

METHODOLOGICAL STORIES ON REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

We are participants of ever changing peripherization. A growing external control over social sciences has been spotted lately in academic community. This inspires to investigate a Lithuanian case on the discourse of regional governance in order to understand the impact of social research methodology in the processes of peripherization. With the intention to deemphasize domination, the article describes eleven stories designed for constituting methodological meanings of regional governance (RG) arrived at while reflecting upon public, academic and legal written texts. Texts were chosen to illustrate variety of international and national discourses, which manage the chain of reasoning on RG. The article ends with some insights on understanding RG and its methodological roots associated with three sets of principles drawn from qualitative research, quantitative research and discourse research.

KEYWORDS: *methodology, social sciences, discourse research, regional governance.*

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Introduction

In the Neolithic Age: There are nine and sixty ways of constructing tribal lays, and every single one of them is right!
Rudyard Kipling

That happened in the Neolithic age. Now do we live in a different age? Are there still “nine and sixty ways” valid for writing tribal scientific lays? Many academics would caution about the growing external attempts to control social research by creating obstacles to publishing (e.g., Dodge, Ospina, Foldy, 2005; Konickis, 2003; Norvaiša, 2010) or by promoting traditional knowledge divides and privileged positions of some disciplines (ISSC, 2010). These ideas imply our research purpose to make sure, what are methodological hierarchies in social sciences in Lithuania? A case on regional governance (RG) makes it easier to approach the problem. Discourse research (DR) is a tool for revealing peripherised genealogies (Foucault, 1971; Gabriel, 2000).

Is discourse research popular on RG in Lithuania? Personal experience suggests that hardly it is, especially in public administration texts. Elusive writings on RG show the signs that both DR and RG is still under peripheral spotlight (see, e.g., Atkočiūnienė et. al., 2010; Bileišis, 2012; Bruneckienė, Kučinskas, 2011; Daugirdas, Mačiulytė, 2006; Donskis, 2010; Dudinskaitė, 2011; Grigienė, 2011; Nakrošis, Martinaitis, 2011; Svetikas, 2007; Vaitekūnas, 2007; Žilinskas, 2009).

What all these fragile shreds may mean in uncovering discursive nature of hegemonic methodologies? With these notes and some good intentions to deemphasize domination, we are led by some specific motivations in the article, as follows:

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- To resist traditional methodological forces which try to control the text.
- To remain open to post-modern undercidability in order to secure dynamical flow of reflection and a state of mind of “being and asking” (Sverdiolas, 2002);
- To take caution through diversity and ambiguity not to prescribe a single model that is up to discipline others (Focoult, 1961);
- To reveal some ways through which social researchers of RG are being subjugated for coming to know and occupy special approaches in academic hierarchies.

The article consists of eleven sections designed for constituting methodological meanings of RG arrived at while reflecting upon public, academic and legal written texts. The texts were chosen to illustrate variety of international and national discourses – more or less stable (deductive and legal) and flexible (empirical), which manage the chain of reasoning and empower to understand concepts, discourses and their implications for social researchers and for the future of RG in Lithuania.

1. A Story on Discourse Research

What is discourse research? The next question is how discourse research may be carried out? Whenever we touch upon a discourse idea, various stories should come to our heads: success story, problem story, change story. A story comes out when we want to share our ideas with others. So, a story may imply a discourse and a discourse may imply a narrative and vice versa (see, e.g., Anderson, 2003; Dodge, Ospina, Foldy, 2005; Feldman, Sköldberg, Brown, Horner, 2004; Foucault, 1971; Gabriel, 2000; Wells, 2011). All are expressed by a text. Texts contain meanings.

We usually would not bother to participate in a meaningless discourse or tell a meaningless story. So texts are intentionally constructed. Any text may be an object of our attention: written, visual, sound, etc. Texts illuminate meaningful understanding of social reality and our experience. Texts may convey alternative, opposite, implicit (hidden), explicit and other meanings. We focus on explicit meanings, which will be condensed into emphatic stories. These make easier to stress contextual weight and reveal hidden genealogical meanings that may not be seen without the enquiry.

Meanings given by a story teller and a reader may be the same and may be different. Sameness occurs from methodological stability, while differences stem from interpretation: both are inevitable. However, if we encounter similar two stories, they dispense nomenclature – methodological stability. Implication: intention for convention vs. intention for discontinuity. This article is about both: about methodological stability and instability, normative and empirical interpretation.

Turned to an enquiry method, interpretation is for revealing meanings. As such, interpretation may be based on a conceptual framework or may just be directed by the general questions: “What is a story that the text renders?”; “What is it all about?”; “What message it yields?” These questions are adequate to our case. A conceptual framework that we may appeal to, – e.g., hegemony, power, human rights, indigenous culture, oppression or equality, sustainable development, etc. – constrains our capacities of interpretation, since the sense in or the point of view from which we are going to discuss RG is already known. Contrarily, our approach free of any background political theory allows unbundling various intuitive insights. On the other hand, if our conceptual pathway is known, a question persists: why then we should strive for inquiry?

