

# Historical Explanations Behind Differences:

The Parallel Development of the Committee of the Regions  
and Regional Offices

*I don't enjoy writing.*

*I enjoy having written.*

- George R. R. Martin<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> O'Toole, Garson. "Don't Like to Write, But Like Having Written." Web log post. *Quote Investigator*. N.p., 18 Oct. 2014. Web. 19 Oct. 2014. <<http://quoteinvestigator.com/2014/10/18/on-writing/>>.

# Abstract

This is a comparative case study of the Committee of the Regions and regional offices. It explores using written records whether history can unveil contrasting features between these two systems using historical institutionalism as the guide. First, it examines the beginning of regional engagement in the European Union with the formation of European Regional Development Fund and the Single European Act. Second, it explores the historical development and implications for the Committee of the Regions and regional offices. It concludes by establishing considerable differences in institutional design and regional representation. The former took a sanctioned constitutional path with equality in regional representation, while the latter an external path with diverse regional representation.

*Key words:* European Union, regions, Committee of the Regions, regional offices, historical institutionalism

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# Table of contents

## **1. Introduction**

**1**

Research Question

1

Literature Review

1

## **2. Methodology**

**4**

Theoretical Perspective

5

Data Collection

5

Limitations

7

## **3. Theory**

**8**

Institutions

8

Historical Institutionalism

8

Formation

9

Isomorphism

9

Path Dependence

10

Inertia

10

## **4. Regions in the European Union**

**12**

A New Beginning for Regions

12

The Emergence of Regional Policies

13

Creation of the European Regional Development Fund

13

Consequences of the Single European Act

15

## **5. Committee of the Regions**

**18**

More Symbol than Remedy

18

Formation at the Maastricht Treaty Negotiations

19

Lasting Effects From Being a Replication

22

Few Opportunities to Change

23

## **6. Regional Offices**

**26**

Sidestepping the State

26

No Longer Foreign Policy, but European Policy

28

Impact of the Committee of the Regions

29

Pushed and Pulled into Brussels

29

Pushed for Self-Determination

30

Pulled for Funding Opportunities

31

Shaped by the Lobbying Environment

32

## **7. Discussion**

**35**

## **8. Conclusion**

**40**

## **9. References**

**41**

# 1. Introduction

If one stands on the right street in Brussels, it is possible to see two drastically different buildings right next to each other. The Committee of the Regions is located in a dazzling contemporary high-rise staffed with hundreds of bureaucrats. A stone's throw away stands a 100 year old castle which houses the Bavarian regional office. Each of them symbolize the separate paths of Europe's regions into the European Union.

Going backwards in time is sometimes necessary to find explanations for the present. The purpose with this study is to find explanations behind the differences between the Committee of the Regions and regional offices by looking at their historical developments. Comparative studies with both institutions are rare in published literature. The intent is to clarify their discrepancies by placing them in a chronicled context.

## Research Question

This study aims to discover differences between the two foremost institutions for regions in the European Union. **How did the emergence of regional policies in the European Union distinctly shape the Committee of the Regions and regional offices?** Factors that will be explored are the historical background behind the emergence of regional engagement in the European Union, how those events led to their creations, their choice of paths to engage with the European Union, their variation in composition of regions, and any observable effects put forward by components of historical institutionalism. The will done by the method of exploring written records such as academic publications and books that describe events taking place from the earliest period of the European Union up to the present day. It does not aim to do a comparison to evaluate which institution is better for regions or more influential in the European Union decision-making process.

## Literature Review

This thesis will explore some of unused ideas present in political science research by looking to understand regional offices as an institution for regions in the European Union and to explore the common history and parallel developments of the Committee of the Regions and regional offices. At present, the most prevailing

methods to study the Committee of the Regions and regional offices have been to investigate them separately. This should be considered puzzling. First of all, they both share the same historical developments and prompts which brought them into existence. Their common history is the explanation as to why the murmur calling for creating a Committee of the Regions and the first regional offices appeared about the same time period in the European Union's history of late 1980s and early 1990s, owing to the Single European Act's introduction of the Single Market and the adjusted European Regional Development Funds. Scholarly research reflected upon this surge of regions in the mid-1980s as "regional mobilization" (Hooghe 1995). Among them were Gary Marks' work in the late 1980s and early 1990s developing the concept 'multi-level governance' and adding to the academic postulation of a rise of a 'Europe of the Regions'. While the former remains steadfast in literature, a 'Europe of the Regions' has waned off. This thesis does not explore either of those concepts, but a great deal of the articles that have been cited in this thesis discuss and incorporate them. Moore (2008b) has been one of the few that discusses the paradox of the demise of 'Europe of the Regions' while we are witnessing unparalleled growth of regional offices. Secondly, they are both representatives of the same constituency: Regions. Regional offices and the Committee of the Regions are the only two evident representatives whose sole purposes are to represent regional interest within the European Union, the other four alternatives being European Parliament, European Commission, the Council of Ministers and European networks and associations (Tatham 2008: 493). This should invite opportunities for comparative research, but this has so far remained unfulfilled. Most research reflects the perspective that they are largely unassociated. Even among researchers who have studied them both, for example Charlie Jeffery, write either about regional offices (1997, 1996a, 1996b) or the Committee of the Regions (1995, 2012 with Rowe). With exception of Moore (2008b) there is little comparative or parallel examination of the Committee of the Regions and regional offices.

The disconnect is evident in how they are approached by researchers. Much of the research on the Committee of the Regions focus on it as an institution: Ineffectiveness, operational shortcomings, irrelevance, influence, decision-making and internal divisions. Correspondingly, while regional offices have been examined in the aggregate (Huyseune and Jans 2008; Marks et al. 2002; Chalmers 2013; Donas and Beyers 2012; Callanan and Tatham 2013), they have not been studied from the viewpoint as an institution. Instead research tend to focus on examining it from the perspective of regional interest representation, the historical developments of individual offices or several regional offices within certain Member States. Much of the research on individual offices center around German and English offices for markedly historical reasons as they were the groundbreakers and remain big and influential actors in Brussels. English offices are also most likely slightly better reflected in published literature because the research cited is predominately in the English language. Researchers tend to write about regional offices in their native tongue (e.g. Badiello 1998, Nouvilas Rodrigo 2012, Jerneck and Gidlund 2001). Carolyn Rowe's book "Regional

Representations in the EU: Between Diplomacy and Interest Mediation” (2011) might be one of the most exhaustively written contemporary works in the field. The book is outstandingly researched and incorporates substantial amounts of academic literature. While the book documents their origins from the 1980s period of regional mobilization (Chapter 2), it focuses more on their developments in the 1990s and onwards. The book does not go back into history far enough, especially on the very early details and historical importance of the European Regional Development Funds and Single European Act. Most literature immediately jumps ahead to their arrivals without expanding their backgrounds.

As for the theory of choice, literature has been more limited because this is not a theory-developing study. Historical institutionalism places great reliance a lot on the writings by Stephen D. Krasner’s work on path dependence and inertia (especially 1988). Guy B. Peters book “Institutional Theory in Political Science: The New Institutionalism” (2012) was for practical reasons used as the main basis in this study to give account for institutions and historical institutionalism. However, Peters’ publication and the literature available at the Social Sciences Faculty Library on historical institutionalism was limited and lacked depth in explaining path dependence and inertia. In searching on these topics in LUBsearch, many of the results and articles pointed towards Krasner, which I took to interpret as a somewhat authoritative figure on the subject and therefore ensured confidence in using his publications to give account for the theory.

## 2. Methodology

This thesis is a non-experimental comparative case study. A non-experimental research design is necessary for the studying of institutions such as the Committee of the Regions and regional offices because it makes it possible to explore a realistic phenomenon. This type of research design is in addition suitable for the investigation of historical developments. The required scanning through empirical material over a long period of time and the study of institutions needs to be explored in the milieu that they operate in. It is also important in being able to place actors in the context of a wider setting in order to capture their right meaning. This would not be possible in experimental research designs. They are almost never possible for exploring social science phenomena (Mackie and Marsh 1995: 173).

Case studies enable the studying of a limited set of cases in greater depth through its special type of empirical enquiry. The research design enables in-depth investigations and detailed descriptions suitable to answer “how” and “why” questions (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 150-2). Limiting the cases to two makes it a qualitative rather than a quantitative study because it means exploring a pair of phenomena meticulously rather than carrying out numerous of brief examinations. An indispensable hallmark of qualitative studies is that they have the advantage of being able to go beyond place and time (Devine 1995: 145; Ward Schofield 1993: 205), and that they are particularly useful when trying to understand actors who shape and are shaped by politics (Devine 1995: 152). Case studies are also a format that allows simultaneous testing, making it possible to learn something new by looking at their differences by means of comparison. For a comparative analysis to be valid the selected cases have to share certain characteristics (Mackie and Marsh 1995: 179). With this study, the selection is rather straightforward: The Committee of the Regions and regional offices share the mission to represent regions concerning European Union decision-making. Limiting a study to cases who share basic characteristics ought to give the ensuing analysis in the discussion section more fitting explanatory power (Mackie and Marsh 1995: 179; Collier 1993: 112).

The results will be structured through chronologically examining their shared history to uncover the factors that helped bring them to existence, followed by exploring how each institution developed independently. This structure is intended to highlight their shared history and their detached developments. Historical institutionalism emphasizes the importance of the ideas present at the formative stages. This will be accomplished by uncovering at the forces at work and the motivations that forged each institution by looking at the history of regional policy in the European Union. A key part of the theory are the consequences of

taking paths, especially their effects throughout time. Their institutional differences will be explored by looking at the implications of their separate paths.

Because both institutions were established at approximately at the same the same time period it suggests the causes behind their creations are shared. Through exploring the development of regional policy in the European Union it might be possible to obtain a deeper understanding behind the common initial factors that paved the way to create each institution. Events unravelled differently to give rise to two institutions, and uncovering their separate paths might help provide insight into their divergent institutional approaches and functions.

## Theoretical Perspective

Historical institutionalism is a theory that permits the study of institutions over time. The theory was chosen for its fit in providing explanatory power of differences in two institutions when exploring their developments through time. It is also a motivating force in this study behind the decision to examine regional offices as an institution, as they need to be an institution in order to conform to the theory and make it fit for a comparative analysis. Most theories claim forms of general applicability, so it becomes a test of the theory to see how well it works in its application.

A central feature of historical institutionalism is path dependence which suggest decisions limit the option for future decisions. The importance of certain moments in time play a big role in the theory. Particular moments are pivotal because they provide a window of opportunity for an institution to take a new path. When the concept is applied for the composition of an institution, it suggests that early decisions before and during an institution's creation can play an important part in how it functions today. By exploring the Committee of the Regions and regional offices historical developments through time, it will be possible to attain a better explanation of their differences in form and function. If the deducted hypothesis from historical institutionalism is correct, this should apply to the institutions in this study.

