernmentalism and neo-functionalism. The former, Stanley Hoffman's theory, perceives European integration as a number of stages largely dominated by national governments based on national interests,⁴⁰ while Ernst B. Haas, the founder of the school of neo-functionalism, states European integration as a process which happens along the lines of common interests and is dominated by supranational organisations (i.e. the EU governing bodies).⁴¹ Naturally, neither theory covers the reality of European integration exclusively; whichever view one follows, however, it is certain that European bodies have played a defining role in European integration. Having said that, it is a third, complementary theory called liberal intergovernmentalism created by Andrew Moravcsik that expands the question of European integration to other, non-state actors such as businesses and

³⁷ Bullmann, Udo (1996): The politics of the third level. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 6 (2), pp. 3–19. DOI: 10.1080/13597569608420965. p. 5.

³⁸ Tömmel, Ingeborg (1998): Transformation of governance. The European Commission's strategy for creating a 'Europe of the Regions'. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 8 (2), pp. 52–80. DOI: 10.1080/13597569808421051. p. 53.

³⁹ Aguilera de Prat, Cesáreo R. (2006): De la "Europa de las Regiones" a la Europa con las Regiones. In *Revista d'Estudis Autònoms i Federals* (2), pp. 47–76. p. 55.

⁴⁰ Hoffmann, Stanley (1996): Obstinate or Obsolete? The Fate of the Nation-State and the Case of Western Europe. In *Daedalus* 95 (3), pp. 862–915.

⁴¹ Haas, Ernst B., 'The Uniting of Europe', (fragment), in: Nelsen, Brent F.; Stubb, Alexander C-G (2014): The European Union. Readings on the theory and practice of European integration. Fourth edition. Boulder Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers Inc.

social security actors.⁴² Although his theory does not explicitly state the inclusion of regional (political) actors, it represents a step away from the strictly nation-state dominated intergovernmentalist view towards a more inclusive approach. Others also emphasise how European integration and regionalism exert a symmetrical squeeze on the nation-state;^{43, 44} this also signals that not only are these processes simultaneous but they also reinforce each other. Relating to this train of thought, some researchers state that the concept of subsidiarity, as discussed in the Introduction, was often used by “both the EU and the regions to try to by-pass the central state”.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Udo Bullmann claims that as European integration gained momentum, it enhanced regionalism. By establishing the European Single Market, for instance, competition (in the economic sense of the word) grew between regions, leading to a change in the perception of the regions’ roles in both the economy and in politics.⁴⁶

As for the concrete role European institutions and bodies have played in aiding regionalism and shaping a “Europe of the Regions”, the European Commission seems to have contributed the most to the realisation of regional mobilisation. There are numerous examples in the past of how the Commission attempted to positively impact regions; these include initiatives such as the European Regional Development Fund that was aimed at providing financial incentives for the development of less developed regions to reduce inter-regional disparities and aid a more complete integration of Europe.⁴⁷ Thanks to the initiative, regions became more active and took on more important roles in economic and political matters themselves; however, this then caused conflicts between the central and the regional governments.⁴⁸ The European Regional Development Fund was less efficient and successful than intended; nonetheless, it already became the spark that (already rather autonomous) regions needed for (further) mobilisation.

As a reaction to this somewhat inefficient solution, the European Commission created a so-called four-channel strategy to influence and strengthen regional policy-making.⁴⁹ Other

⁴² Moravcsik, Andrew (1993): Preferences and Power in the European Community. A Liberal Intergovernmentalist Approach. In *JCMS: J Common Market Studies* 31 (4), pp. 473–524. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5965.1993.tb00477.x.

⁴³ Roller, Elisa (2004): Conflict and cooperation in EU policy-making. The case of Catalonia. In *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 5 (1), pp. 81–102. DOI: 10.1080/15705850408438880.

⁴⁴ Bourne, Angela (2008): Europe, Constitutional Debates and the Spanish State of Autonomies. In *Perspectives on European Politics and Society* 9 (3), pp. 283–300. DOI: 10.1080/15705850802223424.

⁴⁵ Downs, William M. (2002): Regionalism in the European Union. Key Concepts and Project Overview. p. 172.

⁴⁶ Bullmann, Udo (1996): The politics of the third level. pp. 3–4.

⁴⁷ Loughlin, J. (1996): “Europe of the Regions” and the Federalization of Europe. In *Publius: The Journal of Federalism* 26 (4), pp. 141–162. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordjournals.pubjof.a029875. p. 153.

⁴⁸ Tömmel, Ingeborg (1998): Transformation of governance. The European Commission's strategy for creating a ‘Europe of the Regions’. p. 58.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 56.

changes included the reform of the structural funds in 1988 and the introduction of the “partnership” principle (adopted by the Council of Ministers) which requires close consultation between the Commission and all competent authorities at every governance level, including the regional and local level. This principle was implemented to formulate policies *for the regions, by the regions*.⁵⁰ Yet another reform of the structural funds for a more inclusive approach to regional policies⁵¹ happened simultaneously to the implementation of the Treaty of Maastricht drafted in 1992, a milestone in European integration that essentially established the European Union. The treaty was aimed at bringing about further (economic) convergence among member states and potential members and laid down the foundations of the euro, envisaging an even closer integration of member states and, therefore, regions too.⁵² Thus, it is clear that European integration and the mobilisation of European regions were parallel processes, both aided by European institutions.

Besides the European Commission, the European Parliament has been a less active advocate of regional mobilisation and development; nonetheless, it has been somewhat supportive of the Commission’s activity and of the representation of regions. The European Parliament has expressed a certain interest in the regional activities and the so-called lobbying since a fair share of the approved policies have regional implications.⁵³ Also, it is one of the six channels of direct representation for regions, where Members of Parliament (MEPs) may represent their own region; however, this strongly depends on how MEPs are elected within their own country. These MEPs seem to possess substantial soft power in terms of lobbying and persuasion.⁵⁴

There is no institution more prominent in realising the representation of regions than the Committee of the Regions. Under the already mentioned Treaty of Maastricht, the Committee was established and officially started operating in 1994 with the aim of becoming an advisory institution to the main EU governing bodies by including subnational actors.⁵⁵ Although the

⁵⁰ Bache, Ian; Jones, Rachel (2000): Has EU regional policy empowered the regions? A study of Spain and the United Kingdom. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 10 (3), pp. 1–20. DOI: 10.1080/13597560008421129. p. 1.

⁵¹ Tömmel, Ingeborg (1998): Transformation of governance. The European Commission's strategy for creating a ‘Europe of the Regions’. p. 64.

⁵² European Central Bank (2017): Five things you need to know about the Maastricht Treaty. European Central Bank. Frankfurt. Available online at https://www.ecb.europa.eu/explainers/tell-me-more/html/25_years_maastricht.en.html, checked on 4/6/2018.

⁵³ Aguilera de Prat, Cesáreo R. (2006): De la “Europa de las Regiones” a la Europa con las Regiones. In *Revista d'Estudis Autònoms i Federals* (2), pp. 47–76. p. 62.

⁵⁴ Tatham, Michaël (2008): Going Solo. Direct Regional Representation in the European Union. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 18 (5), pp. 493–515. DOI: 10.1080/13597560802351523. pp. 504–506.

⁵⁵ Tömmel, Ingeborg (1998): Transformation of governance. The European Commission's strategy for creating a ‘Europe of the Regions’. p. 68.

founding of the CoR does indeed represent a breakthrough in terms of the political representation of regions, it is safe to say that the seeds of the idea were already sown prior to this establishment; for instance, as early as 1989, the highly autonomous German *Länder* already initiated a series of conferences called “Europe of the Regions”.⁵⁶ Nonetheless, the CoR has proven to be a milestone in regionalism but the institution has been struggling with its own limits. Despite attempting to obtain more powers beside its consultative ones at the 1996 Intergovernmental Conference,⁵⁷ the CoR remains a consultative European institution with its restricted competencies.⁵⁸ It is said to be lacking real definition in terms of its functions and is yet insufficient to become the Third Chamber (i.e. third tier) in European decision-making. Sadly, it still witnesses tensions of various sorts such as divides between regions of different countries besides the local-regional divide.⁵⁹

Based on this summary, it is clear that institutions played and to this day continue to play a vital role in the rise of regions. However, the research done so far bears some limitations ranging from outdated studies to the lack of in-depth comparative case studies, as already mentioned in the Introduction. In order to fill this gap in research, the following chapter contains the analysis of the two case study institutions.