Perhaps the reasons are the same as in the case of not knowing conceptually what to look for: for the sake of knowledge development that may be meaningful to each of us differently; for richer understanding of the subject and each other; for expanding our scientific horizons; for keeping balance between nomenclature and creativity, between the centre and periphery; for learning to express no domination over others; for that we care about people and their equal rights. People shape stories and stories shape people. If our story is to announce a single and the only methodological truth, we definitely are on the way to dominate over the other “*nine and sixty*” possible ways of constructing stories.

Nevertheless, a story is told in order to persuade others that the meaning the author wishes to be heard is the right one. Right meaning is not the same as a true one. Although both may be based on facts and theories; both may be directed to achieve some important targets; both may be addressed to provoke others for re-action; both may be arrived at by similar methods; however true meaning constitute stability, while a right one renders seeds for change. Plato's allegory of the cave, Hardin's tragedy of the commons, Marx's theory of capital or Simone de Beauvoir's oeuvre on the second sex all are exemplars of grand narratives. They all may constrain the directions of our intentional thinking. Nevertheless, they all are right stories. They all render discontent rather than content: they all inspire to change a status quo. They all have openings, actors, moving targets, plots, closures and audiences to whom they are designated. Yet, yesterday they all sparkled with epistemological meanings. Today they are just rhetoric of the past.

The most stable are normative stories because of deduction and convention. A normative story is on how things should be in the ideal state that we think might be right for all. If legally approved, a normative story becomes a binding one. So first, what does it mean RG in academic deductive sense? Second, what are the stories on RG that the legal texts portray? What renders those legal stories on RG in conventional sense?

2. International Stories on G and RG

Regional authorities together with local ones are the main actors closest to lay people and citizens. They act as initiators for encouraging people engagement in various social projects of everyday life. The key role of regional authorities for advancing governance (G) denotes something that is alternative to market driven mechanisms, top-down management or hierarchical structures of government (see., e.g., Ágh, 2010; Bache, Flinders, 2004; Bileišis, 2012; Bufon, 2011; Godsäter, Söderbaum, 2008; Marschal, 2003).

While government designates a "command and control" principle, governance is understood in terms of autonomy, egalitarianism, negotiations, agreements and community networks empowerment principles. While government is about one-sided regulation, governance is about sharing authority and responsibility between many social, political and administrative actors: governance = sharing authority. How different policy and non-governmental actors share formal authority and responsibility? This is a vital question that might be addressed by a democratic citizen to a democratic governor.

A wider view of understanding governance has been generalized in such concepts as meta-governance, multi-level, multi-actor, polycentric or institutional network governance as well as inter-sectoral governance or private-public partnerships (PPP). Altogether, these theories capture the idea of growing dispersion of central government authority both vertically and horizontally. They explain the need for creating close interdependence between government and nongovernmental actors operating at different territorial levels. As a result, they may signal about the arrival of a new style of public management, called as a co-management.

Vertical discursive dimension of governance refers to co-management operating at different territorial levels, such as supranational, national, regional and local. Therefore a story on multi-level governance may be about, for example, the ways, how complex local problems of a small municipality can be handled by negotiations in Brussels for regional structural funds. Or it may be about possibilities of a regional councilor to represent the interests of a region at local, national or supranational levels. The leading part takes meta-governance, which decides on who will regulate and how.

Horizontal dimension signals about co-management performed by multi-actors, such as states (governments), markets (business) and civil society. Collaboration and negotiation between these actors is of particular importance. So a horizontal discourse on governance may focus on negotiations, shared responsibilities, competences and recourses addressed towards and for the sake of a community in order it were empowered to overcome a complex problem. This type of theorizing may run along the headlines of PPP frameworks, including discussions on network or inter-sectoral governance.

A story line "from government to governance" may even be evoked to mean the move of national sovereignty to regional authority in the sense that the national state has been gradually replaced by new forms of territorial organization and multi-level cooperation (Bagdzevičienė, Vasiliauskaitė, 2002; Bufon, 2011;

Burbulytė, 2005; Jäger, Köhler, 2008). Since there might be regions of different territorial scale, so might be different regional places for developing different regional authorities, which promote diversified regional governance too. In this sense we may focus on (3M or 4M theory):

1. Micro level regional governance, related to subnational territorial institutions acting in different administrative subdivisions of unitary or federal types of states or confederations. A topic on regional governance in Lithuania might be an example.

2. Meso level regional governance relative to conglomerations of a few international actors and territorial initiatives concentrated on indigenous regional targets, such as, e.g., The Baltic Sea Region, NAFTA, European area region, Asian or African region.

3. Macro level regional governance associated with the supranational arrangements and co-management frameworks such as, e.g., The Council of Europe, NATO or UN. Experience of the Congress of European Municipalities and Regions may be cited also as an example of a discourse on how regional governance works at international macro level. On the other hand, we may even attribute such projects as UN or NATO to a different – mega level of regional governance (the 4-th M theory).

Here we have captured a small slice of dynamism of the discourse on RG rather than temporal stability, to which we are going to turn next while trying to explicate structural-functional stories attached to the 3M theoretical approaches.

3. A Macro Legal Story on RG

This story on RG may be about democracy development in Europe told by the Council of Europe (see e.g., CE, 2012; CLRAE, 2001, 2012). The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (CLRAE) is one of the main supranational players in assuring the rule of law and Human Rights in Europe. It is a pan-European political assembly with the 636 members of which hold elective office. The members of the assembly are regional and municipal councilors, mayors or presidents from 47 European states, including Lithuania.