## Data Collection

The cited literature consists wholly of the written record, with roughly eighty per cent social science research published in journal articles and books. The remaining references are government/public publications, episodic records like official websites or news articles. Journal articles were obtained through Lund University's LUBsearch academic search engine whereas most books were borrowed from Lund University's Social Sciences Faculty Library. The advantage of using the written record is that it does not pose ethical risks because all the material that has been used is publicly available (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 266-7).

A significant amount of the thesis cite secondary analytical sources, of which is mostly qualitative research. There were three reasons for mainly relying on such academic literature. Firstly, published works in journals articles and books were one of the few venues that adequately cover these topics in the thorough detail necessary for this thesis to investigate the past to the present. Published writings on regional offices and Committee of the Regions greatly rests in what is issued in academic literature. Secondly, published academic works are one of the few venues available at convenience on these subject matters. There are, as to be expected, other numerous authorities available for the purposes of investigating the regions in the European Union, Committee of the Regions and regional offices through for instance (government) public records, interviews and news items. A few of these have been cited for the reason of relevancy, and for exploratory purposes in preparation of the thesis several informal interviews and discussions with staff in regional offices and the Committee of the Regions were carried out to give some pointers. For the reason that they were merely colloquial and informal they were inserted as footnotes. Thirdly, published research possess recognized measures of accuracy and reliability that can be favorably considered to be significantly trustworthy of their description of historical events. Through the many readings, most researchers did come across as corroborating with one another on their depiction of place and sequence of events. There was no discovery of any glaring disputes between them beyond trivial erroneous matters such as dates (in which such instances, their delineations were set aside).

There are several advantages with using written records (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 290-2). First is that it facilitates research irrespective of time period and the study of large political phenomenon. Published literature and scholarly research give the means to study and render events that might have taken place several decades in the past. It enables studying the unfolding of events as they occur over time to discover patterns. It also makes it accessible to study enormous political spectacles: Developments of a Union spanning a continent with hundreds of millions of citizens, the birth of political institutions, important events that involve hundreds of regions and thousands of actors. Secondly, it enables research at a distance and at little cost. Indirect observations are a low-cost research method (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 258). When writing research about the European Union, it is important to be able to cover phenomenon that have transpired all over Europe, especially what has transpired in Brussels and perhaps even in important meetings. The use of existing written records is a low-cost method and requires modest efforts on behalf of researcher (or rather, “standing on the shoulders of giants”). Thirdly, the source material is non-reactive. Non-reactive source material encourages more accurate and less self-serving measurements of phenomenon (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 290). It means throughout writing this study, the research has not influenced the cited sources because the cited sources remain unchanged.

## Limitations

The reader should be aware that the choice of methodology for this study come with caveats. Qualitative research produces what can be described as “soft unscientific results” (Devine 1995: 141, 145; Bryman 1988: 84-5). Understanding its limitations is necessary in order to have a better contextual understanding of its findings. Every chosen methods has its limitations. No single research method can find all the answers in studying politics (Devine 1995: 152).

The weakness with a non-experimental research design is that it is not a strong method to make casual inferences. This means it will not be possible to claim with great confidence that there is a certain relationship between the explored causes and their effects. Strong casual inferences are generally only possible to ascertain in controlled environments through experimental designs (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 148). Qualitative research is also unrepresentative and not particularly replicable. Conclusions and findings will become difficult to generalize because they do not give explanations that be transferred and applied onto other cases without requiring significant changes. The research design of using a small number of cases makes it difficult inference this study’s findings onto a larger number of cases. The limited scope of the research makes it difficult to develop any form of general explanation because the findings will be very case-specific for the Committee of the Regions and regional offices. Qualitative research relies upon a lot of subjectively interpreted evidence through written records because the gathered data is subject to a subjective interpretation without an isolated single “truth”. There are several problems with conducting a study solely based on written records, and one of them is that it may induce incomplete knowledge (Johnson and Joslyn 2008: 290-3). The thesis may not include all the necessary details required to assert absolute confidence of the findings as it is conceivable that certain essentials have been sidestepped or misinterpreted because they were inadvertently undetected or missed. First, the thesis can only cover what has been accounted for in texts. If it has not been written and published it cannot have been included or taken into account into the study. Authors of written records, such as research papers and books, selectively preserve material and only write to include what they consider to be worthwhile or relevant. Second, historical gaps, undocumented events or details are inescapable. It is only possible to cite sources which have been made publicly available, so it essentially is impossible to have a complete understanding of all details or events. There will always be something that cannot and will not be observed. Third, this research requires trust in the written record. Written records are second-hand materials, which means there is always chance they might be incomplete, biased, inaccurate or falsified. In order to keep this at a minimum, most of the cited sources in the study are research material and published works by scholars as they likely to be well researched and have recognized veracity.

## 3. Theory

### Institutions

Institutions are the structures that shape human behavior through a collection of norms, rules and routines (Peters 2012: 29-30). They are manifestations of patterned behaviors in our society — a constructed activity among groups of people who share the understanding of certain formal or informal rules and customs (Parsons 2007: 66, 70). Within the political sciences it is considered old-fashioned to exclusively pay attention to formal government institutions concerning bureaucracy, constitutional issues and public law (Drewry 1998: par. 2; March and Olsen 2011: sec. 2). Presently it is more broadly understood that the changes that take place in politics operate from a greater variety of institutional configurations who come in many different shapes and forms (March and Olsen 2011: sec. 1). Institutions can take the form of tangible structures with buildings and staff such as parliaments, companies and organizations, constitutional (legal) and formal political practices. They can also be inexplicit, indeterminate and out of sight structures such as divisions in societies (e.g. social class), the rule of law, financial markets and less formally organized networks (Peters 2012: 29, 74; Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 2-4; Rhodes 1995: 54; Hall 1986: 19-20). Studying institutions is the attempt to bring them into light by getting a better understanding of the conditions and behaviors that created them, as well as their effects on the environment around them (Parsons 2007: 69). By explaining institutions — their rules, procedures and organization — you explain the structures of society and how they affect politics (Rhodes 1995: 55).

### Historical Institutionalism

Institutions are constructions that require the ingredient of time. It means they shape and are shaped by politics over long periods. If we were restricted to examining institutions only in the present, the explanations available would be limited and incomplete (Sewell 1995: 246). The theory of historical institutionalism looks at institutions and politics over longer time period by following a figurative trail of breadcrumbs to examine the context of outcomes (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 2, 7-9). The theory strives to explain observed phenomenon through inductive reasoning by emphasizing on drawing conclusions made by available evidence. Critics argue this is similar to ‘storytelling’ (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 12).

At the heart of the theory is the special importance of the timing and sequence of events. Institutions are both affected and a source of constraints and opportunities. Through time, these constraints and opportunities create different types of political outcomes to both itself and the environment around it (Fioretos 2011: 371). The theory suggests actors do not always make decisions that are in their own self-interest. Actors follow social rules and their strategies and goals can be shaped by an institution's sphere of influence (Thelen and Steinmo 1992: 2, 8, 11).

The theory has weaknesses. As Greener (2005: 64) asks, "If history matters so much, how do we break from it?". Its strength lies in explaining the past, but is not that particularly great in explaining or predicting the future (Peters 2012: 77). The theory is also pessimistic. It emphasizes negative attributes: Organizational inefficiency, unsuccessful adjustments, and the limitation of paths. It portrays institutions as struggling to adapt to changes, facing reoccurring disparities between ideal scenarios and actual outcomes, and laments dysfunctional relationships between institutions and their environments (Genschel 1997: 43-4).

## Formation

The creation of an institution starts with an idea, whose source can have a variety of origins, such as a group of people or individuals, all with the spirit to encourage the formation and adoption of a certain type of policy (Kingdon 2003; Peters 2012: 76). Historical institutionalism does not pay much attention to examining actors, but accepts they do play a part in the early formative stages (Peters 2012: 76). How an institution was formed is crucial knowledge to historical institutionalism, particularly concerning the ideas that were present at the formative stages (Peters 2012: 75; Hay 2008). Institutions often possess elements of planned design (Alexander 2005; Peters 2012: 76) which cause substantial effects over a long time period. As explained by the logic of path dependence, the initial choices that were made in an institution's beginning can bring about long-lasting effects (Peters 2012: 76-7).

## Isomorphism

Institutional morphism means that institutions learn. It suggests that the best models and ideas serve as templates for others. It will then spread like a contagion to be mimicked by others. This practice in turn generates a converging pattern and the application of similar methods (Tatham and Thau 2013; Kettunen and Kull 2009; Moore 2008a). Isomorphism means that changes are usually made in order to make something more similar. This can be done by the motivation of an internal or external political or organizational pressure, by the desire to mimicking others because they find themselves uncertain, or because they need to adopt norms as a part of an increasingly professionalized environment (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

## Path Dependence

The significance of paths is a central feature of historical institutionalism. Path dependence is the theoretical tool to explain effects of decisions through time. Each decision is appropriate for its very moment, yet it is in force over a long time period. A specific path sets in motion a course of events which limits the ability to go back and reverse course. Each decision is a metaphorical 'fork in the road' that both enables and eliminates paths that can be taken in the future (Kay 2005: 553; Krasner 1984: 225; Peters 1999: 63). Path dependence suggests that there is a constant chain of interactions that can be linked backwards in time. Provided with enough available evidence, it will then be possible to uncover a logical order of events in the form of a historical timeline. The path taken in the early stages of an institution's creation can continue to steer its direction into the indefinite future (Peters 2012: 72). Every path eliminates the option of other paths even if the other paths in retrospect might have been better. Path dependency means that final outcomes are not entirely predictable because initial paths might result in utterly unforeseeable long-term trajectories. Early decisions, at the time maybe judged as minor or random, can create enormous consequences in the future. Institutions can even prompt other institutions to path dependence. Once a choice is made by an institution, other institutions can react and reorient themselves to fit that choice (Krasner 1988: 83-4).

A significant component of path dependence is critical junctures. Critical junctures are a way to explain meaningful events that open up new starting points for new path dependencies. Historical institutionalism suggests institutions operate in long periods of an inactive (or equilibrium) and balanced state with infrequent occasions of changes (Krasner 1984; Greener 2005: 64). Critical junctures are opportunities where substantial changes can occur to break sharply from the past. Structural constraints and political opportunities are loosened up for just a brief period, opening up a whole new range of paths for (powerful) actors with alternatives that are substantially more important than usual (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 343). Institutions can then settle down upon a new path, followed once again by encroaching inertia (Greener 2005: 64). The explanation behind critical junctures is not particularly well-developed and is arguably one of the theory's weaker aspects, criticized among academic literature for somewhat lacking methodological or conceptual rigor (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007: 342).