⁵⁶ Loughlin, J. (1996): “Europe of the Regions” and the Federalization of Europe. p. 151.

⁵⁷ Bullmann, Udo (1996): The politics of the third level. p. 15.

⁵⁸ European Communities (1998): Resolution of the Committee of the Regions on the ‘Outcome of the Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)’. In *Official Journal of the European Communities* 41. Available online at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:51997XR0305&from=EN>, checked on 3/14/2018.

⁵⁹ Aguilera de Prat, Cesáreo R. (2006): De la “Europa de las Regiones” a la Europa con las Regiones. In *Revista d'Estudis Autònoms i Federals* (2), pp. 47–76. pp. 63-65.

2. Comparison of the role of institutions

This thesis attempts to provide an extensive overview of these institutions' natures, views, roles as well as the achievements and challenges they witness. The study uses this overview to conduct an in-depth analysis to find and evaluate the differences and various connections between the case study organisations. This serves the purpose of answering the main research question of how these two organisations have contributed to a "Europe of the Regions". This chapter also exceeds the level of descriptive comparison; instead, it attempts to apply a critical approach towards the provided information and discover the reasons behind certain similarities and differences. Further, for the sake of clarity, the analysis is structured in line with the four sub-questions and sub-topics mentioned in the Introduction.

2.1. Definition and conceptualisation of a "Europe of the Regions"

Before defining regionalism or regionalisation, one needs to define what is meant by regions, considering its various meanings and uses in different disciplines. Keating, for instance, pointed out in his work from 1997 that "[t]he very word 'region' has a multiplicity of meanings in the various social science disciplines and the historical traditions of European countries and is politically loaded and sensitive".⁶⁰ Therefore, it would be foolish to attempt to define and discuss regional matters such as a "Europe of the Regions" without clarifying first what is exactly meant by those regions.^{61, 62} While Keating interprets regions as a territorial concept, he admits that it can also refer to an institutional system (like a regional government). However, these definitions vary. The representative of the CoR states that the organisation regards the NUTS II units as regions,⁶³ defined by the Nomenclature of Territorial Units of Statistics (the abbreviation stemming from the French version *Nomenclature des Unites territoriales statistiques*), the European Union's official classification. According to this classification (amended in 2016), NUTS II regions are so-called "basic regions for the application of regional policies".⁶⁴ In reality, this is a mainly geographical (and, of course, somewhat administrative) categorisation. According to the amended classification, there are currently 311 NUTS 2-level regions which are represented by a total of 350 members of the

⁶⁰ Keating, Michael (1997): *The Invention of Regions*. p. 383.

⁶¹ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): *The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions"*. Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

⁶² Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): *The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions"*. Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

⁶³ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): *The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions"*. Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

⁶⁴ Eurostat (2018): *NUTS - Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics*. Eurostat. Available online at <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/nuts/background>, checked on 4/7/2018.

CoR, which also shows that not only NUTs II level units can be members through their representatives but any other local and regional authorities. Meanwhile, IRE defines regions as political regions and emphasises the importance of focusing on political regions as opposed to historical or geographic ones. By this, the representative of IRE referred to the concept of administrative units or, better said, an area that is governed by the same (in our case, subnational) entity; this entails regions with an own assembly or other regional governing body whose members are democratically elected.⁶⁵ This shows that the representatives essentially refer to related but different definitions of European regions they work with and/or represent which is already rather telling regarding the nature of the institutions. The CoR, an official EU institution, uses the official classification of the NUTS system, showing a more structured and clarified approach towards the question of regionalism; a definition including all classified regions. At the same time, IRE seems to direct its attention towards regions that already have some sort of a (politically active) regional government, meaning that many not yet mobilised (or at least to some extent self-governed) regions may be excluded. This might seem like a substantial contrast but it is understandable considering the fact that IRE is a small bottom-up initiative that is, by nature, less bureaucratic and officially structured. The limited capacities of the institute also justify the smaller scope in terms of defining regions. This difference between the organisations in terms of clear guidelines and structures in something as simple (but nonetheless significant) as the definition of regions shows that IRE, although first thought to be less efficient due to the less systematic and well-known classification, has a more restrictive scope and bases its conceptualisation on more flexible grounds, leading to a less rigid setup and, therefore, increased efficiency. This finding contradicts Weber's theory of bureaucracy and efficiency and rather sides with postmodern organisational theories that confirm that the lack of formalisation can result in more efficient operations.

In terms of defining a "Europe of the Regions", the academic debate in the Introduction already signalled that although the idea of a "Europe of the Regions" has not completely disappeared yet, it is deemed outdated or even unrealistic by some. Nonetheless, the definition of the concept as a phenomenon where subnational entities (i.e. regional and local authorities) take over the roles of nation states in governance is understood but is said to be either an illusion or an overly ambitious and, frankly, irrelevant idea with little supporting evidence.^{66, 67} The

⁶⁵ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

⁶⁶ Marks, Gary; Nielsen, François; Ray, Leonard; Salk, Jane E. (2016): Competencies, Cracks, and Conflicts. Regional Mobilization in the European Union. p. 186.

⁶⁷ Downs, William M. (2002): Regionalism in the European Union. Key Concepts and Project Overview. p. 172.

attitude of the institutions seems to be mirroring this view: the fact that the official website of the CoR also speaks of “350 members from the 28 Member States of the European Union”⁶⁸ signals that Europe is indeed *of* the regions but in a sense that regions are parts of the nation states that are members of the EU; therefore, they are not directly members of the Union.⁶⁹ In line with the works of many other researchers,^{70, 71} the theory of multilevel governance (as already discussed in the Introduction) also claims that there has been (and still is) a shift in the setup of European decision-making and governance towards a more inclusive approach.⁷² However, the national level will always be present in European policy-making, although, in the name of subsidiarity, competences may be delegated to the regional or even to the European level, leading to a weaker but nonetheless present national level.^{73, 74}

Further, the idea of a “Europe with the Regions” as opposed to a “Europe of the Regions” seems to have gained considerable interest and momentum among researchers, as presented in the Introduction. The concept essentially supports the aforementioned theory of multilevel governance whereby subnational authorities are active in political and legislative processes *alongside* nation states, forming a third tier of European governance besides the EU-level and the national level (although there is still a debate around whether an organisation such as the CoR can help fulfil the role of the Third Chamber).⁷⁵ Although this conceptualisation is in line with the operation of both organisations, there is still considerable contrast between the CoR and IRE that partially originate from the differences in their understanding of a “Europe of the Regions”. Namely, the CoR presents itself as “the voice of regions and cities in the European Union”;⁷⁶ this means that they seek to help represent all regions within the EU in European affairs. Without explicitly stating a desire for a “Europe with the Regions”, the CoR’s objective implies a relatively inclusive approach towards regions and other local authorities in order to create a substantially powerful new layer in European legislative and decision-making affairs. In contrast, IRE, although it agrees with the CoR in the relevance of encouraging regionalism

⁶⁸ Committee of the Regions (2018): Members. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/members.aspx>, updated on 4/6/2018, checked on 4/7/2018.

⁶⁹ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a “Europe of the Regions”. Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

⁷⁰ Downs, William M. (2002): Regionalism in the European Union. Key Concepts and Project Overview. p. 172.

⁷¹ Vos, Hendrik; Boucké, Tine; Devos, Carl (2002): The *Conditio Sine Qua Non* of the Added Value of Regions in the EU. Upper-level Representation as the Fundamental Precondition. p. 202.

⁷² Hooghe, Liesbet; Marks, Gary (2000): Multi-level governance and European integration. p. xi.

⁷³ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a “Europe of the Regions”. Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

⁷⁴ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a “Europe of the Regions”. Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

⁷⁵ Bullmann, Udo (1996): The politics of the third level. p. 15.

⁷⁶ Committee of the Regions (2018): About CoR. CoR in a nutshell. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/index.aspx>, checked on 4/7/2018. pp. 2, 22.

all over the EU, focuses its own activities on Eastern and Southeast Europe. This geographical scope also includes regions of non-EU states such as countries in the Western Balkan. More specifically, IRE places a special emphasis on the fact that a “Europe with Strong Regions” is desired, and that is the objective towards which IRE has been working.⁷⁷ This different conceptualisation of a “Europe with (Strong) Regions” pre-signals other differences in viewpoints, activities and achievements as well.