The CLRAE mission is to promote local and regional democracy, improve local and regional governance and strengthen self-government of regional and local institutions. The CLRAE is a consultative institution with the supervising obligation to check how the principles laid down in the European Charter of Local Self-Government are being applied in the European states. “It encourages the devolution and regionalisation processes, as well as transfrontier co-operation between cities and regions” (CE, 2012). The Congress initiates international treaties and projects for strengthening local democracy and transfrontier co-operation. It also encourages setting up of national associations of local and regional authorities, local democracy agencies and the new kind of Euro-region.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government, drawn up by the Congress, was ratified by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania in May of 1999. This act represents Lithuania’s promise to follow the Charter’s principles as well as the Congress’ recommendations. What commitment has Lithuania’s authorities to adhere to, while following the Congress recommendation and how Lithuania succeeds? How the legal written discourse between Lithuania’s authorities and the congress has been flowing?

In 2001 the Congress states that Europe expects Lithuania’s territorial administrative reform unfolding into the “enlarged regions run by directly elected regional councils representing a genuine system of regional self-government” (CLRAE, 2001, art. 14). The Congress recommends constructing regional governance based on concrete socio-economical and ethno-cultural needs, revealed by means of a regular consultation with the population. In general, the Congress sees Lithuania’s administrative reforms run towards the creation of a system of regional self-government as a new tier of authority with its specific executive bodies and administrative structures, which share responsibilities with municipalities, based on the principle of subsidiarity.

A decade past and the Congress prepares a second set of Recommendation numbered 321 (CLRAE, 2012), which registers the concern of the Congress that in Lithuania “since 2010, administrative functions have been removed from the counties and re-distributed to either central or local government, moving away

from (rather than moving towards) a system incorporating regional government, without putting in place a structure that could compensate for its loss". In this case the Congress addresses its recommendation to the Committee of Ministers for it would invite the Lithuanian authorities to "take measures to develop stronger regional tiers by increasing the number of competences of the Regional Development Councils, strengthening their administrative apparatus and allowing them to establish regional budgets" (CLRAE, 2012). The promise given by Lithuania to Europe is still a valid challenge.

4. A Meso Legal Story on RG

In the similar way as the macro story, meso story may also focus on democratic style of regional management: democratic style of management = governance = co-management = authority sharing = policy coordination = participating democracy. However if the macro story transmits the message of the CLRAE's mission to promote democracy at regional and local level, the meso story, which the EU authorities have been developing, focuses on the governance as the vital tool for promoting economic, social and territorial development and enhancing cohesion between regions (see, e.g., EC, 2001; CR, 2009). So, both authorities are interested in improving governance at regional and local level for combating inequalities. The first actors take care about democratic equal rights; the second players stress equal access to other social goods in terms of sustainable development and quality of life. As regards RG, the issue of democratic deficit is a priority concern by the EU (see, e.g., CR, 2009; IES, 2009).

The EU notes that the level of trust of citizens in politicians and public administrators has been constantly decreasing. Citizen interest in political parties and voting has been diminishing. Expectations for better life have been increasing in the proportion with the demands to authorities. Satisfaction with government actions has been declining. The gap between the governors and the governed has been expanding. These facts put at risk of undermining representative democracy. The reasoning line runs like that: if only a minority of citizens express their political will, e.g., to participate in elections, this way legitimized political decision making may be found questionable. Therefore the governing models that see elections as the sole instrument of democracy need to be reconsidered and redesigned. Governments need to empower citizens for broader political participation and cooperation. Engaged citizens in governance are more likely to be informed, active, satisfied and expressing more trust in government. What is the best way to implement the approach of "building Europe in partnership"?

"Governance" means rules, processes and behaviour that affect the way in which powers are exercised at European level, particularly as regards openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence" (EC, 2001). So the White Paper directs attention towards the mode of multi-level governance while announcing governance principles to be acted upon, implemented, maintained and enhanced. Moreover, the Committee of the Regions (CR, 2009) takes over the efforts to advance and follow such European political and administrative culture, which recognizes that:

- local and regional authorities are genuine "partners" rather than mere intermediaries.
- the principle of subsidiarity is guaranteed both legally and in practice;
- fundamental rights, which include local and regional autonomy and respect for diversity are assured; responsibility shared along all tiers of government;
- a pan-European consensus on multi-level governance based on democratic values is established; common and shared understanding of European governance is promoted;
- a process for integrating the objectives of local and regional authorities within the strategies of the European Union is evoked.

These guiding ideas promote political action that has been constructed on the grounds of democratically elected local and regional authorities in the EU. The Commission establishes systematic dialog with European and national associations (EU, 2012). Members of the states have their constitutional autonomy to form the tiers of regional authorities. Therefore, in the EU member states, actors sharing responsibilities between

local, regional and national authorities vary, ranging from voluntary institutions to directly or indirectly elected regional councils and assemblies.

Nevertheless, actions of the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy (DGRP) shape the development of RG in the EU member states. It is not only in the sense that regional policy targets and strategic programs are being set at European and national levels and implemented at regional and local levels. It is not so much in the sense that those programs are financially supported by the EU. Much more than that are the DGRP's efforts to implement the approach of "building Europe in partnership", based on diversity and solidarity.