## Inertia

Inertia is the consequence of path dependence. Institutions are caught in a state of equilibrium until a critical juncture comes along with an opportunity to overcome it. Institutions begin to develop inertia once a certain path has been taken and require significant amounts of effort to steer it in another direction (Greener 2005: 62, 64; Krasner 1988: 83). Inertia does not mean institutions never change, but that the changes are infrequent followed by long periods of paralyzation. Path dependence suggests consequences made by earlier decisions cannot be easily

reversed (Genschel 1997: 45; Krasner 1988: 74). What was once considered a favorable quality of the institution may throughout a longer period of time turn into a detrimental limitation (Genschel 1997: 43-4). Institutions are innately rigid structures slow to carry out changes (Krasner 1988: 85; Genschel 1997: 44). Structure, procedures, habits and attitudes all constrain institutions, rendering them inflexible. Historical institutionalism's theoretical strength lies in explaining the sources of institutional inertia but falls short in providing solutions or the tools necessary to overcome it (Peters 2012: 72, 77).

The stronger an institution is, the more difficult it becomes to modify it (Krasner 1988: 74). Benefactors of the institution's status quo are likely to resist changes because they would gain little or nothing from changes, even if these changes could have long-term benefits for the institution (Krasner 1988: 83; Krasner 1984: 235). Inertia can also persist by the simple matter of toleration, surviving through the condition of "permanently failing" (Peters 2012: 73). It might work "just well enough" so that nobody shares the incentive to modify with how it operates (Krasner 1988: 82).

If there is limited or no competition for an institution's role, survival and justification of its own existence never becomes an issue. In turn, it begins to find its place to fit that environment (Krasner 1988: 84-5; DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150-4). Once an institution has been increasingly adopted by the environment and actors, the institution's position and structure becomes more rigid and eliminates paths that the institution can take (Krasner 1988: 84; Arthur 1989: 1-2).

Institutions may at the outset be designed to resist changes by deliberately incorporating inertia. Legal environments are strong forces in affecting an institution's structure and behavior (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150). Intentionally making path dependent decisions to force an institution into inertia can be a way to remove future options from the table, binding decision-makers to their decisions and demonstrating political commitment (Pierson 2000: 262). A common culprit affected by path dependency is time-consuming democratic decision-making involving factors such as qualified-majority and other kinds of constitutional barriers. Designers of an institution can assume changes might happen in the future, so they set intentional constitutional barriers to establish hurdles. It is merely a method to make people think twice before changes can be put into practice (Alexander 2001: 259-60).

## 4. Regions in the European Union

### A New Beginning for Regions

A region is a distinct territorial fragment. They come in many shapes, sizes and configurations attributed to the widely different historical developments of European states. Their variation is so great there is no unprejudiced single definition that can be equally applied to all regions. Economists, political scientists, anthropologists and geographers all employ their own definition of regions. State blueprints for regions in France, Belgium, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands are vastly different from one another. In Germany their regions even have regions (Loughlin 1996a: 146). It can be an "...unsolvable task of determining what a region in Germany is" (Benz 1998: 112). The typical manner to define a region is by geography and visible lines on a map, but there are also immeasurable elements such as a "regional consciousness" which can span state boundaries across multiple countries. As counsel, the Council of Europe define regions as "...a territory of medium dimensions susceptible to being determined geographically and which could be considered as homogenous." (Gren 1999: 12, 186).

Throughout the 19th century regional identities were progressively replaced by national and state identities, meaning people began to identify more strongly with the state than with their region (Augusteijn and Storm 2012: 1). Regions and states have similar characteristics, such as sharing social and spatial characteristics with obvious and fixed thoughts of being a part of a community (a defined territory with a lasting population). Physical boundaries are very important, but equally important is the interplay of factors such as politics, economics and values (Weichlein 2012: 95-6), including history/ethnicity and administration (Loughlin 1996a: 146). What separates states from regions is a state's independence and absolute authority over its own internal matters. The state is the highest unit and principle actor on the world stage. The absence of a higher authority is what grants its highest ranking status (Heywood 2011: 112-114). A state's organization of its regions are territories ultimately defined by politics. Such as the case with German Länder, which are politically defined and differ from Germany's traditionally economic and cultural regions (Benz 1998: 115). In consequence, regions, despite sharing many characteristics with states, are not equal to them. They are below them in all manners of hierarchical standing. The principal differences between them rests with sovereignty and the degree to which they have self-determination of their own internal matters.

The foundation for regional policy in the European Union is the acknowledgement that Europe has its allotment of both economically successful

regions and economically lagging regions. Equalling out prosperity between regions is intended to discourage creation of social and regional tensions as a result of unevenly distributed wealth generated from economic growth (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001: 32-3). Particularly since the 1980s there has been a resurgence of regionalism within the European political system attributed to the new economic reality of globalization: International trade puts more emphasis on economic governance across state borders, which in turn puts pressure for increasing regional self-governance as a way to cope with these new challenges (Heywood 2011: 488-9). Regions are increasingly performing work akin to foreign policy by, for example, lobbying at the levels which it finds to be most relevant to the region's own interests, whether it is at the European or state level (Gren 1999: 10). European states have over time increasingly devolved responsibilities from the central government. For instance Spain, France and the United Kingdom are traditionally considered as states who reserve strong powers for central government with little, if any, for regional governing. Yet beginning in the 1980s, all three have since then incrementally increased regional autonomy (Heywood 2011: 480-2).

## The Emergence of Regional Policies

There are two factors that are important for the formative stages of developing regions' access to the European Union. Together they were the stimulus that set the Union's path dependence towards creating two distinct institutions for regional interests. First, through the emergence of structural funds, predominantly the European Regional Development Fund, regions sought access to which stimulated their interest in getting involved with European politics. Second, the increasingly complex relinquishment of governmental responsibilities from states to the European Union spurred largely populous, autonomous and self-governing regions within Member States to seek direct engagement to the European Union's decision-making process.

The impact of the Single European Act with the introduction of the single market and the increased weight of the retooled structural funds set a new backdrop for politics in Europe. The late 1980s and 1990s became the critical juncture in European politics in which we saw the ascension of the region, exhibiting concerted efforts to challenge, and in some respects breach, the state's monopoly in interacting with the European Union. This had once been an arena which traditionally had been exclusive for states (Jeffery 2000: 2, 6).

### Creation of the European Regional Development Fund

The European Union entrusts regions with a lot of money through its European Regional Development Fund. It is the largest European Union structural fund and was created with the intention to aid additional national expenditure of regional

development. It has over time somewhat become a replacement of state expenditure for regional funding (Sutcliffe 2002: 103). Between 2014-2020 the fund will distribute 351 billion euros for local projects ("Available Budget 2014-2020." 2016). This tender can be sought by public bodies, small businesses, universities, associations, non-governmental organizations and voluntary organizations. These funds are only intended for partial financing in order to encourage other financing partners, both public and private, to get engaged with the project. The whole application process is known to be quite administratively cumbersome and each application has to meet certain regional investment priorities ("Accessing the Funds." 2016).

The European Union's first treaty referred to the vague aim of reducing economical differences between regions by 'strengthening unity and ensuring harmonious development' ("The Treaty of Rome" 1957, preamble; Marks 1992: 193). The general belief at the time was that, without requiring any specific regional policy, lagging regions would catch up and benefit by increased economic integration and the broad economic growth enjoyed by the entire community. There would be no need for any meticulous policy for regions. If necessary, poorer regions could take advantage from the European Social Fund whose purpose was to assist retraining workers in high-unemployment sectors, and the European Investment Bank which provides low-interest loans. The lack of regional policy in the Union's early history serves as a reflection of those early member states' priorities and world view. France, Belgium, Western Germany, the Netherlands, Luxembourg did not feature any particular stark differences in regional inequality. The sole exception was Italy's Mezzogiorno regions in its southern peninsula (Marks 1993: 193-4).

As the union increased in size with new members, the first developments of regional policy would materialize. A compromise in 1975 between Britain and France over the Common Agricultural Policy paved the way for the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 32; George 1985). The accession of Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom in the 1970s, with the latter two featuring economically laggard regions, opened up a window of opportunity for a change in policy. The United Kingdom's government, aligning itself with Italy's long-standing call for a regional policy, devised a budgetary-trade off: France was a net-recipient of the Common Agricultural Policy, while Britain was a net-contributor to it (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 32; George 1985). As accommodation, the European Regional Development Fund was created to more fairly distribute the community's expenditures (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001: 31-2; André, Drevet & Landaburu 1989).

The European Regional Development Fund, through its own directorate in the European Commission, mainly redistributed budget surpluses and deficits across the community and until 1984 was for the most part run and funded by states themselves (John 2000: 880; Hooghe 1996a, 1996b). As an example, in the United Kingdom any financing by the fund had to go past the British government for approval who in turn only permitted investments in certain areas. The government

did not put any particular effort into consulting regions in how to spend that money (Macneill, Jeffery & Gibney 2007:408).

The Single European Act and the launch of the single market intensified regional competition across Europe. For regions, it became tougher to preserve local private industry because industry could move from a region to another with greater ease, particularly if they felt the corporate climate better suited them elsewhere. It also became more easy for private industry to merge, such as community banks and local companies combining with competitors to form new entities that could span multiple territories (Boisot 1990: 396-7). To address concerns of regions, the Single European Act doubled the resources for structural funds so much that they would amount between quarter to a third of all European Union expenditure by the end of the 1990s (Sutcliffe 2002: 103-5; Christiansen 1996: 94). It was a side-payment to Greece, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Portugal who felt they would have less to gain from the requirements of privatization and market liberalization that would come with the single market (Marks 1992: 198). New rules were accompanied by how the funds should be distributed, bringing in actors from regions to the state to the European Commission. This had the effect of pulling regional governments further into the European policy-making process (Sutcliffe 2002: 103-5; Marks 1993; Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 362). The European Commission in turn created an entirely new department to explicitly focus on regional policy, 'DG XII - Coordination of the Structural Funds' (Marks 1993: 191-). There had been a shift in thinking about the possibilities of redistributive fairness. No longer would economic redistribution be solely have to be carried out by state governments (Marks 1992: 204). Further reforms in 1998 moved the leverage from states to the European Union with a distribution of the funds based upon an eligibility criteria (Macneill, Jeffery & Gibney 2007:409).

## Consequences of the Single European Act

The Single European Act of 1986 gave the rise to a new embrace of regions in European politics. The Treaty brought forth new policy-areas to the European level that necessitated implementation of laws and decisions at the regional level. The Single European Act elevated a lot of responsibilities to the European level along with an expanded agenda that crept into the competences of local and regional governments (Christiansen 1996: 94; Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361-2). To justify intervention in an economic community committed to market-based non-intervention thinking, the Treaty declared economic and social cohesion as an objective and encouraged stronger regional focus and thinking in European policies (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 33). Regions began to become significantly more interested in decision-making at European institutions as caused by the elevated responsibilities and the effects caused of the single market's four freedoms of capital, services, goods and people (Christiansen 1996: 94).