Regarding the feasibility of a “Europe with the Regions” (i.e. further regional mobilisation), there are surprisingly few studies as most researchers focus on simply offering the concept as an alternative to the idea of a “Europe of the Regions”⁷⁸ (or solely analyse the fall of a “Europe of the Regions”).⁷⁹ Despite the criticism of the works of the CoR in representing regions (whereby some complain about its purely consultative role),⁸⁰ it is believed that the current setup with the consultative role of the CoR entails great potential waiting to be exploited by both the organisation and the regions represented by the members.⁸¹ For IRE, the question of a “Europe with the Regions” is viewed differently since IRE is not a political institution and is not aimed at aiding the rise of regions via political representation. Nonetheless, despite the halt of decentralisation in some Eastern and Southeast European countries following the financial and economic crisis, the representative of IRE believes that the pendulum will swing back and the mobilisation of regions will continue.⁸² Also, both representatives believe that there have been major achievements (as discussed later) but also some obstacles, some of which cannot be overcome just by the works of their respective institutions. There are other promising developments besides these two institutions; there are countless networks, associations and groups of regions that cooperate on various topics in the form of lobbying and the exchange of know-how.⁸³ The combined work of more active subnational authorities and these numerous institutions, associations and networks is promising a future of a Europe with strong regions.

⁷⁷ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a “Europe of the Regions”. Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

⁷⁸ Marks, Gary; Nielsen, François; Ray, Leonard; Salk, Jane E. (2016): Competencies, Cracks, and Conflicts. *Regional Mobilization in the European Union*. p. 189.

⁷⁹ Hepburn, Eve (2008): The Rise and Fall of a ‘Europe of the Regions’. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 18 (5), pp. 537–555. DOI: 10.1080/13597560802351572.

⁸⁰ Loughlin, J. (1996): “Europe of the Regions” and the Federalization of Europe. p. 155.

⁸¹ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a “Europe of the Regions”. Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

⁸² Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a “Europe of the Regions”. Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

⁸³ Hooghe, Liesbet; Marks, Gary (1996): “Europe with the Regions”. *Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union*. pp. 86-90.

Altogether, it seems that, although academic literature is not quite decided on the matter, the era of a “Europe of the Regions” is over in the view of organisations like the CoR and IRE; nowadays, it is nothing more than a once popular and idealistic concept that slowly faded away. This is also proven by a summary of milestones and key dates published by the CoR itself. In the entire document, the term “Europe of the Regions” is mentioned twice, one of which is regarding the election of Luc Van Den Brande as President of the Committee, saying that “What we need [...] is not a “Europe of the regions” but a “Europe with the regions, towns and local authorities”.⁸⁴ The findings also signal that the conceptualisation of future regional mobilisation (in terms of a desired objective), albeit important, is not a crucial pillar to the activities of the CoR but seems to be playing a bigger role in the operation of IRE. Giving a name and clear definition to an objective can increase the dedication of employees to achieving that specific goal and that is an important criterion of Weber’s theory of bureaucracy. Therefore, it is possible that emphasising the desire for a “Europe with Strong Regions” can increase efficiency, meaning that IRE may be considered more efficient, in line with Weber’s theory. Regardless of the question of efficiency, it can be uniformly stated that the findings confirm the first-sub-hypothesis saying that a “Europe of the Regions” is defined as a once popular idea that faded away, giving room to a more appropriate and feasible “Europe with the Regions”.

2.2. Institutions’ views on regional developments

Two occurrences were examined regarding regional developments, namely the direct representation of the regions in the EU (i.e. regional offices in Brussels), and the cultural, economic, geographical and political diversity among regions. Although both deserve a paper of their own, I only intend to focus on how the case study institutions relate to the topics, what their opinions are on these matters and how these may have influenced their actions.

2.2.1. Regional offices in Brussels

There are several studies that expand on the role of regional offices operating in Brussels.^{85, 86, 87} As the benefits of these regional offices, the transfer of information, networking opportunities and lobbying are mentioned. Researchers witnessed exponential growth in the

⁸⁴ Committee of the Regions (2011): The Committee of the Regions: Key dates. 1994-2010. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/brochures/Documents/cdr-key-dates-2010/EN.pdf>, checked on 4/7/2018.

⁸⁵ Marks, Gary; Nielsen, François; Ray, Leonard; Salk, Jane E. (2016): Competencies, Cracks, and Conflicts. Regional Mobilization in the European Union.

⁸⁶ Hooghe, Liesbet; Marks, Gary (1996): "Europe with the Regions". Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union.

⁸⁷ Moore, Carolyn (2008): A Europe of the Regions vs. the Regions in Europe. Reflections on Regional Engagement in Brussels. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 18 (5), pp. 517–535. DOI: 10.1080/13597560802351564.

number of regional offices up until 1996 and saw their presence as a somewhat recent development where there is both cooperation and competition among regional offices and also conflict between these offices and other (national) actors.⁸⁸ In the late 2000s, however, these offices were already seen simply as one of the many forms of subnational mobilisation that are well-embedded in the network of institutions, whereby national permanent representations view these offices as partners.⁸⁹ This also seems to be true for European institutions; the CoR welcomes all initiatives that aid regional mobility, including regional offices, proven by their support for local events too.⁹⁰ The CoR also keeps an up-to-date list of all regional offices in Brussels, showing that the institution keeps a keen eye on direct representation channels.⁹¹ It seems that direct and indirect paths of representation are not incompatible but quite the opposite; the CoR also needs strong direct channels, naturally strong members that strive to make a difference. The role of regional offices in Brussels is, therefore, quite important and does not conflict but indeed aid the activities of the CoR.⁹² This is also visible from various documents such as the Opinions Impact Reports published by the CoR; several of these reports of the past years mention the collaboration with regional offices in the Related activities section.^{93, 94} This suggests that the CoR closely cooperates with regional offices and encourages their work.

For IRE, these channels of direct representation in Brussels are crucial, especially when one considers the increased ease of information flow and knowledge transfer that several of the aforementioned academic sources also mention. This is especially the case since there might be an information gap or a flaw in transmitting information between the national government and the regional government; therefore, a regional office in Brussels is necessary to receive information directly. It is also an excellent channel for young people to visit Brussels and learn

⁸⁸ Hooghe, Liesbet; Marks, Gary (1996): "Europe with the Regions". Channels of Regional Representation in the European Union. p. 83.

⁸⁹ Moore, Carolyn (2008): A Europe of the Regions vs. the Regions in Europe. Reflections on Regional Engagement in Brussels. pp. 518-519.

⁹⁰ Committee of the Regions (2016): CoR Local Events. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/cor-local-events.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

⁹¹ Committee of the Regions (2018): Europe in my region. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/regions/pages/europe-in-my-region.aspx>, checked on 4/29/2018.

⁹² Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Maria Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

⁹³ Committee of the Regions (2009): Assessment of the political influence of the CoR. Opinions PS December 2009 and February 2010. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/Archived/Documents/dcfb9221-6b77-4d2b-ba9f-9d95b6b296fa.pdf>, checked on 4/7/2018. p. 26.

⁹⁴ Committee of the Regions (2010): Assessment of the political influence of the CoR. Opinions PS April and June 2010. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/Archived/Documents/14eba4cc-481c-4fde-a30d-ceb7bc8e150c.pdf>, checked on 4/7/2018. p. 24.

more about European affairs that also have a considerable impact on their lives.⁹⁵ This argument shows that regional offices can act as a gateway for two-way information flow: they help bring regions to Europe by being physically present and active participants and they enhance bringing Europe to the regions by transferring information, best practices and know-how via inviting the future generation, organising conferences and so on. And although there is little written evidence of this, this does not mean that IRE does not strongly support the direct representation of regions; rather, it seems that the lack of documentation (which is one of the pillars of Weber's bureaucracy theory) restricts the availability of information about the topic. In turn, the numerous conferences and seminars organised by IRE are an excellent opportunity to make up for the lack of such documentation and information transfer in person. Regardless of these events, IRE is hindered by the lack of documentation; the possibly tacit knowledge is not externalised and made available for members, researchers or the general public. This poses the following questions: Can an organisation be efficient without a system to manage its knowledge? How can one measure efficiency without sufficient knowledge about a matter? These questions signal that bureaucracy may be more helpful than postmodern theories suggest and IRE could become more efficient by improving its documentation on topics like its relation to regional offices in Brussels.