The mission of the DGRP is "to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion by reducing disparities between the levels of development of regions and countries of the European Union" (DGRP, 2012). While managing such frameworks as, e.g., the European Regional Development Fund, the Cohesion Fund, the European Union Solidarity Fund, the DGRP assists less prosperous EU regions in job creation, competitiveness, economic growth, improved quality of life and sustainable development. However, the access to the funds is available only to those who commit themselves to the principles of partnership governance at least in four fundamental senses as follows:

- Co-operation between economic and social partners;
- Co-financing: EU + national/regional funds;
- Co-ordination of measures and resources for socioeconomic and territorial cohesion.
- Co-management = multilevel decision making and implementation.

Responsibility for assuring wide multi-actor participation in the RG takes the agency of the Committee of the Regions (the Committee). It represents the local and regional authorities within the European institutional system and plays the role of a partner in the dialogue (see, e.g., EU, 2012). The Committee consists of 344 members and alternates from all 27 EU Member States. Members and alternates are appointed for a five-year term by the Council, acting on proposals from the EU countries. Each country chooses its members in its own way, but the delegations all reflect the political, geographical and regional/local balance in their country. The members are elected members of or key players in local or regional authorities in their home region.

The committee's mission is to incorporate regional and local authorities and the communities they represent in the EU's decision-making process and to inform them about EU policies. The Committee accumulates local and regional points of view and puts them forward on EU legislation by issuing reports ('opinions') on Commission proposals (EU, 2012). Although the Committee of the Regions is an advisory body, The European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council are legally obliged to consult the Committee and to receive its approval prior to EU decisions are taken on matters concerning local and regional governance.

If the macro story on RG sounds like polite reproach to Lithuania expressed by representatives of Europe, the meso story is beyond the reproach. Nevertheless, the support of EU must insert remorse on the part of Lithuania. Perhaps we must regret for being seeds in a scorched land, just because the waters has flown past.

5. A Micro Legal Story on no-Governance

We do have neither governance (Bileišis, 2012), nor regional governance (Dudinskaitė, 2011; CEC, 2008; Šileika, Šimulienė, 2011) in Lithuania. So the story on no-governance may run along the lines of how government style is going to be changed and implemented. The Program on the Development of Public Administration (LRS, 2012) states the necessity of the reform in order to increase efficiency of public administration (PA) and meet the needs of Lithuanian people. The main mission of PA is to fulfill people needs. People need authorities to be more open and transparent, more effective and more available for public participation. How these priority needs are planned to be turned into practice?

First, Lithuanian people complain they lack information on how public institutions work and what kind of changes implement. So if transparency is a problem, regulation on better delivery of information is the very solution. Second, officials rarely consult with the people while preparing public projects. So if hearing people advice is a problem, better regulation on systemic consultations between authorities and the stakeholders is a solution. Third, people would be happy to offer some advice on policies; however officials are not bound legally to include their proposals in the frameworks of decisions. So if responsibility of public officials is a problem, better regulation on the procedures of consultations is the solution: officials will be obliged to register people participation, to monitor it and measure its impact for decision making.

Fourth, In Lithuania legal acts guarantee people's right to informal participation in the decision making processes on both levels – national and local, and people would definitely exercise this right if they could; people lack skills of public responsibility, they lack knowledge and competences of leadership. So people need to be taught how to practice initiative and how to exercise and promote leadership; so do public officials.

Fifth, people complain on the quality of public services that do not correspond to people needs. The best answer to that are institutionalized national standards on the quality of public services which support the principles of subsidiarity and wider public participation. Moreover, permanent service quality monitoring should be strengthened and centralized; administrative service of the “one stop shop” should be advanced; possibilities for the dialog on service quality between users and suppliers should be created; institutional conditions for increasing competition of public service suppliers should be innovated on the lines of public “money follows the service” user rather than its supplier; public services should be concentrated around the newly established centers.

Finally, evidence based and result oriented strategic management should be advanced following the objectives to strengthened the capacities of strategic planning; to minimize regulation; to level hierarchical authority structures; to optimize management structures by joining small public institutions into the bigger centers; to homogenize the activities of public institutions; to increase attractiveness of public office; to strengthen monitoring of its activities; to reinforce collaboration between public institutions; to enhance the capacities of using innovative technologies of public management.

So the mini story on no governance persuasively states that the government in Lithuania is going to be very busy in centralizing and decentralizing; in increasing regulation and minimizing it; in bureaucratizing and dehierarhisizing PA structures; in homogenizing and diversifying their rules in 2012–2020: very busy government vs. very passive citizens. Government is an inevitable event; public must be a reaction.

6. A Micro Legal Story on no-RG

The Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Lithuania (MI) is responsible for state policy in the field of public administration, including regional public administration (LRS, 2000). The MI arranges and coordinates production and implementation of both policies. Apropos: in Lithuania, regional public administration is of two types: 1) regional public administration of European support managed by the Finance Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania and 2) regional public administration of Lithuania's support (national regional administration) managed by the Ministry of Interior. So national regional public administration = national public government of Lithuania's regions.