The Single European Act increased competition between regions at the same time there was curtailing the power of state governments, restraining their ability

to properly aid their own regions because of the transfer of powers up to the European level. States were faced with the decision to either assign themselves more power at the expense of regions by eroding regional power to make up for their own loss that had been transferred the European level, or to grant regions higher degrees of autonomy by e.g. granting them greater control of their own budgetary and legislative matters (Boisot 1990: 394-5).

Another effect of the Single European Act was the anxiousness of inappropriate democratic representation. Powers and competencies to make political decisions that affect society had become increasingly relinquished from national decision-makers and entrusted on to European decision-makers (Carroll 2011: 349; Staab 2008: 64). Decisions affecting people's lives were felt to not be as democratically accountable and more difficult to hold to public scrutiny. This problem became to be characterized as the "democratic deficit" (Carroll 2011: 348), a gap of political and democratic legitimacy between national parliaments, national governments, the European Union's non-elected institutions and the European Parliament.

Prior to the enactment of the Single European Act, the European states generally retained unchallenged 'top-down' powers within their own borders. Regions with self-governance mainly derived from justifications by the central bureaucracy to reduce administrative burdens or to appease regional political parties and cultural tensions (Gren 1999: 15; Paxton 1984; Wright and Mény 1985: 8; Dayries 1978; Milward 1984). The Single European Act in 1986, along with the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, radically changed the state-region relationship. It encouraged a stronger 'bottom-up' governance in Europe, breaking the previous 'top-down' approaches from the decades prior (Gren 1999: 10-1, 15; Keating 1995). Decentralization, by encouraging stronger 'bottom-up' politics, was a solution offered by states to regions as a way to meet the challenges posed by European integration and increased international competition (Gren 1999: 9). There was a considerable increase in western European political decentralization, regional economic development and interregional cooperation in the 1980s and 1990s (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 31).

Local and regional governments felt like they got the short end of the stick by becoming responsible for implementing much of the legislation established in an arena where they had insignificant abilities to shape policy (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361-2). Highly autonomous regions, from states such as Spain, Germany and Belgium, felt disproportionately affected. In return they pushed their state governments to formalize forms of regional representation in the European Union's policy process (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361-2). Ramping up lobbying efforts, creating networking organizations and housing regional offices all over Brussels was not enough. Regions wanted an institution to call their own (Christiansen 1996: 94).

The accession of Spain in 1986, the regionalization of Belgium in 1992, the accession of Austria in 1995 and the devolution of Scotland the United Kingdom in 1998 added regions into the European Union with considerable autonomy and self-rule (Jasch and Suszycka-Jasch 2009: 1216). For roughly four decades prior, Germany had been the only European member state with a strong federal

character with its Länder regions, a legacy dating back to the post-World War II partition of the country by the western alliances (Ibid: 1229). Some argue that there had even existed a “Länder-blindness of European treaties and institutions” (Jasch and Suszycka-Jasch 2009: 1229; Laufer and Münch 1998: 216). The Single European Act's surge of regulations and directives overwhelmed German Länder with more than 10,000 pieces of legislation by 1989. Länder felt weakened and embittered by the indirect strengthening of the German federal government which played a part in creating the policies they were in turn required to put into practice (Jasch and Suszycka-Jasch 2009: 1229-30, 1233). It emboldened them to seek new pathways to influence European decision-making and the German government's European policies (Ibid: 1216). They became the vanguard in spurring the European Union's increased advancement towards incorporating regions into its decision-making (Benz 1998: 111). Starting in the 1980s, they began to set up administrative structures to maximize their involvement in European policy by creating internal European policy sections within their own Länder ministries. They also assembled some of the first regional offices in Brussels in order to directly influence Commission officials and to establish a straight link of information (bypassing the German government) for upcoming developments of European legislation (Moore 2006: 193; Jasch and Suszycka-Jasch 2009: 1246-7). The German federal government had sole power in exercising European decision-making up until 1993 when Länder accomplished to secure some constitutional guarantees (Moore 2006: 193; Jasch and Suszycka-Jasch 2009: 1229-30), in addition to formalizing an understanding with the federal government the right as regions to actively participate and conduct activities in Brussels as long as they did not begin to mirror classic diplomacy or consular activities (Moore 2006: 196). Germany and Belgian regions did manage to pressure their governments to allow them to participate in Council of Minister discussions in policy areas which they thought were distinctly important to them (Carroll 2011: 349). The German Länder's push for more influence in formulation of European policy and safeguards to ensure their regional autonomy in the 1980s played a large part in bringing forth a collection of amends for regions in the Maastricht Treaty 1992 (Jasch and Suszycka-Jasch 2009: 1216-7).

## 5. Committee of the Regions

### More Symbol than Remedy

The Committee of the Regions is an institution in the most old-fashioned understanding — a classic formal government bureaucracy and tangible representation with a building and staff that work with drafting laws and public policy. It is symbol for regional interests among the European Union's decision-making institutions with the purpose to serve as a link between Europe's regions and the decision-makers in Brussels who create the laws in the European Union. By bringing together a selection of 350 European regional representatives, the purpose is to find common ground on policy that concern Europe's regions and act as a voice for regions. When it manages to, European Union legislation and decisions are coated with a varnish that only it can provide (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 360). According to Carroll (2011: 342, 353) there are three important characteristics of the Committee of the Regions. First, it is "representative" by tapping regional representatives and plugging them into the European Union's decision-making and policy implementation. Second, it is "advisory" by drafting opinions which might be incorporated into policy decisions by other institutions. And third, it is "symbolic" by the mere existence of the institution itself, embodying the principle of central authorities having the good conscience of relegating responsibilities down to decision-makers at more local levels.

The Committee of the Regions believes in it plays an important representational role among the European Union institutions. The European Economic and Social Committee represents civil society groups such as workers and employers, and the European Parliament represents European peoples and their political beliefs. The Committee of the Regions in turn represents Europe's regions. By being a part of the formal structure that makes the European Union, it is supposed to bring the governing closer to its people, increase the responsibility of decisions and strengthen representation by making decision-making more democratic (Carroll 2011: 351). As might be expected, other institutions are suspicious of its role, particularly European Parliament and a few Member States (Jeffery 1997: 5).

Its establishment is tied together with the increased transfer of competences to the European Union in the late 1980s and early 1990s. There is a relationship between the European Union's legitimacy crisis brought forth by the criticism of its democratic deficit and the push to increase the amount of political counseling into the European Union's decision-making process (Carroll 2011: 342; Christiansen 1996: 93-4, 105). The creation of the Committee of the Regions became an institutional remedy to solve the democratic deficit for regions (Carroll

2011: 349). Its creation became an important symbolic step for European regions as it was the first time, stipulated by the European Union treaties, that regional governments acquired formal recognition within European policy-making (Jeffery 1997: 5, Loughlin 1996b).

It is repeatedly maligned in academic literature, often treated as nothing more than a weak advisory body on behalf of Europe's regions (Carroll 2011: 341; Sbragia 2002; Wood and Yeşilada 2002; Hancock and Peters 2003; Warleigh 2004). A chaotic backdrop of dissatisfied feelings transpired at its inception during the Maastricht Treaty negotiations (Millan 1997: 8). Creating it became a "pyrrhic victory" for regions (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen and Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 36), effectively a product of settled compromises — a bartering of official representation in exchange for the cost of political inadequacy. The regions who yearned for more influence in the European Union's decision-making processes were not content. Expectations of its performance had been high. But in retrospect, it should have been rather clear, that it was never likely going to be a magical solution (Millan 1997: 8).

## Formation at the Maastricht Treaty Negotiations

The critical juncture, or as Christiansen puts it 'a window of opportunity' (1996: 94), that set the path for creating of the Committee of the Regions was the 1990s negotiations of the Maastricht Treaty. The Committee of the Regions was introduced in discussions as a continuation of a working group for regions set up by the European Commission. It was at a later stage decided to replicate it from the existing European Union institution European Economic and Social Committee. The final outcome of the Maastricht meetings itself involved elements of inter-institutional bargaining between participants.

The European Union, its authority and institutions, are wholly based on international agreements between its Member States. These treaties are written at Intergovernmental Conferences, which are drawn-out periods in creating a new treaty. At the beginning they were a long series of negotiations between Member States, but have over time taken the shape of a formal process and become a regular component in developing the European Union's structure (Dehousse and Magnette 2012: 21). The Treaty of the European Union furthermore codifies the Intergovernmental Conference in Article 48. The European Parliament, the European Commission, Member State governments and parliaments all take part in drafting the new text for a new treaty. As a consequence of involving so many actors, what comes out of the conferences have all the traditional hallmarks of bargained arrangements.

In 1988, at the start of another five year period of distributing structural funds, the European Commission tested the waters in response to the demands of regions for more input by creating a Consultative Council of Local and Regional Authorities. It was an effort to befriend and coalesce regional interests rather than to have them turn towards national governments or other Community institutions.

The European Commission's efforts belonged to a broader attempt at introducing regions into the world of "pre-cooking" in the Commission's policy ecosystem encompassing countless working groups, steering and management committees (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 35). There was a feeling inside the European Commission, particularly the department responsible for regional policy, that there had to be a body that regions could consult to (Millan 1997: 5). The council's goals were modest at best and received a lukewarm reception by other Commissioners. However, what it did accomplish was to set the path towards part of the institutional design of the Committee of the Regions by serving as a form of prototype to later be advanced by the European Commission at the Maastricht Treaty negotiations (Ibid: 6).

The Committee of the Regions is characterized as a result of regional lobbying (Gren 1999: 54). In 1985, the Assembly of European Regions was founded by forty-seven regions to serve as a consortium for regional interests in Europe. One of its major missions was to call for the creation of a Committee of the Regions in the run-up to the Intergovernmental Conferences that produced the Maastricht Treaty (Carroll 2011: 349; Dinan 1999: 320). In accompaniment, the large German region Bavaria founded an interest organization called 'Conference on a Europe of the Regions' to do roughly the same task (Jeffery 1995). In practice, they both were nothing more than "window-dressing" and mouthpieces for what the German Länder wanted at the Intergovernmental Conference. Their actual independence and influence at the conference was marginal at best. It was the German Länder, supported by Belgian regions, who played a key role in exerting influence onto their own governments to insert the provisions which created the Committee of the Regions in the treaty text (Jeffery 1997: 6; Jeffery 1996a: 68). While regions only had observing seats at the table during the intergovernmental negotiations, they were represented on behalf of Belgium and Germany, the two respective Member States characterized by regions with high amounts of autonomy (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 35). Because German Länder had the ability, and goaded, to veto the future treaty's ratification, the German government felt obliged to conciliate. As a consequence, on the agenda during discussions, they called for a creation of a regional chamber or council that could truly represent regions in the European Union (Christiansen 1996: 94).