In a sense, both institutions are supportive of regional offices; however, while the CoR works with them closely by co-organising events and inviting them to their own ones, IRE is not directly involved with this channel of direct representation in Brussels but actively works with several regions (like the ones in the Western Balkan) to help them open regional offices. This difference is partially due to the fact that IRE's focus and location are far from Brussels in general and, therefore, the organisation is not as involved in matters happening in Brussels as the CoR, including the activities of regional offices in the capital of Europe.

2.2.2. Diversity

As discussed in detail in the previous chapter concerning the history of European institutions and regionalism, diversity is present across and among European regions in terms of economic and political power as well as cultural and geographical dimensions. Consequently, the extent of political activity and mobilisation differs between regions too. Most academic sources cited above see diversity as a negative element, more of a hindrance to the rise of regions than a phenomenon that could benefit individual regions and, through that, European

⁹⁵ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

regions in general. Therefore, diversity is a rather salient and topical issue and European institutions' take on the matter should be examined. Interestingly, both institutions' views differ from the one expressed in academic papers but seem to be quite similar to one another. The celebration of diversity is very much present in the communication of both organisations; for instance, the report issued by the CoR about the milestones of the Committee in its first 20 years quotes former Prime Minister of Spain Felipe Gonz  les who talked about the importance of local and regional authorities in preserving the diversity in European identity.⁹⁶ Another shining example of the celebration of diversity was the EU Open Doors day on the 6th of May 2017, followed by an event called the "Festival of Regions and Cities" and various other occasions for citizens to engage in dialogue about Europe all over the continent.⁹⁷ Mrs. Lozano's viewpoint (which, based on the aforementioned sources, can be considered representative of the CoR) is that diversity, whether it is linguistic, economic or agricultural, should be celebrated and also utilised by regions. This can be done, for instance, via Smart Specialisation which requires regions to build on their competences and strengths which, of course, are highly varied, and participate in interregional cooperation to boost innovation.⁹⁸ The representative of IRE also believes in taking advantage of the diversity of regions, and that is precisely what IRE does: it brings together regions of differing financial resources, competences and political power to exchange information, network and strive together to find solutions.⁹⁹ There are various examples of regions with distinct cultural, economic and political backgrounds uniting and working on specific problems; one of the most recent such example is the 7th IRE-Expert Conference on "Smart Cities" that welcomed mayors, presidents of regional parliaments and state councillors from a wide range of places including Brasov, Vienna, Essen, Rome and Istria. The conference was held in Salzburg and provided a place for actors from both the public and private sector to network and exchange their opinions and experiences surrounding the topic.¹⁰⁰ An interesting similarity between the CoR and IRE that also underscores both organisations' support for diversity is the fact that they both organise an annual week-long event for regions

⁹⁶ Committee of the Regions (2015): Milestones in the history of the Committee of the Regions. 1994-2014. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://www.cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/CoR-key-dates-1994-2014-EN.PDF>, checked on 4/7/2018. pp. 38-39.

⁹⁷ Committee of the Regions (2017): Reflecting on Europe. European Committee of the Regions opens its doors to citizens. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/Reflecting-on-Europe-CoR-opens-its-doors-to-citizens.aspx>, checked on 4/7/2018.

⁹⁸ Committee of the Regions (2017): Strengthening innovation in Europe's regions through smart specialisation and a strong cohesion policy. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/strengthening-innovation-in-europes-regions.aspx>, checked on 4/7/2018.

⁹⁹ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

¹⁰⁰ Institute of the Regions of Europe (2018): Hot Issue Nr. 480. 7th IRE- Expert Conference on "Smart Cities". Institute of the Regions of Europe. Salzburg, Austria. Available online at <https://mailchi.mp/356482f3c67b/191950vku2-1006001>, checked on 4/7/2018.

and cities; the one held by the CoR is the famous European Week of Regions and Cities in Brussels, while IRE's own event is the Conference on European Regions and Cities in Salzburg. Although the scope of the events is different, their overall objective is the same: to bring together experts, political actors and officials to network, exchange know-how and celebrate the diversity of regions in Europe.

While diversity seems to be positively perceived by both spokesmen, one has to make the counterargument that diversity can indeed have negative consequences. For instance, it is sufficient to look at the convergence (or, better said, the lack thereof) of European member states and how that has been converted from a covert problem to an overt one. This became especially apparent in the case of the single monetary policy of the Eurozone that applies the same policies and measures to all member states. However, they were not sufficiently convergent on several economic measures, which led to severe economic issues of mainly Southern European countries.¹⁰¹ If there are too many different voices with conflicting interests attempting to achieve a certain goal (like it occurs in the CoR with its 350 members who experience the dividing power of diversity),¹⁰² that may hinder the achievement of said objective. Nonetheless, it is clear that both organisations see the diversity of the regions as an inherently positive characteristic that could benefit Europe and the regions within.

Despite the fact that the CoR's activities are based on the cooperation of various types of actors and involve many kinds of contributions, it is a top-down EU-institution with highly regulated and standardised roles and processes. These factors also contribute to the fact that the CoR is at times perceived as an organisation where efficiency levels still have not been maximised.¹⁰³ This is in line with the findings of postmodern organisation theories of bureaucracy, claiming that, departing from Weber's theory on bureaucracy, overly institutionalised processes may hinder efficiency. However, several sources claim that the CoR indeed has been performing well and has been effective in representing local and regional interests, although there is some room for improvement.^{104, 105} In the case of IRE, the issues

¹⁰¹ Regan, Aidan (2013): The 'one size fits all' approach risks intensifying Europe's North-South divide. Policy Network. Available online at http://www.policy-network.net/pno_detail.aspx?ID=4525&title=The+%e2%80%98one+size+fits+all%e2%80%99+approach+risks+intensifying+Europe%e2%80%99s+North-South+divide, checked on 4/7/2018.

¹⁰² Aguilera de Prat, Cesáreo R. (2006): De la "Europa de las Regiones" a la Europa con las Regiones. pp. 63-65.

¹⁰³ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

¹⁰⁴ Carroll, William E. (2011): The Committee of the Regions. A Functional Analysis of the CoR's Institutional Capacity. In *Regional & Federal Studies* 21 (3), pp. 341–354. DOI: 10.1080/13597566.2011.578810. p. 353.

¹⁰⁵ McCarthy, Rosarie E. (1997): The Committee of the Regions. An advisory body's tortuous path to influence. In *Journal of European Public Policy* 4 (3), pp. 439–454. DOI: 10.1080/13501769780000091. p. 451.

with excessive standardisation are much smaller considering the bottom-up nature and somewhat informal working processes of the organisation and its more restricted geographical focus. In the lack of institutionalised structures and lower bureaucratic expectations, IRE can function in a more flexible and efficient way, siding with said postmodern organisation theories and rejecting Weber's theory of the benefits of bureaucracy.

Altogether, the findings are mostly in line with the second sub-hypothesis claiming that the CoR and IRE are both aware of the diversity of regions and the direct representation of them in Brussels. Even though they interact with these phenomena differently, they seem to share the positive attitude towards them and, to different degrees, attempt to make use of and cater to both phenomena in their operations.