The main task of national regional policy in Lithuania is focused on redistribution of public investments in favor of less developed regions (MI, 2012). It is aimed at reduction of regional socio-economic (statistical) disparities within the (statistical units of the) country. It is implemented via regional development plans, national strategies and programs, local and regional initiatives (MI, 2012). Strategic provisions of national regional policy are incorporated into EU structural support programming documents which allows using EU support for national regional policy (MI, 2012).

The main actors in the area of national RP development are as follows (MI, 2012; LRS, 2000; VRM, 2012): (1) The Government of the Republic of Lithuania (GRL), (2) The Ministry of the Interior (MI), (3) The National Council of Regional Development (NCRD), (4) The Councils of Regional Development (CRD),

(5) ministries, municipalities, social and economic partners. (1) The GRL holds the power for making decisions related to regional policy (RP): it institutionalizes national RP. It composes regions demarcating the lines between and regionalizing counties and municipalities; the proposal of the demarcation for approval it transmits to the Seimas (LRS, 1994). GRL also appoints members to the NCRD and approves its chairman.

(2) The Ministry of the Interior (MI) coordinates the development and implementation processes of regional policy. Among other mandates, the MI approves the members to the Council of Regional Development (CRD); approves the regulation on the actions of the NCRD and organizes meetings of its members; prepares programs related to the reduction of disparities between regions and the development of problem regions in Lithuania; administers finance of the program of regional development; controls municipalities and other public institutions how they implement MI's recommended provisions (LRS, 2000).

There are two main subdivisions at the MI (VRM, 2012). The first one is the Department of Regional Policy (DRP). The second one is the Department of Regional Development (DRD). The first one produces policy of regional development, the second one implements it at deferent territorial counties. The first one resides at the centre, the second one is deconcentrated along the counties. DRP participates in producing projects of legal acts, while DRD has the right to produce projects of plans on regional development. DRP orders, while DRD executes. DRD coordinates the activities of municipalities and social partners, while DRP controls how DRD and other MI's subordinate offices work in the field of regional policy.

(3) The National Council of Regional Development (NCRD) holds the status of consultative institution: it discusses national planning documents on RG, prepares recommendations for their improvements. Nevertheless, its approval is obligatory prior to the MI's prepared programs proceed to the GRL (LRS, 2000). The NCRD include representatives from ministries and other governmental institutions, the Association of Local Authorities in Lithuania, social and economic partners and the chairmen of the CRD. The NCRD members meet at least two times a year. They can invite to the meetings social and economic partners from the sectors that have no representatives in the NCRD. Invited people participate on advisory terms.

(4) The Councils of Regional development (CRD) exercise advisory powers at the national level and some authority force for the development of regions at the territorial county level. There are 10 territorial counties, each having a separate Council of Regional Development in Lithuania. Municipality mayors belonging to the same region, delegated representatives from the region municipality councils and members appointed by the GRL compose the structure of the CRD. It is a collegial institution which mission is to stimulate sustainable development of the region. The CRD works in collaboration with the central-regional DRD, the latter serving as a secretariat of the first. The CRD approves its own regulation of actions and elects its chairman. It also holds powers to approve planning documents on the development of its own region, to select projects addressed to put the plans into practice and to control their implementation.

The micro legal story is the newest story on regional government in Lithuania. It signals about centralized regional government in Lithuania 2012. Its nearest roots may be visible in a multi-voiced story in 2010, to which we are going to turn further.

7. A Multi-voice Story on delimitation

Counties and municipalities are legal territorial administrative units of the Republic of Lithuania (LRS, 1994). Counties are administrated by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania; institutions of local authorities are in charge for the management of municipalities. The county is formed out of the territories of the municipalities that have common social, economic, ethnic and cultural interests. There are 10 counties and 60 municipalities in Lithuania.

Are counties the same as regions in Lithuania? Yes and no. Yes, they are in the sense of planning and implementation of regional policy: national regional policy is planned and implemented in the counties (DRP, 2012). No, they are not in the sense of the GRL's right to transcend the boundaries of counties while seeking national interests: the Government can construct purposeful non-administrative territories (regions) out of a few counties or municipalities that have the same territorial boundaries (DRP, 2012). This has helped Lithu-

anian authorities to be flexible in consolidating national regional policy with the EU regional policy, which is administrated on the bases of NUTS.

NUTS = legal nomenclature of classification dividing territorial units for statistics within the EU territory (EC, 2007). NUTS classification embraces a three-level structure that defines minimum and maximum population thresholds for the size of the NUTS Euro-regions. Lithuania is a Euro region close to NUTS 1. Its territory can be further divided into units of NUTS 2 (Lithuania), which in turn are divided into NUTS 3 level territorial units (10 counties and their non-administrative territorial conglomerations which the GRL is free to construct). Statistics is helpful in particular while deciding which regions need badly financial and other support.

However this freedom of the GRL for maneuvering with the territorial boundaries was one of the many reasons which determined political will to reform public administration in Lithuania in 2010. Since jurisdictions of public administration and implementation of regional policy diverge, authority areas also become unclear. If regional policy is planned and implemented in the counties, they must have democratic (elected) powers for exercising authority based on clear cut boundaries of a particular territory (see, e.g., Daugirdas, Mačiulytė, 2006; Dudinskaitė, 2011; Svetikas, 2007).