In December 1990, prior to the upcoming Intergovernmental Conference, the European Council noted that there was an urge among some of the Member States for a "consultative machinery" that could seize the interests of regions. Some states were more in favor of such a thing more than others. While Germany was supportive of it, some other states were downright hostile to such an idea (Millan 1997: 5). The German government was able to sway some of the more skeptical Member States during negotiations (Christiansen 1996: 94). European Parliament, which has always had a tepid relationship with the Committee of the Regions, even passed a resolution in favor to encourage creating it (Millan 1997: 5-6). The Assembly of European Regions came with four requests: The creation of a Committee of the Regions, regions' ability to directly partake in Council of Ministers meetings, codifying the principle of subsidiarity into the treaty, and the

right for regions to take cases to the European Union's Court of Justice (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 35-6). While the first two would end up to be included in the Maastricht Treaty, the latter two would have to wait to be incorporated in to two subsequent treaty revisions.

Two Intergovernmental Conferences took place in parallel. The first one focused on economic and monetary matters, which was the one which created the Economic and Monetary Union's Eurozone and the single currency. The second conference concerned political matters, and was the one that led to the creation of the Committee of the Regions. The European Council had emphasized that some Member States, in accordance with the goal to increase the European Union's democratic legitimacy, ought to adopt new arrangements that take into account regions (European Council Presidency's "Conclusions of the Rome European Council (14 and 15 December 1990)"; "Intergovernmental Conference (IGC)."). Originally it was meant to be a further development of the Consultative Council of Local and Regional Authorities that the European Commission had set up in 1988, but the product that had come out from the deliberations was significantly modified. The European Council began to tailor the institution during the drafting period to suit its own needs by turning it more in to an advisory body rather than just a committee linked to the European Commission. The European Council also weakened the European Commission's original blueprint for the institution by relinquishing the Committee of the Region's ability to independently decide its own rules of procedure and the type of regional membership in the plenary. At some stage of the discussions, the idea to attach the Committee of the Regions to the European Economic and Social Committee was advanced and assented, which would bring about massive ramifications for it in the future. The very first evidence of this was when the European Commission's original suggestion of 155 representative members ballooned to 378 (Millan 1997: 7-8). Belgian regions also managed to successfully lobby for an amendment of Article 146 which enabled participation of regional representatives in Council meetings (Suszycka-Jasch and Jasch 2009: 1238). Former Commissioner Bruce Millan (1997: 7-9), who played a big part on behalf of the European Commission in pushing for the Committee of the Region's creation, expressed disappointment with the results of the conferences, and has written an extensive first hand account on the deliberations. He argues the German government did not push hard enough to back up the European Commission's better proposals for the Committee of the Regions' institutional design and insinuates that the German government let its guard down in favor of other questions that were much more pressing at the time, such as the construction of the Economic and Monetary Union in the concurrent Intergovernmental Conference on finance and monetary matters. The European Commission also voiced concerns regarding an organization problem with Consultative Council of Local and Regional Authorities regarding the differences between large self-governing regions and state-ushered local authorities. German Länder were very powerful regions, larger than some member states, and felt it was beneath their dignity to be grouped with them. If the Committee of the Regions only included regions with autonomy or legislative authority, it would have excluded local authorities, meaning Germany would have its Länder in the

institution but the United Kingdom would not (at the time), “which would make the whole thing a farce”. This complex issue was never resolved in the Intergovernmental Conference and is a formational defect that remains with the Committee of the Regions to today. According to the former Commissioner, the negotiations resulted in creating an institution stretched thin with weak powers. Millan concludes with that an ideal construction would have been a more focused institution with a narrower mission.

## Lasting Effects From Being a Replication

As put forward by historical institutionalism, the initial design choices of an institution yields enduring effects. The Committee of the Regions has an older sibling based on another institution with approximately similar design: The European Economic and Social Committee. They are mentioned in the same line of text in the Treaty on the European Union (Hönnige and Panke 2012: 452). Unearthing this lineage brings to light many of its attributes. The idea to attach the Committee of the Regions to the European Economic and Social Committee came up at the drafting of the Maastricht Treaty and was approved in the discussions (Millan 1997: 8). Both of them operate on the same principle of providing an advisory function to the European Union’s decision-making process. They draft their own opinions, provide mandatory consultation to the European Commission, and provide consultation by request to the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council of Ministers (Hönnige and Panke 2012: 454). They both share a fixed membership with compositions based on nationality, similar to how the European Parliament did it in its infancy. They both operate out of the same building and share the same staff for administrative functions at Rue Belliard 99-101 (Ibid: 543). After entering the building and passing through security, walking to the left takes you to the Committee of the Regions while walking to the right takes you to the European Economic and Social Committee. They even eat at a shared cafeteria (with a vista of the German region Bavaria’s regional office). The reasoning behind so closely sharing features with one another was the so the Committee of the Regions could benefit from the European Economic and Social Committee’s practical knowledge of operating facilities and administration so to retain expenditures (Domorenok 2009: 145).

The European Economic and Social Committee precedes the Committee of the Regions by forty years (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361). It traces its origins back all the way to the founding European Coal and Steel Treaty of 1951 to an assembly called the Consultative Committee, created to serve as an advisory group of producers, workers and users of the coal and steel sector to the European Commission’s predecessor, the High Authority (“European Economic and Social Committee and ECSC Consultative Committee.” 2012). In 1957 with the Rome Treaty it was remodeled in to its current form as the European Economic and Social Committee along with some increased responsibilities (Hönnige and Panke 2012: 453; Lodge and Herman 1980). It does have more policy competences than the Committee of the Regions because it is required to provide more mandatory

consultation to legislation. Another fundamental difference is that it operates more on attempting to achieve broad consensus in its plenary, whereas the Committee of the Regions operates more on votes passing along party lines (Hönnige and Panke 2012: 454-5). It would not come to as a surprise then that the measured influence of the Committee of the Regions is on par with the Economic and Social Committee. Both are equally lackluster with their respective roles in the European Union's decision-making process and struggle to "...have a voice but no vote" (Ibid: 467-8). However, while do they do produce a lot of quality written reports, Commissioners pay little attention to what they say (Millan 1997: 9).

## Few Opportunities to Change

The Committee of the Regions was intentionally designed as a hamstrung institution. At the outset of its creation, it faced challenges in acquiring influence within the policy-process. Its limited capacity to act stemmed from its vague position outlined in the treaties (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361). The treaty provisions that granted its powers were judged to be weak. Its authority was restricted to merely consultative opinions with inadequate control and capacity to measure their subsequent impact (Jeffery 1997: 5). It had to carve out its own position within the scope of the existing institutional structure for decision-making at the European level (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361). Hence the Committee of the Regions depended on, in its initial years of operation, wholly on the European Commission, the Council and the European Parliament for its formal relevance. Particularly the European Commission served as its partner-institution (Domorenok 2009: 145-6; Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 360). Reliance on the benevolence of informal contacts were of the uttermost importance to accomplishing its work (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 360).

Cruel defects ensued. The Committee of the Regions was expected to produce advice on policy issues without any guarantee for their consideration down the line in the policy-process. There was difficulty in finding commonalities between its members due to the wide discrepancy of regional characteristics. On top of that, the institution's human and financial resources were meagre (Domorenok 2009: 146). As an example of its diluted capacity, individual cases and concerns are not permitted to be included into its advisory texts. Recognizable attributes that single out certain regions are not written into the documents because policy recommendations by the Committee of the Regions must represent all regions and cannot have its origin clearly stem a sole region's specific interest.

The Committee of the Regions is made up of national quotes of regional representatives appointed by the European Council – that is to say, national governments (Borrás-Alomar, Christiansen & Rodríguez-Pose 1994: 36). Members are allocated proportionally to each member state roughly based on size (Carroll 2011: 343). It is a deeply rooted deficiency, resting with the decision to not differentiate between regions who can vary widely in geographical and population, political autonomy and wealth. It came to be an institution

indiscriminately representing all subnational territorial interests irrespective of shape or form, seating small town councillors of 250 residents next to the presidents of German Länder with millions of inhabitants and wide legislative competencies (Domorenok 2009: 146; Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 363). There was simply a lack of common interest between Europe's regions (Jeffery 1997: 5). The fractured composition of its membership became a gap in the institution's ability to act, weakening its legitimacy and a source of internal strife (Domorenok 2009: 146).

The Committee of the Regions believes its advisory role is important (Carroll 2011: 346). But with only the power to advise and no bargaining power, its influence wholly depends on its means to craft good arguments and to present its viewpoints in as a compelling way as possible to officials who partake in decision-making (Hönnige and Panke 2012: 465). It does not matter whether the Committee of the Regions advice was initiated through self-initiatives or by mandate in certain policy areas. Its best card to play was to target the European Parliament and Member States governments' very early with enough quality arguments, acting prior to the starting of formal negotiations in the institutional triangle with the European Commission, Council of Ministers and European Parliament (Ibid: 467). The Committee is not hesitant in issuing own-initiative and optional opinions, outnumbering mandatory advisory opinions three to one (Carroll 2011: 346). The results from a limited qualitative study (Carroll 2011) suggests that the Committee of the Regions is fairly successful in encouraging the European Commission and the European Parliament to adopt its options outright or that they are in agreement.

The first opportunity came with the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999. An important matter of question for regions is subsidiarity, and the General Court had ruled that subsidiarity was not a general principle of European Union law. To make amends it was annexed into the treaty so that it was a part of law (Chateau 2015). The treaty also expanded the Committee of the Region's mandatory advisory powers and the right of consultation with the European Parliament (Carroll 2011: 349). Initially its mandatory advisory powers were very limited. Following the Amsterdam Treaty in 1999 they were expanded to many more policy fields, among them administration of the Structural Funds, the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund (Ibid: 345).

The second opportunity for improvements came with the Treaty of Nice. The composition of the Committee of the Regions' membership required modifications. Its appointed representatives were intended to consist of representatives of regional and local bodies, but some Member States inconsistently applied the criteria — particularly unitary states such as the United Kingdom and France. The Treaty of Nice in 2000 began to require its plenary members to be regional officials with electoral accountability (Hooghe and Marks 1996: 75; Carroll 2011: 343). On its eighth birthday in 2002 it carried out some internal restructuring (Christiansen and Lintner 2005: 9). It rearranged the seating of members from sitting according to Member State to political groups in 2002. (Hönnige and Panke 2012: 453). This was internal restructuring that did not

require modification of the treaties. An institution's uncertainty with itself can give rise to mimicking another institution (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). As suggested by Christiansen and Lintner (2005: 9), it could be a display of contention with its initial design and a stretching their hand out to better cooperate with the European Parliament by copying their plenary seating arrangement.