2.3. Role and operation of organisations

As already mentioned above, the two organisations fill distinct roles guided by different objectives in the same field. The CoR is designed to be “the voice of regions and cities in the European Union”,¹⁰⁶ meaning that the institution represents subnational entities (all 350 members acting for regional and local authorities) in European decision-making in an official manner. Its setup is somewhat similar to that of the European Commission: it is divided into a total of six commissions based on the policy areas established by the EU Treaties and it holds six plenary sessions in a year, based in Brussels.¹⁰⁷ It fulfils its consultative role during the most of the decision-making process, including the pre-legislative phase, the adoption of the proposal and the discussion of said proposal. Consulting the CoR is mandatory for both the Council and the Commission before deciding on matters that concern some specific topics such as education and economic and social cohesion. On other topics the CoR might be requested to issue an Opinion if the Commission or the Council thinks it is necessary to involve the subnational level in decision-making; however, the CoR may also take the initiative and issue an Opinion when it thinks that regional interests are involved.¹⁰⁸ The consultative role is fulfilled in various ways, one the most important elements being the aforementioned Opinions that are drafted by the commissions of the CoR and then adopted at the plenary meetings. To draft an opinion, a

¹⁰⁶ Committee of the Regions (2018): About CoR. CoR in a nutshell. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/index.aspx>, checked on 4/7/2018.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ European Parliament (2018): EU fact sheets. The Committee of the Regions. European Parliament. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at http://www.europarl.europa.eu/atyourservice/en/displayFtu.html?ftuId=FTU_1.3.14.html, checked on 4/11/2018.

member of the CoR is appointed as rapporteur;¹⁰⁹ interestingly, Prof. Schausberger (who, despite not being the governor of Salzburg anymore, is the representative of the Austrian Salzburg region)¹¹⁰ was chosen as rapporteur to draft an Opinion on Enlargement strategy and main challenges 2014-2015.¹¹¹ These Opinions and resolutions (drafted by chosen rapporteurs) present examples of how the CoR is involved in representing regions at the European level. Essentially, the CoR is the EU institution that ensures that the subsidiarity principle is adhered to. Also, since the CoR monitors the implementation of EU legislation at regional and local level, it is also aware if the legislation is not in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, in which case the Committee has the right to bring this infringement on the principle before the European Court of Justice.¹¹² These actions guarantee that regional and local authorities are well-represented and their rights are protected in European affairs; the CoR helps to bring regions to Europe.

However, this is only the official and institutionalised role of the Committee. Besides this, the CoR is dedicated to fostering the other direction of the two-way street; the organisation wants to bring Europe to the regions too. This is aided in several ways including collaborating with other networks,¹¹³ co-organising events with regions in these regions themselves and involving people interested in regional and European matters in Local Events;¹¹⁴ the list goes on and on. The CoR also provides some financial support to the organisers such as covering the cost of translators and the expenses for media and communication activities.¹¹⁵ The CoR further contributes to the two-way information flow by communication and transparency. For instance, all of the press releases, Opinions, Impact Reports and articles can be found on the website of the CoR; it is key to the activity of the organisation to raise awareness of the issue of regionalism

¹⁰⁹ Committee of the Regions (2018): Opinions and resolutions. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/opinions/Pages/opinions-and-resolutions.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹¹⁰ Committee of the Regions (2018): CoR Member profile. Franz Schausberger. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/Pages/memberprofile.aspx?MemberId=32029>, updated on 4/4/2018, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹¹¹ Committee of the Regions (2015): CoR calls for further regionalising and decentralising reform in enlargement countries. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/CoR-calls-for-further-regionalising-and-decentralising-reform-in-enlargement-countries.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹¹² Committee of the Regions (2018): Work of the CoR. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/activities/Pages/work-of-the-cor.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹¹³ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

¹¹⁴ Committee of the Regions (2016): CoR Local Events. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Pages/cor-local-events.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹¹⁵ Committee of the Regions (2018): Local Events by the European Committee of the Regions. Committee of the Regions. Leaflet/Flyer. Available online at <https://cor.europa.eu/en/events/Documents/Local%20events%20leaflet/Local%20Events%20leaflet-EN.pdf>, checked on 4/11/2018.

and of the activities of the CoR.¹¹⁶ Such a communicative and open attitude is of crucial importance in dealing with the issue of democratic deficit in the EU. The question of democratic deficit has been discussed by many authors including Andrew Moravcsik, Andre Follendal and Simon Hix, arguing either for the legitimacy of the current system and how it is truly and democratically representing the European population or against it.^{117, 118} Even if Moravcsik is right and there is no real democratic deficit, there is no denial in stating that the EU is often perceived as something superficial and rather distant from everyday citizens. The CoR, therefore, tries to bring Europe closer to these citizens by spreading more information about it and showing the relevance of various European matters to the people via the regional and local channels. Therefore, albeit the role of the CoR is primarily of legislative and political nature (i.e. to help regional and local authorities influence European decision-making), it also engages in enhancing the communication between the several layers of governance and aiding the transparency of European affairs to the public.

Organisations like IRE consider the CoR as a trend-setter, as the organisation that shows the (future) direction of regionalism.¹¹⁹ Although the CoR has not been directly and consciously cooperating with IRE, there are some links between the two organisations, even if they are not as one had imagined. For instance, Prof. Schausberger, the founder of IRE, has been a member of the CoR since 1996 and, as mentioned above, has even been selected as rapporteur for an Opinion. Further, in 2016 he became a special adviser to Johannes Hahn who is the EU Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations.¹²⁰ These also show the involvement of Prof. Schausberger (and, through him indirectly, IRE) in some of the workings of the CoR. Also, IRE is one of over 4000 signatories of the #CohesionAlliance, a coalition of actors strongly in favour of keeping the cohesion policy as a pillar of the EU's future. The initiative was launched by the CoR and has the support of all regional associations; it can be signed by individuals, organisations and institutions to show support for working

¹¹⁶ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

¹¹⁷ Moravcsik, Andrew (2002): In Defence of the 'Democratic Deficit'. Reassessing Legitimacy in the European Union. In *Journal of Common Market Studies* 40 (4), pp. 603–624. DOI: 10.1111/1468-5965.00390.

¹¹⁸ Follesdal, Andreas; Hix, Simon (2006): Why There is a Democratic Deficit in the EU. A Response to Majone and Moravcsik. In *Journal of Common Market Studies* 44 (3), pp. 533–562. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-5965.2006.00650.x.

¹¹⁹ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

¹²⁰ Committee of the Regions (2018): Local-government involvement 'absolutely essential' if Western Balkan states are to join EU. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/Local-government-involvement-Western-Balkan.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

towards “a stronger, effective and more visible cohesion policy for all regions”.¹²¹ IRE, therefore, aims to actively participate in the initiatives of the CoR that are either general enough to adapt to IRE’s own specific goals and activities or are specific but the topics largely overlap with those at IRE. For instance, as mentioned above, the enlargement of the EU and the strengthening of regions in Eastern and Southeast Europe is an issue close to IRE’s heart; therefore, Prof. Schausberger’s involvement as rapporteur and special adviser in the matter is completely understandable. On the one hand, IRE (and especially its founder) can provide the CoR with valuable expertise and experience regarding currently non-EU (but, by the looks of it, soon-to-be-EU) regions especially in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. This does not only help the CoR but, through it, also the EU bodies in preparing for and aiding the enlargement while involving regional and local authorities as well. On the other hand, working through the CoR may provide IRE with information about further regional and enlargement processes in general too which might help it in its further activities. This link to the CoR, therefore, is an official and structured one for Prof. Schausberger and an indirect way for IRE through the aforementioned personal contact.

Besides some indirect work with the CoR, IRE has plenty of ways to help regions. These activities include the publication of a (quarterly) newsletter and several information sheets, the organisation of seminars, lectures, meetings and discussions, the formation of committees to handle the issues relevant to the association’s purposes, setting up a database and a collection of publications established for the achievement of the association’s objectives and conducting information events.¹²² Nowadays, IRE, as mentioned above, organises annual conferences called the Conference on European Regions and Cities but it also cooperates with various national, regional and local actors to set up thematic conferences concerning distinct fields such as that of the Smart Cities conference series.¹²³ These events are a great opportunity for regional and local authorities to network and establish contact to other actors from both the public and private sector for future cooperation. Usually, IRE does not initiate schemes concerning specific projects by itself; the initiative and the idea has to come from the region(s) and IRE facilitates the exchange of information and know-how through organising conferences and seminars. In a

¹²¹ Committee of the Regions (2017): The #CohesionAlliance. A strong EU cohesion policy beyond 2020. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/takepart/Pages/cohesion-alliance-intro.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹²² Csiba, Betti (4/4/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Joachim Fritz. Salzburg, Austria.

¹²³ Institute of the Regions of Europe (2018): 7th IRE- Expert Conference on “Smart Cities”. Institute of the Regions of Europe. Salzburg, Austria. Available online at <http://ir000044.host.inode.at/de/7th-ire-expert-conference-on-smart-cities-2/>, checked on 4/30/2018.

way, IRE acts as a catalyst or almost like a midwife for future projects; it provides the right circumstances but the end results depend largely on the subnational actors themselves.