Moreover, centralized government of counties is ineffective for its decisions are too far off people; centralization produces passive regional policy which does not lead to expected results; instead of focusing on increasing county's competitiveness, regional policy is still concentrating on the direct support to the counties in need; such policy increase problem region's dependence on the national and the EU support rather than increasing its competitive potentials; because the average county calculates 350 000 people, Lithuania's counties in general are too small for conforming to the NUTS 2 regulation, accordingly to claim support available from the EU for minimizing regional socio-economic differences starting from 2014 (ibid).

So in 2010 the reform measures on the county administrations have been implemented in Lithuania. This counts as an empirical event, which results have already been revealed in the previous Micro Legal Story on no-RG. A reaction by Lithuanian experts towards the reform is another event worth of our attention for it presents another – empirical inductive meaning on RG.

8. A Story on Auca 2010

In 2010 the county governor's administration (CGA) was abolished in Lithuania. It was a fact that passed not without attention of social researchers. What does the fact of the administrative change mean in terms of regional governance according to the minds of Lithuania's experts in governing matters ♠? L. Dudinskaitė's (2011) story on the case is extremely comprehensive, drawn from texts of academic literature and experts' interview recordings. She reveals a rich pool of data for further utility, exhibiting a particoloured reasonage (♠♥) of the administrative reform in Lithuania. Using the reasonage we will construct a new story of Auca 2010, building it on the principle of "everything matters" ♠♥. What does it mean in terms of changed RG situation ♠? What Lithuanian experts wish us to believe concerning Auca 2010 ♥? How the process of telling stories and persuasion has been constructed ♥?

Let's the story start from determinism: Lithuania's reform of county administration as well as many other administrative events in Lithuania have been determined by external, rather than internal national forces ♣ (Dudinskaitė, 2011♠; Nakrošis, Martinaitis, 2011♣). Auca 2010 has been prompted by the world economic crises of 2008 as well as by the EU pressures. Earlier formed political ideas gained momentum of being established: external pressures were transformed into internal change. Imagine the situation. Who has any interests in the reform? Municipalities have. They have been expecting to gain more powers. Unfortunately, they were failed, since the bulk of the functions from the CGA were handed back to central authorities.

The fifteenth national administration cabinet also is concerned with the reform. Lithuania needs to economize. The global crisis brings this message; the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania does not forbid centralization ♣. Besides, national government has its powers to initiate the reform or not to. After all, regional policy also is one of the main obligations to be performed by the national government.

A good opportunity occurred, a new solution for saving public money by reducing bureaucratic apparatus was found. The aim of Auca 2010 had been meant for decentralization of public administration. However, during hard times centralized ways of regulation are more effective than decentralized. So in order to save a sparrow in our palm we have to lose an elk in the forest. Heroic deeds require some intermediate periods even at the expenses of democratic principles. Saving money turned to be the priority.

Auca 2010 mirrors no special ideological aspirations. It has occurred not because of any particular conservative, liberal, socio-democratic or other political ambitions. All parties supported the reform. It was a consensual political decision ♠. Nevertheless, the reform must be understood in terms of accidental collision of external forces ♥♣. Some hidden intentions may also be penetrating ♥. Managerial interests of sharing functions were overridden by political ones. This may have to do with the right party intention for revenging the oppositional party: the county governors had been established by the lefts, they were supposed to be suspended by the rights. Hidden intentions may also be attributed to the scapegoating: it is the county governor's fault that life in Lithuania is not easy. No other alternative models of RG were offered and discussed; no debates on how to share administrative functions initiated. Silence was useful to the government for relocating functions according to its own convenience.

Lithuanian mass media was politicized; it delivered information, which politicians saw to be necessary to. The media intentionally witnessed the reform beneficial for society. So politicians, rather than reporters designed the minds of Lithuanians ♥. The reform was crafted by political elites. They persuaded society to conceive county administration adversely: regional government consumed money; it was very passive in public life; it protracted land reform; it duplicated functions of municipalities, its poor management and financial misconduct failed to meet people needs, etc... So it is too little to say that the CGA was understood as not being useful; rather it was seen as being wasteful. Regional administration is economically detrimental. Society believed. On the other hand, society has been little concerned with reforms lately.

Therefore the main idea of simplifying public administration by cutting its one hierarchical unit came to seem very attractive. The Ministry of Internal worked hard on preparing amendments of about a hundred legal acts, analyzing of relocation of administrative functions between the levels and sections of government as well as organizing the reform in counties. Duplicated functions were eliminated; some functions were decentralized, the others centralized; the minister of the MI used often to stress the reform would allow much saving. Yet, society did not receive information on the details of the reform flow: e.g., how and why functions, money and staff were relocated; how much money spent on what and how much money were saved.

The reform process was protracted, legalization of decisions was late; cases on debts of county governor administration stacked up in courts; misconducts were tried to be calculated. Fired people from the CGA were disappointed. However it is impossible to make all people happy during changes. Besides, the majority of administrative staff was moved to analogical working places transformed to ministries or municipalities. Still, many issues remain relevant, such as staff skills, relationship between functions and finance allocated to municipalities; the need to change Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania for further decentralization; land management. Municipalities are not content with the reform results.