The third opportunity for a critical juncture were the talks that produced the current Lisbon Treaty. At the European Convention that drafted the Constitution in 2003, the precursor to the Lisbon Treaty, the Committee of the Regions was relegated to merely having an observer status and faced opposition from other European Union actors. In addition, the consensus that had once existed at past Intergovernmental Conferences between regions was not there. Instead they were more divided. Regions with high amounts of autonomy and self-governance, such as Bavaria, North Rhine-Westphalia, Salzburg in Germany, Catalonia in Spain, Scotland in the United Kingdom and Wallonia and Flanders in Belgium, made it clear they wanted more: The Committee of the Regions as an institution was simply not good enough and they wanted more influence in European policy-making, whether it would be through increasing their sway in the governing of the Committee of the Regions or the European Union's policy-making (Carroll 2011: 350). On the other side, national governments in unitary systems such as Sweden, France, Denmark and the United Kingdom were less likely to support in strengthening any powers for the Committee of the Regions (Ibid: 345). As such, instead of acting as a unified group at the Intergovernmental Conference, Europe's regions came disunited (Ibid: 350). Notwithstanding, the Lisbon Treaty did enhance the principle of subsidiarity by further recognizing regions role in its definition (Ibid: 349). In addition, the treaty permitted the Committee of the Regions to bring actions to the European Court of Justice, most importantly in matters that it felt thought breached the principles of subsidiarity (Ibid: 350). But it is important to make not that as of early 2016 that provision had not been invoked a single time.

The past two decades have seen relatively small changes to the institution. It is possible that the regions starting position was inadequate. For instance, looking back at the stipulations in the run up to the Maastricht Treaty made by the Assembly of European Regions — all of the group's four requests have been accomplished. But the very regions who so strongly pushed for those policies remain unsatisfied. The RegLeg group faction inside the Committee of the Regions, with members from German, Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, Austria, Belgium, Portugal and Finland – all regions with various amounts of legislative powers (“About Regleg - Organisation”), remains highly critical of the Committee of the Regions current state of affairs. Its present-day role has subdued in to a public forum, performing the service as a chamber for networking among regions that help them develop common perspectives and find solutions to problems (Christiansen and Lintner 2005: 11). Its most influential members have long been jaded with the institution's abilities, deciding to focus their efforts elsewhere through other entry points (Badiello 1998; Jeffery 2002; Domorenok 2009: 146), such as through informal lobbying in Brussels with their own regional offices and directly with their state's governments.

## 6. Regional Offices

### Sidestepping the State

Regional offices are, as a collection of offices, an institution for regional interests in the European Union. Institutions can be organized networks (Rhodes 1995: 54; Hall 1986: 19-20) norms, rules and routines (Peters 2012: 29-30). The mid-1980s was a period where valiant regions took the initiative in setting out a new path for relationships with the European Union, as a part of a surge in regional mobilization (Moore 2008b: 518; Bomberg and Peterson 1998; Keating and Hooghe 2001). Increased economic competition and the European Union's strengthening legal powers over its Member States drove regions to internationalize their behavior (John 2000: 877-8) in an exhibit of "Europeanization of local politics" (Ibid: 891). It was the beginning of an emerging institutionalization in creating direct links between regional and European levels of authority through "outflanking" state governments (Rowe 2011: 4; Moore 2008b: 519; Marks 1992; Benz 1998: 117) and to galvanize support from the European Commission against them (Rowe 2011: 4; Moore 2008b: 519; Ansell et al. 1997: 350). By installing specialist staff and hiring policy-influencers, regions could wedge themselves into European Union policy-making (John 2000: 883; Moore 2007: 275) and get closer to the recognized center of political authority (Rowe 2011: 173). Regions believe having an office is a way to deliver concrete benefits to their inhabitants (Ibid: 210) through lobbying, making themselves heard and defend their interests ("Brussels: A Regional Player in Europe." 2008). Presently regional offices are a key component in the European Union's strategy to engage with regions in Europe (Moore 2007). Its expanding opportunities for participation in policy-making (opening up to lobbying) made it possible for offices to institutionalize themselves (Rowe 2011: 210; Jeffery 2000; Moore 2008a). The regional office's adaptive structure of continuously refashioning both responsibilities and organizational composition have ingrained them into the workings of the European Union and the city (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 10).

Despite the European Union never really realigning itself to incorporate regions as much as hypothesized in the late 1980s and early 1990s with the ideational 'Europe of the Regions', regions have continued to strengthen their engagement with the European Union by setting up regional offices in Brussels. Tatham and Thau (2013: 272) make the case that the unique lobbying environment of the European Union could be one of the reasons why regions create offices. Unlike the United States which has strong streaks of winner-take-all, the European Union's policy processes are made to encourage the input of

many interests (Scharpf 1999), with negotiating compromises of a large number of voices to shape policy (Mahoney 2007: 53-4). This encourages regions to set up an office because they know they might be able heard and provide feedback. Schmitter (2000) and Greenwood (2011: 437) suggest regional offices are a kind of 'participatory democracy' that bridge the gap between the European Union and its citizens.

Setting up a regional offices is expensive and difficult to do, so for a region to make a decision to launch an office it means they consider the benefits they bring to outweigh the costs (Rowe 2011: 5-6). Most offices are a brisk walk's away from the Committee of the Regions — the institution that is supposed to be the entry point for regions into the European Union's decision-making — yet regions insist on operating their own regional offices and have so for the past 25 years. The desire for independent representation has only continued to intensify (Ibid: 1-2). The amount has continued to grow steadily for two decades (Moore 2008b: 517). Between 1986 and 2010 there opened an average of 7.6 new offices a year (Tatham and Thau 2013: 257; Studinger 2013). As of early 2016 there are a total of 242 regional offices in Brussels ("Regional Offices." 2016), though only two-thirds of all European Union regions have an office (Tatham and Thau 2013: 272). Larger states have many offices, whereas many of the less populous might only have one (except Luxembourg, which has none). The size of the building, the amount of employees and the policy ambition of an office is often correlated with the economic size and political autonomy of the region. The two most powerful predictors for an office representation in Brussels is the strength of regional identity and regional autonomy (a third factor is linguistic/ethnic distinctiveness) (Nielsen and Salk 1998: 247-8). Regions that are strong in their own state are also generally stronger players in Brussels (Bomberg and Peterson 1998: 234). To give an example, German Länder enjoy high amounts of governmental self-determination and are also economically well-off with large populations, whereas Irish local governments possess limited self-determination. And as can be expected, German regions have very large and active regional offices while Ireland in comparison only has one small and less active office (John 2000: 884; Coyle 1997; "Regional Offices." 2016). German Länder's regional offices are power houses. Their prominence stems from their capabilities to influence political decisions in Germany, their large number of staff and financial resources to cover large number of policy fields (Kettunen and Kull 2009: 137). As a contrast, Finnish and Estonian regional offices are comparatively weak with only modest resource and staffing. Their regional offices purely work with gathering information due to being part of constitutionally unitary states (Ibid: 137). In general, regional offices from regions with greater amounts of autonomy pay much more focus on attempting to influence their government's stance in European Union issues, whereas offices to regions from unitary states tend to conduct more autonomous and separate activities (Blatter et al. 2008).

Each office's key arbiter is the dispatching region. Given that Europe's regions have vastly different arrangements with many different factors ranging from

economic and population sizes to power of self-governance, the lobbying efforts they choose to place in Brussels reflect that diversity. There are a couple of different perspectives that set out to classify their range. The most basic model is by Badiello (1998: 328) who considers their composition to derive from the region's basic relation with central governments and the region's constitutional framework: 'Individual offices', 'joint representations' with one of several regions, 'direct representations' of regional governments, and 'private bodies' representing the regional executive. It is not too dissimilar from Jerneck and Gidlund's model (2001: ch. 3) who look at them from the perspective of democratic legitimacy. They categorize offices as either 'administrative' when the office is wholly integrated with the region's government, 'entrepreneurial' when a region employs and give professional lobbyists assignments, or 'federal' when offices who include several public actors or a mix of public and private actors (Ibid: 71-89). Lastly, Rowe (2011) developed a complex model for explaining individual offices by weighing resources and organizational principles (Ibid: 126-8). Factors such as human resource polices (staffing profiles and staffing levels), administrative capacity and budgetary resources are cross-sectioned with whether the region is constitutionally self-governing, mainly administrative or if it belongs to a new European Union Member State. As for joint offices, Rowe concedes that "there is no identifiable or predictable logic to the choice of co-locational form on the basis of regional type" (Ibid: 158).

## No Longer Foreign Policy, but European Policy

The state has always been seen as the traditional arbiter of foreign policy. The very first regional office in 1984 was launched with the fear of breaching the law. Given that European policy was at the time considered to be foreign policy, and thus a matter of Germany's federal government, North Rhine-Westphalia crafted a scheming legal setup through a joint venture with the Westdeutsche Landesbank. It lasted five years until clarifications with domestic law gave them the confidence to solidify its links to their Prime Minister (Moore 2006: 193; Dorn 1991: 334; Rowe 2011: 173-4). Opening an office had been, for all intents and purposes, a 'camouflage' way as a means of access to the European Union (Badiello 1998: 341; Rowe 2011: 174). State governments were caught off-guard. In Sweden the government missed an opportunity to draft rules for how they should operate and by the time they took notice of their emergence it was already too late, as there were too many offices already operational (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001: 67). Spain and Italy even legally challenged their regional offices. The Basque Country's office was tested in Spain's Constitutional Court whose verdict permitted their operations as long as they did not establish obligations to foreign powers or impinge upon Spain's foreign policy (Rowe 2011: 76). There is no legislation in any Member State that prohibits regions to set up regional offices (Moore 2008b: 519; Badiello 1998; Closa and Heywood 2004). Over time it became understood that the increase in 'foreign relations' activity by regional governments did not challenge the role of the state or their executive branches (Blatter et al. 2008:

485). As long as their activities did not run into the domain of classic diplomacy, such as consular or diplomatic activities, German regional offices were in the clear (Moore 2006: 196). What had begun with the Single European Act in the 1980s was already set the early 1990s: It was not possible to classify “European policy” as “foreign policy” (Rowe 2011: 174).

## Impact of the Committee of the Regions

Creating the Committee of the Regions in 1994 did not appear to have a dampening effect as new offices have continued to open up for the two decades following its inauguration. It always had organizational problems since the very beginning with large self-governing regions feeling it was beneath them to sit next to minor local authorities (Millan 1997: 8-9). Rowe suggests (2011: 8) the reason regions persist to open up new offices belongs to a greater symptom of the general inability of all of the existing European Union institutions (which includes the Committee of the Regions) to sufficiently ingest the vast amount of diverse demands that persists among regions.

It is not major avenue for regional offices. As an organization it does not place any great emphasis to work with regional offices and does not really need them for the functioning of its duties.<sup>2</sup> Even if it is an institution within the European Union’s decision-making process that represents regions, many offices generally consider it to be unimportant and of limited influence.<sup>3</sup> Their work to influence European Union policy does not involve the Committee of the Regions. Interactions exist, but are limited. It regularly holds forums and public debates with invited speakers and observers from regional offices and have since 2003 arranged Open Days, a yearly event to share knowledge of best-practices and to enable networking among regions, with many events hosted by regional offices. Regional offices predominately use the Committee of the Regions as a ‘spotlight’ to capture the attention of certain European Commissioners or the European Council Presidency (Huysseune and Jans 2008: 7).