One of the biggest initiatives was the Café d'Europe, a Europe-wide cultural project organised on the 9th of May 2006 by IRE under the EU Presidency of Austria. The event took place in cafés in all capitals of the 27 member states to invite the public (mainly young people) to discuss the questions, stories, issues and topics connected to Europe.¹²⁴ This project also shows that IRE shares the CoR's goals: to bring regions to Europe by inviting their citizens to European discussions and to bring Europe to the regions by organising various events where participants can connect to each other and share experiences, best practices and know-how about European and regional affairs. Besides this, IRE, as can also be read in the statute of the organisation,¹²⁵ is also an academic institute in a way that it is a centre dedicated to collecting important works related to regionalism within (and outside of) the EU and to encouraging the production of such works through its internship programme open to all students, even to those from outside of Europe.

Altogether, it is clear that the third sub-hypothesis (which assumes that although the ultimate objective is rather similar for the institutions, their intermediate goals and their paths are vastly different) is to a large extent confirmed. Given by the origin, nature, size and financial position, the CoR plays a much more substantial role as an advocate of the inclusion of regions in European governance. It is a political organisation (with recent changes to incorporate more political debate in the plenary sessions)¹²⁶ that, although it works directly with regions, operates on the European legislative field. In contrast, IRE is a non-profit and politically impartial organisation that is more involved in smaller-scale, more practical initiatives and solutions with a more specific geographical focus. As for the efficiency of both organisations, IRE operates on a more personal and less structured basis with considerably fewer bureaucratic checks than the CoR. This makes IRE less structured and hierarchical but also more flexible and, in line with the aforementioned postmodern organisational theories, more reactive and efficient. However, the CoR publishes Impact Reports and various assessments that attempt to measure the organisation's impact on legislative measures and the political mobilisation of regions in

¹²⁴ Europaforum (2006): Café d'Europe. Europaweites Kulturprojekt. Europaforum. Luxembourg. Available online at http://www.europaforum.public.lu/fr/actualites/2006/04/27cafe_europa/index.html, updated on 3/22/2017, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹²⁵ Board of Directors, Institute of the Regions of Europe (2004): Statuten des Vereines "Verein zur Förderung des Instituts der Regionen Europas (IRE)". Source: Archive of IRE, pp. 1–10, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹²⁶ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

general. Albeit this evaluation is challenging for several reasons, the written documentation of activities and achievements is an important step in the direction of improving efficiency. In this case, this criterion of Weber's bureaucracy theory (written documentation) is necessary to shed light on not only the positives but also the potential flaws or things the CoR has lacked which it can improve based on the reports. In contrast, while IRE does reflect on the outcomes of individual conferences and projects (which, in case of the latter, is partly mandatory since it is often co-financed by other organisations who demand such evaluation),¹²⁷ it does not prepare such thorough documentation on a regular basis. Although the lack of such documentation is not a problem in itself, it makes it difficult to learn from previous experiences on an institutional basis since the knowledge remains tacit and is not made explicit. In this sense, IRE may be able to operate more efficiently if it incorporated this specific aspect of bureaucracy. Nonetheless, its flexibility and the lack of formalisation holds considerable advantages in terms of efficiency of operation, countering Weber's argument of bureaucracy being the most rational and efficient way of organisation.

2.4. Achievements and challenges

The findings above signal that regionalism (without needing a catchphrase like "Europe of the Regions") has come a long way. Despite the aforementioned criticism towards regionalism and the CoR itself, there are numerous trends and events of the past 10-15 years that facilitated the operation of the CoR and IRE. For instance, the question of and desire for decentralisation in the late 1990s, early 2000s,¹²⁸ although it did not apply to all countries homogeneously, led to increased activity at the subnational level. Since both the CoR and IRE can only function effectively when the members are actively involved, such enthusiasm (in some countries paired with the actual decentralisation of competences and funds) greatly contributed to the successful operation of these organisations. Another huge win for the CoR and, therefore, European regions in general, was the signing and ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 that endowed the CoR with new powers. These include the aforementioned mandatory consultation of the CoR by all major EU bodies during the entire legislative process, the increased scope for involvement in EU decision-making (i.e. a horizontal expansion of powers) and the right to bring actions before the European Court of Justice in the case

¹²⁷ Csiba, Betti (4/4/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Joachim Fritz, Salzburg, Austria.

¹²⁸ Centre for Tax Policy and Administration (2002): Fiscal decentralisation in EU applicant states and selected EU member states. Report prepared for the workshop on "Decentralisation: trends, perspective and issues at the threshold of EU enlargement". Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. Paris. Available online at <https://www.oecd.org/tax/tax-policy/2765013.pdf>, checked on 4/11/2018. pp. 14-16.

mentioned above.¹²⁹ Besides strengthening the CoR, the new treaty explicitly respects the principle of self-government on the regional and local level and the subsidiary principle has four official levels: European, national, regional and local.¹³⁰ From IRE's point of view, these achievements are also important. Even though the organisation does not get involved in the legislative and political aspects of regionalism, it is nonetheless important that its members' positions in Europe (at least of the members that are located in an EU member state) as subnational authorities are strengthened, since the objective of IRE is to achieve a "Europe with Strong Regions".¹³¹ There are numerous smaller-scale successes to both institutions ranging from successful application for certain European funds in IRE's case to fruitful cooperation between the CoR and other networks that are too many to include in this thesis. It seems that European regions and the institutions aiding them are on the right path.

Despite these great achievements of the past 10-15 years, there also have been some serious challenges that either hindered European regionalism directly or made it difficult for the CoR and IRE to exploit their full potential, thereby indirectly creating burdens to subnational entities. One of these was the economic and financial crisis of 2008-2009. In times of a crisis, budgetary cuts are often made and some have questioned the necessity of regional mobilisation,¹³² thereby questioning the existence of institutions like IRE and even the CoR since some sceptics feel that the work of the CoR is not of primary importance.¹³³ Such economic and financial difficulties resulting in budgetary cuts are not just restrictive in a very practical sense but also signal a trend reversal away from a regionally-oriented Europe and make the work of institutions like the ones examined in this thesis challenging. In addition, the recent wave of nationalism and Euroscepticism has been damaging too,^{134, 135} since inward-looking and overly nationalistic governments are more likely to, instead of decentralising, centralise competences and funds for administrative and governing purposes. This might not always be visible; in Hungary, the traditional so-called *járások* (translated as districts in lack of

¹²⁹ Committee of the Regions (2018): Lisbon Treaty. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/about/interinstitutional/Pages/lisbon-treaty.aspx>, checked on 4/11/2018.

¹³⁰ Committee of the Regions: A new treaty: a new role for regions and local authorities. Committee of the Regions. Brussels, Belgium. Available online at <http://cor.europa.eu/en/documentation/brochures/Documents/84fa6e84-0373-42a2-a801-c8ea83a24a72.pdf>, checked on 4/11/2018. p. 2.

¹³¹ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

¹³² Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

¹³³ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

¹³⁴ Csiba, Betti (4/3/2018): The Institute of the Regions of Europe and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with Franz Schausberger. Salzburg, Austria.

¹³⁵ Csiba, Betti (3/26/2018): The Committee of the Regions and a "Europe of the Regions". Interview with María Lozano. Brussels, Belgium.

a better word) have been legally re-established in 2012, further dividing the 19+1 counties (the +1 being the capital city).¹³⁶ However, there is no denial that the government has stepped on an autocratic path that, despite the seemingly decentralised governmental setup, is centralised both in terms of funds and competences. Such trends are also present in several other countries including Poland. While this may not be hindering regionalism and the works of the CoR directly, they signal a break with previous trends and indeed create additional burdens for the regions of said countries. As for IRE, its functioning is even more affected since some of these countries fall exactly in the geographical scope of the organisation. Besides these major trends, there are various other hindrances such as the level of corruption in some states and regions and, despite the efforts of various organisations and EU bodies, the limited extent of public knowledge and interest of both these initiatives and the intertwining of European and regional affairs. In light of these findings, one can confirm the fourth sub-hypothesis expressing that the examined institutions acknowledge largely the same achievements and perceive mostly the same problems in the way of European regionalism and even their own functioning.

¹³⁶ Miniszterelnökség (2017): A járáskról. Járáskereső. Járásinfó. Budapest. Available online at <http://jarasinfo.gov.hu/jarasokrol>, checked on 4/11/2018.