Situation of Lithuanian people after the reform has not been changed, except that people might feel uncomfortable for a while. But because the bureaucratic apparatus has been slightly minimized, it might even be much easier for our society not only to understand how government runs but also much more comfortable to handle their own private business: fewer levels of authority, more private life. Critical reflections of the preparation for the reform and on its ex-post implementation were very rare and sporadic. Media in Lithuania usually delivers bad news. Since it kept silence, Auca 2010 is good news. After all, Auca 2010 is only the first step of the reform. It is a nationalization of regional policy for the preparation to the new programming period. Formation of new regions is going to be the next step. Having in mind that regional policy is nationalized, now it is a policy of drift; even though we had got some blaming from European organizations for not established principles of self-governance at a county level. We need a new public administration model for RP; we need regional governance.

In sum, the abolition of the CGA means political promotion, determined by the consensual political decision as a result of rhetorical pressure for financial profit ♥. The nature of the decision is populist (all agree), promotional (we regulate), scapegoating (it is its fault, not ours), imitating governing (we make things move) and simulating the efforts of effective governing (we save public money) ♣. The overall result of the reform is contrary to the recommendations of the Council of Europe: instead of decentralization national government turned to more centralization. Anyway, governing processes now are simpler and more comfortable to national governing institutions. Democracy costs much. Therefore exercising democracy has not been attracting Lithuanian government yet. Government needs movement. The movement of Auca 2010 has put Lithuanians on great expenses in terms of money, democracy and human rights.

Generalization which stems from the revealed data ♣: in 2010 the administrative unit of county authority (Auca) in Lithuania experienced the reform during which deconcentrated county governors office (the CGA) was replaced by the national county agency, i.e. by the deconcentrated DRD (a secretariat). In Lithuanian language, sounding of Auca denotes a victim: Auca suffered the reform, however survived unchanged in its centralized RG nature. This “metamorphosis” is a real event and a social phenomenon of 2010 that from now on may be called Auca 2010: the administrative reform aims to reform national regional government, yet produces no more than the national regional government ♣. Can we say then that a management reform sometimes may mean much ado about nothing ♠? Perhaps; Auca 2010 has gone ♣. The story on it is for us to learn ♥.

Paradox of rebranding ♥♣: Lithuanian government is in fact submissive for its acts are changed by external social forces. Yet the indigenous sabotage is evident: European authorities prefer democracy while Lithuanian government firmly resists it in terms of RG. Why is it so?

9. A Story on centralized reasonage ♣

Why regional reform in Lithuania has never taken the direction of decentralization? This is the question that has been openly discussed in a conference and transformed into a written text, which looks like a public dope (see: Donskis, 2010). Reasonage on Lithuania non-decentralization persuades that:

- Lithuanians stick with a primitive nationalism supported by the lack of identity.
- The local autonomy has been eroding: city councils and mayors lack powers to act.
- Political parties promise decentralization, once they get into, they act on centralization.
- President office powers are too weak: though all presidents of independent Lithuania see the state as decentralized country, rights to decide on regional policy are in the hands of the Seimas and the Cabinet of Ministers.
- Decentralized authority in Lithuania will cause the country to receive significantly less funding from the EU for Regional Policy intended to decrease socioeconomic disparities.
- Lithuania is understood as one of 271 EU regions in Brussels. Centralized decisions on fund allocation for regional policy are being made in Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania. Responsible ministries in the centre are too busy for being truly concerned with the right situation in the regions. As a result, EU funds are being allocated not for the right targets.

In general, democracy does not work in Lithuania because it is underfinanced (?). This would be too simple explanation persuading that matter is prior to consciousness. This would make us take somehow a Marxist position: economy is the basis of culture. Although we may not like it, we still stay on the same Marxists tune if we reason that decentralization fails because those who have power are not interested in losing bags, which feed them. Unfortunately, this is also a precarious conclusion. It makes us believe that all who have power are selfish, while in fact human nature is much more complicated than just one category can explain. We may find some other reasons and accumulate some more reasons, compare and weight upon them until we find the very reasonage that satisfies us. We may... if it would be meaningful ♥. And it is truly meaningful for some social researchers, while the others find some different meaningful pathways of partici-

pating in the discourse on RG ♥. Not least is speechlessness of the speechless that matters. It constitutes the very semantic closure of the reasonage of centralized authority.

Conclusions

♥: *Insights on regional governance*

There is difference stressed between the governance of national, regional and local levels in the international and Lithuanian discourses. Regional is something in between of and transcending national and local. It is something that we need a middle-range theory to explain it. RG means both something less and something more than national state governance in terms of territorial design, scope of interests, institutional rules and governmental mission.

As we have seen in the stories on no-RG, regional may be understood as being the same as national. However, in cognitive terms then our discourse may proceed on regional government rather than governance. In empirical sense, a question of authority taking care to integrate interests of central minority with peripheral majority in the national community comes to be relevant. How then we are to slow down the minority acting in the centre, who running much faster than majority in the periphery, subjects the majority for the minority speedy purposes to be fulfilled?