## Pushed and Pulled into Brussels

The introduction of the Single European Act, the single market, together with the expansion and reforms of the European Regional Development Fund set the stage wide open for regional offices to take up residence in Brussels. German and English regions were the ones who in turn laid the groundwork for the surge of offices that would set themselves in the city in the following decades.

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<sup>2</sup> Informal discussions with two Committee of the Regions functionaries.

<sup>3</sup> Paraphrasing a representative from a regional office: "We only go to the Committee of the Regions to eat lunch at their cafeteria."

How an institution appears is crucial knowledge to historical institutionalism (Peters 2012: 75; Hay 2008), particularly elements such as utility and motives, because institutions require ideas (Kingdon 2003; Peters 2012: 76). The first wave of offices started to pop up in 1984. Rowe distinguishes them as being either ‘pushed’ or ‘pulled’ into Brussels (2011: 57). The ‘push’ for German regions was the fear of becoming hollowed-out administrative units. German regional offices represented highly self-governing Länder who set them up as political representations with the goal to impact European policy and protect domestic competences. English regions on the other hand were ‘pulled’ by the increasingly tempting opportunities for financing enabled by the refashioned European Regional Development Fund (Ibid: 64; "Regional Representations." 2016).

### Pushed for Self-Determination

The Single European Act and the introduction of the Single Market, regional governments felt like they got the short end of the stick by becoming responsible for implementing much of the legislation established in an arena where they had insignificant abilities to shape policy (Jeffery and Rowe 2012: 361-2). A physical presence would enable them to directly lobby European Commission officials and have their own straight link of information on developments of European Union legislation (Moore 2006: 193; Jasch and Suszycka–Jasch 2009: 1246-7) and to get a foothold in to the European Union’s Council meetings. By having direct correspondence with the European Union’s institutions they aimed to increase their leverage against their own state government. There was some anticipation among regions to be able to punch above their own weight by taking a larger part in the European Union’s decision-making process (Huysseune and Jans 2008: 4-5). Because of their region’s considerable amounts of self-determination, German regional offices highlight how connected European, state and regional levels are in the European Union policy-process (Rowe 2011: 175). According to a former Minister President of Bavaria, in some policy areas they find it more important to be in Brussels than their own capital (Rowe 2011: 176; Stoiber 2004). The first regional office in 1984 was German. Between 1985 to 1989 all German Länder followed along by opening up an office themselves (Moore 2006: 196).

Conducting business with the European Union solely by themselves and the eagerness to bypass state governments gradually waned over time. The tensions that once existed between self-governing regions and state governments loosened up and turned into partnerships. Instead it developed into functional relationships between regional offices and state government permanent representations. The initial drive to “outflank” state governments turned out to be a dud (Rowe 2011: 17; Elias 2008; Greenwood 2003: 252; Keating and Hooghe 1996: 226). With the particular case of Länder regional offices, their increased political importance brought upon a change of heart for the German government. Its official representation to the European Union, Germany’s Permanent Representation, after some time began to rely on German Länder offices to convey policy information

to Germany's regions (Rowe 2011: 174; Börzel 2002: 77). Regional offices started to set collaborative arrangements with their national governments (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 5; Hoven and Sutcliffe 2003). Today most state permanent representations view their regional offices as partners (Moore 2008b: 519). For example, Spain looks to regional offices as suitable representatives for regional interests when taking decisions at the European Union's Council (Nouvelas Rodrigo 2012). Tatham and Thau's (2013) research suggest that the grounds behind setting up an office is similar as the 1990s because the still leading motivator for creating an office are by regions who have seen increased governing responsibilities, reflecting the developments in the 1980s which saw Member States entrust responsibilities onto both the European Union and their own regions (Börzel 2005; Hooghe et al. 2010). While self-determination is still a significant factor in new offices, it has a weaker role in spurring their creation than it did two decades ago (Tatham and Thau 2013: 264).

### Pulled for Funding Opportunities

The European Regional Development Fund effectively coaxed regions to launch an office. Reforms in 1988 and 1993 not only close to doubled the amount of funds, they also encouraged regions to become more involved in the application process by requiring better formulation of regional development strategies (Burch and Gomez 2002: 770, 774). Birmingham's City Council opened one of the first regional offices in 1984 as a one man operation in Brussels solely focusing on pursuing financing opportunities provided by the European Regional Development Fund. Successful networking gave valuable access to Commissioner of Regional Policy Grigoris Varfis and senior staff in the Commission Directorate for Regional Policy. Their success spurred the creation of more British regional offices (Macneill, Jeffery & Gibney 2007: 408-9; Huyseune and Jans 2008: 4; Burch and Gomez 2002: 776-7). Between 1989 and 1994, 17 British regional offices opened in Brussels, who brought forth an awareness to other regions the importance and advantages of having an official presence in Brussels to lobby and to gather information (Burch and Gomez 2002: 769-72). English regional offices gradually spent more and more time gathering information to deliver back to their home region, working on enhancing the profile of their region, searching for new funding opportunities, networking with officials in institutions and partaking in important debates and forums, lobbying on behalf of their own region's interests and local authorities. By 2002 all English regions had regional offices (Ibid: 775).

The incentive to seek financing opportunities from the European Regional Development Fund gradually diminished as applications became increasingly possible to do remotely. These days regional offices are simply not created anymore on the basis of obtaining structural funds (Chalmers 2013: 828; Marks et al. 1996). Specialized administration in the home region do the engrossing process to apply for the funds. Offices in Brussels instead concentrate on matters that entail groundwork such as finding regional partners (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 4). Only weak regions employ full time staffers to lobby for structural funds,

while powerful regions just lobby for the funds on the side (Chalmers 2013: 828-9; Moore 2008b: 526).

## Shaped by the Lobbying Environment

The main responsibilities of regional offices are by and large are the same: They lobby to European Union institutions on behalf of their regions. Together they affirm a considerable force and have become institutionalized into negotiations that concern regional interests in the European Union. Officials generally expect that regions are represented and accessible through their regional office (Moore 2008b: 520). Regional offices have a unique role in the European Union lobbying environment. Their competence in implementing European Union legislation and “citizen legitimacy” by virtue of representing regions serve as a strengths to enter negotiations with the European Union institutions (Rowe 2011: 39-40).

They reflect their purpose of being physically in Brussels by carrying out jobs that are not possible for regions (or just very challenging) to do at great distances. Communicating between the home region concerning the developments in Brussels is the basic responsibility. The most important task of an office is acquiring information in accordance with what the office chooses or has been instructed to keep an eye on. This is done through attending public discussions, forums, building ties with European Union officials and other important actors. The latest information on policy developments is very important in order to produce the right lobbying strategies (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 5-6; Badiello 2000). Offices help people from the region get in touch with the right people in Brussels. Office staff help find the right experts, project partners and contacts at the European Commission (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 6; Badiello 2000; Logon Report 2002: 51; Jeffery 1996b: 196-7). The reverse also happens with European Union officials seeking expertise from regional offices by using them as a kind of “grass roots” or “civil society” to improve their own policy (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 6). Networks play a central role and networking is a crucial responsibility. Brussels is a city with a lot networks (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001: 93) which have come as a result of the special character of European Union’s elaborate lobbying environment (Rowe 2011: 32; Greenwood and Aspinwall 1998: 7). Regional offices through networks exchange information and best practices with another which helps with creating strategic partnerships and alliances (Huyseune and Jans 2008: 6-7). Many important decisions are made in networks because they enable regions to jointly influence decision making in the European Union’s institutions or national state institutions (Bomberg and Peterson 1998: 234). Bargaining, making deals and building coalitions with other regional representatives and European Union institution officials is crucial in order to influence European Union policy (Ibid: 234-5). Interviews with regional office staff suggest it takes around two years to build up personal networks (Kettunen and Kull 2009: 138).

Regional networking organizations have hundreds of regional offices as members and are essential help in securing influence in the European Union's decision-making bodies. Among them are most prominently the Assembly of the European Regions and European Municipalities and Regions (Rowe 2011: 52-3). Every now and then regional offices create "fluid" and impromptu networks to share information with one another rather than exerting political pressure (Benz 1998: 120). This is a result of the elaborate lobbying environment (Rowe 2011: 32; Greenwood and Aspinwall 1998: 7). These fluid networks are used for exchanging information and what are the best practices (Marks, Haesly and Mbaye 2002: 5; Benz 1998: 120). They mobilize around a specific policy to later on dissolve once the issue is concluded (Rowe 2011: 32). Swedish regional offices are coupled together with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities' outpost in Brussels, which represents all of country's municipalities, city councils and regions ("Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions - SKL." 2016). They serve as a coordinator between the Swedish offices. A similar example is the United Kingdom's government 'UKREP family' (Moore 2007: 280-1). The British government developed it in order to safeguard its own authority, hold regional offices under stern control and to ensure a coordinated voice from English regions. In return, the offices were given special privileged access to government meetings, information and working groups to the European Union institutions (Bulmer et al. 2001: 136; Rowe 2011: 181). Regional offices and other lobbyists (often from the same region) can locate themselves into the same building in order to reduce costs and facilitate cooperation. The Scotland Europa house functions as an umbrella organization for Scottish public and private interest representations in Brussels (Jerneck and Gidlund 2001: 128; Rowe 2011: 161-2), whereas the House of the Dutch Provinces hosts all the regional representations of the Netherlands under one roof (Rowe 2011: 158). Many of the projects enabled by the European Union's structural funds require cross-regional cooperation. The Baltic Sea House hosted several regions who participated in the Baltic Sea Strategy policy area. Many regions from eastern Member States have been encouraged to set up their own office because of regional office buildings. Without the access to cheap rent and being able to "piggyback" off of more experienced regional offices they would not have been as compelled to open up one as early as they did (Ibid: 160-1).