Conclusion

This thesis addresses the question of European regions and the effect of two European institutions on contributing to a “Europe of the Regions”, namely that of the Committee of the Regions and the Institute of the Regions of Europe. Independent regions are not a new phenomenon; in fact, subnational entities were functional geographical and governing units well before nation states were even established. Now, the role of regions, partly with the aid of European institutions like the ones examined in this thesis, is on the rise again – even if the path to regional mobilisation and governance is a diverse and at times rocky road. There is talk about the fall of the nation state due to the erosion of countries’ powers from below and above, i.e. from the supranational governing powers of the EU and from subnational authorities. Some relate this phenomenon to a “Europe of the Regions”, an idea popularised in the 1980s and early 1990s that has by now lost its appeal to many but not all, often giving room to the idea of a “Europe with the Regions”. While the former approach emphasises the rise of regions that overtake the position of nation states, supporters of the latter concept believe in the functioning of multilevel governance in Europe whereby regions and other subnational entities play a substantial role as well.

This thesis fits into the academic debate around the question of a “Europe of the Regions” as well as the role of European institutions in shaping and contributing to this phenomenon and regional mobility in general. A lot of previous research is either outdated, incomplete or mostly descriptive on the effect of certain European institutions on regional matters. Further, there are few if any timely relevant and analytical studies that compare the contribution of various institutions to the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”. This gap in previous research led to the research question of this very thesis, which is: *How do the Committee of the Regions and the Institute of the Regions of Europe compare in contributing to a “Europe of the Regions”?* These organisations (namely the CoR and IRE) were chosen with care in order to gain insight into the differences and similarities as well as the causes for these between an institutionalised top-down European construction and a bottom-up initiative. The thesis is based on the causal narrative method, a type of comparative-historical methodology that allows for the in-depth analysis of causal processes. Besides this, the study makes use of a wide range of secondary and primary resources including three semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the case study organisations. In addition, a conceptual framework is applied, namely that of organisational efficiency and Weber’s theory of bureaucracy to discover whether a bureaucratic organisation like the CoR really is more efficient than a less bureaucratic one like IRE.

There are four sub-questions regarding the following sub-topics: the conceptualisation and definition of a “Europe of the Regions”; the institutions’ responses regarding direct representation channels as well as diversity among European regions; the role and strategies of the organisations; and the challenges and achievements related to regional matters. With the aid of the aforementioned frameworks and sources, the four sub-hypotheses originating from the four sub-questions were successfully evaluated and the main research question could be answered. Regarding the conceptualisation and definition of a “Europe of the Regions” or, for that matter, regional mobilisation in general, it seems that conceptualisation, albeit important, is not a crucial pillar to the activities of these institutions (even though it seems to have a greater influence in IRE’s operations). It is important to note, however, that the definition of regions with which the two institutions collaborate is different: the CoR represents and unites all NUTS II level regions while IRE focuses on working with “political regions”, i.e. subnational entities with an independent governing body. In addition, the CoR does not use a catchphrase like a “Europe of the Regions” to describe its objective for regional matters; at the same time, IRE tends to emphasise the need and desire for a “Europe with Strong Regions”. Altogether, the findings confirm the first-sub-hypothesis stating that a “Europe of the Regions” is defined as an interesting and once popular idea that faded away, giving room to a more appropriate and feasible “Europe with the Regions”.

As for the second sub-question regarding the aforementioned regional developments and phenomena, findings show that the CoR and IRE are both very aware of the diversity of regions and the direct representation of them in Brussels. Also, in line with the second sub-hypothesis, diversity is seen as a positive by both organisations: it is perceived as an opportunity by the CoR and IRE for regions to help each other grow based on their different competences and strengths. The direct representation of regions (i.e. regional offices in Brussels) are also considered a positive development: it is one of the many channels for regions to gather information, network and lobby to make their voices heard.

The role and strategies of the organisations relate to the third sub-hypothesis which assumes that although the ultimate objective is rather similar for the institutions, their intermediate goals and their paths are vastly different. Given by the origin, nature, size and financial position, the CoR plays a much more substantial role as an advocate of the inclusion of regions in European governance. It is a political organisation that is mostly active on the European legislative field besides its other activities like local/regional events that help the

spreading of information to the citizens of Europe. In contrast, IRE is a non-profit and politically impartial institute that is more involved in smaller-scale, more practical initiatives and solutions with a more specific geographical focus. It focuses on the regions of Eastern and Southeast Europe, even including those outside of the EU to ease the future enlargement of the Union from the point of the potential member states and their regions. Also, IRE often works on the basis of personal connections as opposed to the well-structured and institutionalised channels of the CoR. Nonetheless, the main objective of both organisations is quite similar: to create a future of strong influential regions in Europe. Therefore, the third sub-hypothesis is largely confirmed.

The fourth and final sub-hypothesis expresses that the examined institutions acknowledge largely the same achievements and perceive mostly the same problems in the way of European regionalism and even their own functioning. This is also confirmed by the findings: the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty is one of the biggest achievements of the past 15 years and the powers it gives to regions and the CoR are a milestone in regional mobilisation and strengthening. This accomplishment also bears great significance to IRE since it strengthens subnational actors which is one of IRE's main objectives. That, paired with active and enthusiastic regions, has contributed substantially to the rise of regions. One of the biggest obstacles is seen in the attitude of several nation states and other political actors that do not see regional mobilisation and the works of European institutions aiding the process as necessary. Some countries, like Hungary, have stepped on the road of recentralisation and inward-looking nationalism that stands in the way of the strengthening of regions. Other factors such as budgetary restraints and the low (or even lack of) interest in regional matters from the citizens also have a limiting effect on regional mobilisation.

As for the question of efficiency, one would expect the CoR to be the more efficient organisation of the two when applying Weber's theory of bureaucracy and its six characteristics to these organisations. Considering that the CoR fulfils most of these criteria (fixed scope of activity, hierarchical organisation, written documentation as a base of action, expert training, devotion of officials and the following of general rules by management), it is no wonder that one would expect it to be more efficient than IRE, a smaller initiative that lacks some of these characteristics. However, IRE's smaller scale, more restricted geographical scope and increased flexibility (the latter of which is directly related to the lack of some bureaucratic measures) seems to make the institute more efficient in achieving its goals, even if they are not as well

documented as in the case of CoR. These findings are more in line with some postmodern theories that make a case against formalisation; however, it does not go completely against Weber's theory. Namely, the German sociologist described these characteristics as those of an ideal bureaucracy which can rarely (if ever) be found in its entirety in real-life organisations. Weber also warned of the danger of the "iron cage" of bureaucracy,¹³⁷ meaning that rationalisation and increased bureaucracy, if not carried out as described by him in an ideal way, may be overly restrictive and eventually lead to decreased efficiency. In light of this, expecting a bureaucratic system far from the ideal bureaucracy described by Weber is somewhat unrealistic, showing that the question of efficiency and the comparison of the two organisations in terms of it is a bigger challenge than it seems.

To answer the main research question, the thesis can conclude that a "Europe of the Regions" has not been realised, partly because it turned out to be an overly ambitious and, in some ways, unreasoned objective; however, considerable progress has been made in the field of regionalism and regional mobilisation to which the examined institutions contributed substantially. While the role, size and intended purpose of the two analysed organisations are widely different, just like the scope and nature of their activities, the contribution of both has been of great importance in straightening the path to increased regionalism for European regions. The findings also show that the path Europe will follow in the future is not yet unambiguous; however, a total disappearance of the nation state and the creation of a federal Europe of regions appears to be unlikely. Nonetheless, it seems that one can expect the further political mobilisation of regions supported by the increased powers of the CoR – despite the recent rise in Euroscepticism and the questioning of the *raison d'être* of regional mobility and the organisations aiding it. In addition, bottom-up initiatives like IRE will contribute to the strengthening of regions and their cooperation on different projects, helping to complement the works of the CoR in a more practical way. These (and similar) organisations will keep working in different ways towards the same goal: a more united but still diverse Europe consisting of regions that are powerful and have a say in European legislation and politics.