♣: *Insights on RG methodology*

Stability: we usually associate methodology with ontological and epistemological research principles. While constructing stories we draw our ideas from different methodological collections. At least three sets of them can be envisaged in the stories on RG: (1) brick – ♣, (2) bricolage – ♠, (3) brand – ♥ thinking. Appealing to their essences, what matters here is difference between the truth of a fact, experience and meaning. All in our minds are mutually supportive rather than excluding each other. The signs of ♣, ♠, ♥ illuminating distinct sets of principles respectively provide us with some evidence showed in the stories above.

♣ A Story on a **brick** methodology covers the idea that facts are bricks out of which we built knowledge. Social world (RG) is natural/real; it is outside our minds; a researcher is an impartial mediator between reality and truth. Catch the natural order objectively! Seek objective truth! Think rationally, check empirically! Nature determines social world. People act according to laws of nature. If we know those laws, we can control social life. If we can predict floods, we must be able to predict RG developments. Variables, experiments, observations, verifications or falsifications and measurements are to help us to determine what the nature of a natural thing is and how it works. Language constructs reliable research instruments, they reveal true data. Hypotheses, facts, laws, numbers, calculations, statistics, explanations, causes and generalizations compound the main stuff of understanding. Research is disciplinary; inclusion is highly selective (no values!); research quality is assured by validity, credibility and reliability; methodological nomenclature is straightforward: from roots to fruits. All these are very meaningful to the brick methodology followers. This is a fact.

♠ A Story on a bricolage methodology may be drawn from the idea that a researcher is a bricoleur and the research is a bricolage. The researcher constructs not only the bricks, but also the ways of brick construction out of social experience. Norms, behavior, institutions, processes, language, etc.: what is social phenomenon (RG) and how it manifests through experiences? All that we can know best are social events that might be initiated or reacted to by us. A researcher reacts to social events within his or her horizon of ideas and theories. Researcher's values matter, so does intersubjective truth. Make order out of disorder! Build theory from practice! Seek consensus through interactions! Forecasting and understanding are both important. If we illuminate regular reactions, we may predict social actions (stimulus-reaction). Questions, inter-subjective lived experiences, definitions, facts and interpretations regulate research. Still, quantity is superior than quality; Research is multi-disciplinary; its quality standards are rigor (coherence), relevance, interaction, self-reflection, every-day language. Nomenclature is soft – including rather than excluding. All these are very meaningful to the bricolage methodology followers. This is mine and yours social experience.

♥ A Story on a brand methodology: social world, practice and experience is the confluence of mental brands. They develop through discourses. If we want to change practice, we must change discourse. All discourses are textual, all texts are accidental, all accidents are unique moments; all moments may count. Reflect upon them, illuminate intuitive insights, deconstruct order, decrease oppression! If people create stories, it must mean something. A researcher makes sense of stories told over times. How social world (RG) is constructed through ideas? How people make senses? How particular discourses (on RG) come to being and are sustained? Dismantle hegemonic unity (stability)! Restore diversity (flexibility)! Provide the insights on the bigger picture! Create a new brand! Signs, symbols, tropes, paradoxes, dilemmas, metaphors, all other cognitive tools are at work while making sense of textual reality. Disciplinary boundaries are irrelevant; no generalizations, just directions of thoughts; no systems, just accidental sets of ideas; no conclusions, just implications; no truth claims, just significant assertions. Preferences: self-made language, hidden values, exceptions, unexpectedness, alternatives, shades, persuasiveness. All these are meaningful to the brand methodology followers. This is what matters. This may be meaningful in different senses. This is what I mean.

These methodological stories and their separate principles revealed are satellite ideas whenever we are immersed in social research. They inevitably control the discourse on RG. Their roots may be traced to some philosophical discourses. The brick story ♣ may be associated with the principles of realism, empiricism and positivism (quantitative research); the bricolage ♠ may relate to the rules of apriorism, behaviorism and phenomenology (qualitative research); while the brand story ♥ is constructed out of idealism, phenomenology, linguistics, semiotics, critical theory (discourse research).

An implication: in Lithuania the principles of discourse research on RG are rare and scattered through out the texts. This may signal about DR inferiority. We have tried to pull DR out of periphery while prioritizing it in the context of RG texts.

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REGIONINĖS VALDYSENOS METODOLOGINĖS ISTORIJS

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Santrauka

Tarptautiniu lygmeniu diskutuojama, kad pastaruju metu stiprėja socialinių mokslinių tyrimų kontrolė: publikacijoms keliami vienpusiški nomenklatūriniai reikalavimai, remiamas tradicinis žinių suskaldymas, periferizuojami nauji diskursai. Šis teiginys skatina tyrinėti Lietuvos atvejį mėginant suprasti socialinių mokslų metodologijos vaidmenį periferizacijos procese. Todėl gilinamasi į regioninės valdysenos (RV) diskurso situaciją: kokios metodologinės hierarchijos vyrauja diskurse, kuris susijęs su regionine valdysena? Straipsnį sudaro vienuolika skyrių. Juose, remiantis diskurso tyrimo metodologija, atskleidžiamos istorijos, išryškinamos RV prasmės ir reikšmės, atskleidžiami trys metodologinių principų rinkiniai – diskursų apie RV geneologija.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *metodologija, socialiniai mokslai, diskurso tyrimas, regioninė valdysena.*

JEL KODAI: R590; H190; C180.