There could be a trend among regional offices towards uniformity. A more professionalized lobby environment strengthened by networks which abet in the exchange of best practices and norms could be the cause. Knodt et al. (2011) suggest that research points towards an 'Europeanization' of lobbyist activities in Brussels through the means of increasing the likeness of their activities. This argument is also advanced by Huysseune and Jans (2008). Regional offices are a part of the general lobby because they have very limited formal representation in the European Union institutions, and as a consequence they had to learn how to cope with trying to influence European Union policy much the same way as any other type of lobbyist group in Brussels. The researchers all suggest that over time there has been increased convergence among the strategies employed by lobbyists

in Brussels for the reason that they all end up doing comparatively the same chores collecting and assessing information on political developments, produce and communicate policy positions to decision-makers in the European Union institutions. The cause behind this convergence is the distinctive European Union lobbying environment which encourages a homogenization of lobbying approaches. For example, the common set of lobbyist rules, the European Transparency Register, treat all lobbyists equally and requires that they publicly register meetings with European Union institution employees. Regional offices who are not constitutional regions with the approval to attend European Council meetings are stuck without any formal representation in the European Union institutions, and as a result are required to use the same entry points as any other lobbyist interest group. Factors like these have brought upon an increasingly professionalized environment to impact European Union policy (Knodt et al. 2011: 364) and which is part of what has made regional offices appear over time more and more similar in their configurations and responsibilities. As asserted by Huysseune and Jans (2008: 10), over time this should generate a convergence in regional offices, meaning offices in the 2010s should be more similar to one another in their activities than they were in early 2000s or the 1990s (Rowe 2001: 11; Scherpereel 2007; Tatham and Thau 2013: 258-9; Kettunen and Kull 2009; Moore 2008a).

## 7. Discussion

The purpose for comparing the historical developments of the Committee of the Regions and regional offices is to gain a better understanding of the discrepancies. Each institution and their shared history is examined through sourcing written records, mainly social science publications, journal articles and books. The findings are narrow and case-specific making these difficult to generalize.

A persistent challenge for with regions is the fuzzy definition of what is a “region”, owing to their diverse characteristics. It can be argued that both institutions’ organized representation of regions are diametrically opposed from one another and have a clash of approach to European Union decision-making. The Committee of the Regions took the path of going through the ordinary process of the Treaties which make up the European Union, while regional offices took a path outside the supervision of the Member State’s own governments.

Their divergent paths show two evident influences. First, the European Regional Development Fund was forged from a compromise in the 1970s between France and Great Britain, then reformed in the late 1980s to lessen the Single Market’s impact on poorer regions. Its advancements relinquished state responsibility of aid to regions, combined with its increased financial muscle and impartiality in distribution of tender by eligibility criteria. These encouraged regions to pursue these funds for themselves. Second, the Single European Act lifted decision-making from states to the European Union, making self-governing regions feeling undermined. They reacted by seeking new channels, establishing activities in Brussels and lobbying their state governments to safeguard guarantees. German Länder played a pivotal role in the outcome caused by the Single European Act and led to encouraging the formation of the Committee of the Regions and the first to create an outpost in Brussels.

With regional offices, both influences stood more on equal footing, which pulled and pushed regions to create the early offices. Self-governing German Länder came to Brussels to bypass state governments while supervised English regions came for the new funding opportunities. The creation of the Committee of the Regions did not dampen establishments of more regional offices. Institutions can reorient themselves as a response to other institutions and can adapt to situations where there is no competition for their role (Krasner 1988: 84-5; DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150-4). It is conceivable the Committee of the Regions set in motion a path dependency for regional offices since it was unable to fulfill its own obligations, pushing regions towards seeking another entry point to European Union decision-making.

They sprang from “outside the system” absent of a legal framework and attempting to outflank state governments (sometimes in insubordination of the law) in order to directly reach European Union institutions. This means they have to operate more through the means of traditional lobbying using lobbyist methods such as networking and coalition-building to impact decision-making. Regional office configurations are driven by regions themselves and are hence unfixed, being a sort of expression Europe’s regional diversity. There is no central authority to set rules, instead networks and isomorphism play a binding role between offices. Among the different models of offices, postulated factors behind their observed diversity range from the region’s relations with the central government, their constitutional abilities to self-govern, democratic legitimacy, resources and organizing principles. However, once on the ground in Brussels, the behavior is shaped by the lobbying climate.

The reconditioning of their objectives away from bypassing state governments and applying for European Regional Development Funds were path dependent changes. In moment of defiance of inertial inflexibility (Peters 2012: 72), it showed a capacity to change their methods. Partnering with state governments make sense in a lobbying environment as coalition-building is a vital practice to achieve results, while the development funds was less of an active choice as its reforms lessened the need for offices’ roles in the process. As what Knodt et al. (2011) research suggests, the most fitting explanation behind their realignments is the lobby environment’s isomorphism because the exchange of best practices and ‘Europeanization’ encourages uniformed behaviors. The offices who mobilized the best served as templates for other offices and was therefore mimicked. Offices might do this out of their own uncertainty, desire to adopt norms, shared expectations, or by coercion from political pressure (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The bedrock of networks between offices and the convergence of functions suggest institutional inertia, but evidence such as the continual opening of new offices point towards continued growth. This falls in alignment with existing research's difficulty in explaining the contradiction of a withering ‘Europe of the Regions’ but a continued surge of regional mobilization with new offices.

The Committee of the Regions owes its earliest lineage to the European Commission’s short-lived working group on the distribution of the European Regional Development Fund, the pressure of the Single European Act heavily weighs upon stimulating the creation of the Committee of the Regions. It was mainly driven by large and autonomous regions pushing their own governments, backed by pro-regional lobbyist groups at Intergovernmental Conferences. The Single European Act was among the factors that spurred German Länder to get engaged and call for creation an institution. Yet during the Maastricht Treaty negotiations, the German government’s decision to focus attention on the deliberations concerning the Single Market instead might have permanently hamstrung the initial institutional design of the Committee of the Regions.

Its path was to become a formal legal institution developed “within the system” through conventional constitutional means. Regions’ intense political pressure on state governments and coordinated lobbying was present during the

1990 Intergovernmental Conference with its creation placed on the table by the European Commission, followed by bargaining and negotiation then written into the Maastricht Treaty. Customary of democratic forums and reflecting the nature of the proceedings, it became a product of compromise by being afforded solely (even if selectively mandatory) advisory capacity within the European Union decision-making system. It is unclear at which stage of the conference discussion the suggestion came copy the institutional design from the European Economical and Social Committee, but the cost-effectiveness arguments that were leveraged in the discussion gives the impression that it was introduced as a solution for practicalities. This decision set it towards a dependent path that it has been unable to readjust. It was also intentionally designed to treat all regions equally without regard for differing characteristics. Voices were raised during its inception about the limitation. This was to the great discomfort of the self-governing regions, and is a likely a source of remaining disengagement with the institution. As Millan describes (1997: 9), the negotiations were not thorough enough to solve the complex issue of regional representation in the institution. The institution's blueprint could not end up favoring one type of region over another, which is why the institution ended up using indiscriminate methods to include all varieties of regions.

It is struck by very limited amounts of paths to it can take. It cannot change its features to appease both the strong will of the self-governing regions of Europe and to the consent of the political environment, particularly the other major institutions and the Member States. Institutional inertia can carry on by matters of mere toleration and by "permanently failing" (Peters 2012: 73), including those who might benefit from the current state of affairs (Krasner 1988: 83; Krasner 1984: 235). Member States with few autonomous regions, the European Council and European Parliament, are all actors who benefit from the current status quo of a submissive Committee of the Regions, and they would stand little to gain from a change to the equilibrium. Institutions may also work just well enough that the incentive to fundamentally transform how it functions becomes difficult (Krasner 1988: 82). Its existence right now might simply just tolerable enough: It would be too radical for regions to outright remove it from the treaties. And it would be too disconcerting for its opposition to significantly improve its power and influence in the European Union decision-making process.

In hindsight the larger regions (for the most part German Länder) cannot have been particularly satisfied with the outcome. Jeffery, at the outset in 1997, rightly judged the Committee of the Regions as a relatively inefficient channel for regions to influence the European Union's policy process, predicting that any form of transformation of it to fix its defects would take a long time (McCarthy 1996; Jeffery 1997: 5). Owing to its position as an official European Union institution written into international law, European Union treaty revisions are the only critical junctures at the Committee of the Region's disposal for thoroughgoing changes to its design. First, legal environments are very strong forces in shaping institutions (DiMaggio and Powell 1983: 150). Second, historical institutionalism stresses that deliberately devised institutions contain strong elements of planned design (Peters 2012: 75-6; Hay 2008; Alexander

2005). Third, institutions can be designed to deliberately feature inertia for strategic reasons (Pierson 2000: 262). Last, democratic decision-making is a significant hurdle if institutions are bound to that process (Alexander 2001: 259-60). The Committee of the Regions is an example of all four. It was clearly destined for inertia at the outset. But unlike regional offices, its future is more easily predicted because the next critical juncture will be at some future Intergovernmental Conference.

This study has sought to investigate the Committee of the Regions and regional offices side by side. Their parallel developments uncovered contrasting features among both institutions. First, history provides an insight into the question why there are two institutions that represent regions in the European Union. It is coupled with the European Union's swelling of responsibilities as it matured during the 20th century. The critical juncture for regions to seek entry into the European Union institutions came about in the 1980s to the early 1990s as a culmination of funding opportunities and a feeling of lost power. Second, the events clearly show two factors at play with the Single European Act and the European Regional Development Fund. There was evidently skewed influence from the former in the birth the Committee of the Regions, whereas regional offices more plainly shares lineage with both factors. Third, they highlight entirely contrasting approaches in attempting to influence European Union decision-making. Both institutions play advisory roles with consultative capacity, "lobbying" to persuade European Union decision-makers. The Committee of the Regions does it through the inside while regional offices do it from the outside. Fourth, historical institutionalism posits that critical junctures enable new paths. The critical juncture of the proceedings created not just one path for regions, but two channels as entry points into European Union decision-making. Fifth, historical institutionalism exhibits distinct effects for each institution. It is rather straightforward for the Committee of the Regions, displaying evident critical junctures and a designed inertia. This is was to be expected as it is a political institution in the most classic sense being apart of the overall governmental bureaucracy, with a building, staff, and defined objectives to affect public policy. On the other hand, for the regional offices, its unfixed structure makes theoretical application slightly more difficult. The most clear observation has been the realignment and convergence of operations owing to isomorphism. Lastly, deliberately created institutions, especially those which are legal and part of the democratic process, can end up with crippling statutes whereas institution with unfixed designs can find considerable strengths in their freedom to adapt. The wish and intent to have an institutional representation for regions was stronger than the will to accommodate the complexity of Europe's regions. The Committee of the Region's shackled design explicitly bars it from dealing with isolated issues and instead must function on behalf of the interest of all of Europe's regions. This aligns with historical institutionalism's assertion that path dependent decisions can remove future options by binding decision-makers and showcasing political commitment (Pierson 2000: 262). In contrast, without oversight regional offices have freely managed to develop their own models of representation that more

accurately reflect the diversity of Europe's regions. These offices have the liberty to work in their own region's interest and on the issues their region find to be the most important.

## 8. Conclusion

This study finds that the European Regional Development Fund and the Single European Act played crucial roles in the creation of the Committee of the Regions and regional offices. These organizations exhibit significant differences in regional representation, resulting from differing design purposes, explained by historical institutionalism. This study presents a new effort for conducting a comparative historical analysis of the Committee of the Regions and regional offices. By chronicling these historical developments, we explore both institutions while attempting to specify and highlight the differences.

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