Considering the findings presented above, the contribution of the paper is manifold. It fills the gap regarding the impact of European institutions (besides the governing bodies of the EU) on shaping a "Europe of the Regions" or, seeing that the term has become somewhat irrelevant, regional mobilisation in general; such analyses are rare and often already outdated

¹³⁷ Hatch, Mary Jo; Cunliffe, Ann L. (2013): Organization theory. Modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives. p. 25.

in today's environment. Moreover, the study is academically relevant due to not only its methodology (i.e. the chosen case studies and the causal narrative methodology) and its use of sources (the combination of expert opinions and other primary and secondary sources) but also due to its conceptual framework of Weber's bureaucracy and efficiency argument. It compares a well-known EU institution with an organisation that is not yet widely known but has been an active player in the field of regional matters in the past 14 years. In addition, it is not only descriptive of the different channels regions can utilise to strengthen themselves economically and politically. It also offers a new perspective of European institutions through the lens of the conceptual framework, namely efficiency and bureaucracy, an issue closely related not just to European institutions but all organisations. Besides its valuable contribution that adds to the academic debate to settle the question of a "Europe of the Regions", this thesis is also relevant for our society: it helps academics and policy-makers better recognise the trends related to regionalism. In the end, it is clear that regionalism is a recurring phenomenon, but this study helps to partially discover the likely path Europe will follow: regions with ever-growing influence despite some current negative trends concerning regionalism. This is combined with the remaining of the current European political setup of nation states that are, however, weakening in their gatekeeper position but are unlikely to completely disappear any time soon. This knowledge also enables decision-makers to identify the remaining gaps and determine future goals for policies affecting the regions in Europe.

Despite the unique and valuable insight this thesis provides, it also has several limitations that have to be mentioned and kept in mind. During the analysis, although many different primary and secondary sources were considered, there is a considerable reliance on the semi-structured interviews with the representatives of the institutions. As mentioned in the Introduction, using such subjective sources may generate biased information and, because of this, could lead to conclusions that might not be as firmly grounded in objective facts as necessary. However, I attempted to countervail this issue by, when possible, contrasting the information gathered from the interviews with other, more objective or official sources. Also, even though interviews are often considered subjective and are, therefore, disregarded as a potential source of information, they often provide a great deal of detail and in-depth knowledge that help the researcher to form a better, fuller picture of the subject of the analysis. For this study, the interviews proved invaluable, especially in the case of IRE where there were a limited number of other sources (insofar that, for instance, there have been no academic studies conducted on the organisation).

An additional limitation of the paper is that it is not a generalisable study whose findings could be applied like a scheme to other similar organisations without further thorough investigation. This is for two reasons, namely that it is a qualitative and not a quantitative analysis (meaning that findings are not categorised and quantified into measurable output) and that the research was conducted on only two case studies. However, as a qualitative study with the suitable methodology of a comparative-historical method, this thesis still provides in-depth knowledge about the specific research subjects; as opposed to being broadly applicable, it is narrow in scope but thorough in terms of depth. Considering the topic of the paper, such a research methodology proved to be a better fit even if findings are not generally applicable in a blueprint-like manner. Furthermore, the number of case studies (two) might seem too low; however, further case studies like that of Interreg of the Assembly of European Regions would have made the paper excessively extensive and, therefore, incomprehensible.

Another related characteristic is the fact that the CoR and IRE, the two case study organisations, are widely different which is already apparent at first sight; they fill completely different roles (or do not even have one) in European policy-making. This dissimilarity might seem like an argument against comparing these institutions. However, it is important to emphasise that the choice of two such different case studies was conscious, one of the reasons being the ability to compare a powerful top-down and a smaller bottom-up organisation in terms of the efficiency of their operations. Further, the goal of the thesis was to analyse the differences and similarities (and the reasons thereof) between these organisations that operate differently but work towards the same overall objective: the mobilisation and strengthening of European regions. This comparison could not have been conducted the same way in the case of two institutions with a similar organisational structure.

Future research may seek to produce similar but improved studies by mitigating or eliminating the limitations of this thesis. For instance, subsequent papers could make use of an even wider range of primary and secondary sources which would enable researchers to rely less on interviews and, thereby, produce possibly more objective findings. Also, future studies could examine more than two case studies; for example, several smaller organisations could be analysed for a fuller picture of how bottom-up initiatives help to shape the landscape of regionalism in Europe. In addition, future research could combine the findings of this thesis and the valuable (and still valid) classification of the channels of regional representation used by Liesbet Hooghe and Gary Marks; this way, a more recent and extensive study could be executed

on European institutions and other channels of representation for subnational entities. Further, since one of the limitations of the thesis is its qualitative as opposed to quantitative nature, a more extensive and general study could gather information that could then be quantified, providing invaluable current information and a generalisable base for further research on regionalism and European institutions.

Moreover, this thesis seeks to inspire fellow researchers to investigate related topics. Future papers could have a broader scope and examine the efforts and achievements of European organisations aiding regionalism in a more general way, not just related to the concept of a “Europe of the Regions”. While general studies like this have been common in the past, there is a need for such research in the light of recent developments. Such papers could build on this thesis to obtain specific information about the CoR or even IRE to be incorporated in them. Furthermore, although a theoretical framework concerning efficiency is embedded in this study, the analysis is not structured around the framework completely and, therefore, provides only limited information about the efficiency of European regionalist institutions. Further research could attempt to interlink more theories related to governance and management in the public sector to explain the (in)efficiency of current European policy-making in a more detailed way, thereby generating a more theoretical extension of the current study. Also, the restriction of the geographical scope to be analysed could also be useful and lead to interesting findings. The aforementioned diversity across European regions makes it difficult to evaluate the exact effects of European institutions on regionalism. By confining the analysis to a country or a group of similar countries or regions, researchers could, to some extent, correct for the vast diversity within the EU.

While this thesis could not possibly cover all aspects related to regionalism and European institutions, it provides important findings that hope to inspire and influence others researching similar topics. In the end, the question of European regions is far from being completely answered but every bit of new information is like a new puzzle piece to help the academic community and the public form a more thorough understanding of the intertwining relation of the EU and the regions that compose it.

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Appendix

Appendix 1: Interview questions – To what extent did different international organisations contribute to a “Europe of the Regions”?

Questions about the interviewer and his/her relation with the organisation

1. What is your name?
2. What is your position at the institution and for how long have you been working in it?
3. What tasks does your current position entail?
4. For how long have you been working at the institution in total?

Questions about the conceptualisation/definition of a “Europe of the Regions”

1. How do you define a “Europe of the Regions”?
2. Is it a geographic, economic, political or other kind of concept to you? What does the concept mean to your institution?
3. Based on the definition given by you, do you see a “Europe of the Regions” a viable/feasible goal? Why/Why not?
4. Some authors define a “Europe of the Regions” as a concept where subnational entities (i.e. regions) take over the roles of nation states in governance. Based on this definition, do you think the EU should work towards a “Europe of the Regions”? Why/Why not?

Questions about the developments of regional affairs in Europe

1. In recent years, the number of regions that started seeking direct representation in European affairs through, for example, lobbying and thereby sidestepping institutions that facilitate indirect representation, has increased. What is your institution’s take on this phenomenon?
2. There is a great range of diversity among European regions in terms of economic and political power as well as cultural and geographical dimensions. Consequently, there are also numerous regions that are not mobilising in European affairs, especially in countries where subnational entities do not have a strong identity or economic or political power. This, by definition, hinders the fulfilment of a Europe of the Regions. To what extent and in what way does your institution deal with this question?
3. What is your institution’s take on secessionist developments of some regions like Catalonia? To what extent and in what way do you think they will affect a “Europe of the Regions”?

4. There has been talk of a “Europe with the Regions” as opposed to a “Europe of the Regions”, marking the remaining significance of nation states and the impossibility of basing European governance on regions as primary actors. How does your institution relate to this concept?

Questions about the role of institutions in working towards a “Europe of the Regions”

1. What do you see as your own institution’s role in creating a “Europe of the Regions” in the period of 2004-2017?
2. To what extent do you think your institution have contributed to the rise of European regions and what was the nature of this contribution?
3. What do you see as the role of IRE/Committee of the Regions in creating a “Europe of the Regions” in the period of 2004-2017?
4. To what extent do you think IRE/Committee of the Regions has contributed to the rise of European regions and what was the nature of this contribution?
5. During the period 2004-2017, to what extent did your institution collaborate with IRE/Committee of the Regions and what was the nature of this cooperation?

Questions about achievements and challenges in working towards a “Europe of the Regions”

1. What do you see as the biggest achievement(s) in the period of 2004-2017 that helped work towards a “Europe of the Regions”?
2. What do you think were the biggest contributing factors to these successes?
3. During the period 2004-2017, what do you see as the biggest obstacle(s) to the rise of regions and what was the nature of these challenges?
4. To what extent and in what way do you imagine resolving the aforementioned obstacle(s) to help European regions?