



**Corvinus University of Budapest**

**PhD Program in Political Science**

## **Ph. D. THESIS**

**Éva Kovács**

**The development of governmental coordination mechanisms in  
Hungary (1990-2014)**

Abstract

**Supervisors: György Hajnal Ph.D. and Miklós Imre CSc.**

Budapest, 2014

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## 1. The aim and the context of the research

The general aim of my dissertation is analyzing the waves of reforms having happened within the Hungarian central and territorial government coordination since the transition. In this context, the dissertation seeks to examine the emerging patterns and the main structural characteristics of government coordination in Hungary with a special focus on the one stop shop coordination initiative. My research would contribute to the better understanding of the motives of Hungarian public administration reforms.

The dissertation has three main special ambitions. These are the followings:

1. First of all, the dissertation pursues descriptive ambitions. It gives a comprehensive overview about the evolution of government coordination in Hungary and the discursive environment (for example: reform ideas and actions, academic and practitioner debates) surrounding it.
2. In addition to giving a general description I am particularly interested in one specific aspect of governmental coordination. Namely, the coordinating functions – the problems targeted and the instruments chosen in order to alleviate them – appearing in the consecutive waves of reform. Therefore the second ambition of my research to give an empirically based overall analysis of coordination instruments and instrument mixes in Hungary. The research investigates the coordination instruments on the central and territorial government level with a special focus on the innovative one stop shop coordination instrument.
3. Finally, the third ambition is to contribute to a better understanding of the motives and driving forces underlying the governmental coordination reforms in Hungary. Therefore I investigate the decision making process and the motives of the Government Windows project in particular and possibly the results of the analysis delivers useful information and benefits more generally, about the present-time reform initiatives in Hungary too.

Coordination among different social actors, governmental units and departments is not a recently emerging phenomenon. It has always been a problem since the states and governments have existed. Nonetheless, the choice of research subject may be justified by two main elements. *Firstly*, the governmental coordination and the problems around that have become more prominent concerns in recent years. *Secondly*, the government coordination has been, with the desire to strengthen it, - throughout the Hungary's post-transition history - a very frequent objective of administrative reform intentions and actions. Notwithstanding this frequency, the

recurring waves of central government coordination reform has been a relatively neglected area of systematic longitudinal research. These arguments are described in more detail below.

## 1.1. Coordination as a frequent element of administrative reforms

The introduction of coordination initiatives in public administration is a frequent element of contemporary administrative development (or reform) activities all over the world. In my dissertation I deal with those factors that have eroded the coordination capacities of governments. These are only listed below:

- *Globalization*
- *‘wicked’ or transboundary problems,*
- *Financial restraints* of governments;
- The achievements and negative results of *New Public Management reforms*. Such as the establishment of single- purpose organizations [Kettl 2000, Hood 1991], and the modes of operation of them were ‘silo – mentality’ and initiation of quazi – autonomous agencies that are out of the strength central control. (agensification).

These facts have tended to increase the fragmentation of public administration and enhanced the need for integration and coordination. The establishment of new coordination arrangements can be seen as a reaction to these with the clear intention to decrease the horizontal and vertical fragmentation within public administration. It has therefore started to look beyond NPM and to develop new approaches - both in the academic and practical environment – to solve these de – coordination problems. The common feature of these new approaches was the greater reliance on coordination mechanisms and integration. Mixtures of old and also innovative coordination initiatives and models were emerged to strengthen the governmental coordination. These coordination models – frequently called *post – NPM reforms* - were spread across the world in different shapes and with different names. The main idea of post – NPM doctrines is to define them in terms of what they oppose. Namely, all of them counter to NPM type initiatives. Their common features are the intention to enhance the coordination capacity of government, to extent the scale of integration, to spread the

The new coordination practices come in various shapes and various names, such as whole – of - government [Christensen and Laegreid 2007, OECD 2006], *joined-up government* [ Pollitt 2003], *holistic governance* [Perri 2004, 1997 ]. The common feature of them is the notion that strengthening cooperation will enable better problem solving system within the society.

This trend of strengthening coordination has not avoided Hungary either. From 1990 – when all Communist party structures were eliminated – there were recurring intentions and actions acting towards strengthening coordination on different levels of government. This effort peaked in 2010 when the second Orban government introduced its comprehensive government reform program

(Magyary Program) [Közigazgatási és Igazságügyi Minisztérium 2011]) that consist of wholesale constitutional and legislative changes. These reform waves between 2010-2014 consisted of elements that reshuffle and transform the entire system of coordination structures and mechanisms within public administration. One remarkable elements of these coordination initiatives is the establishment of the Government Window one stop shop.

## **1.2. Setting the dissertation in the context of Hungarian literature**

The research ambitions cannot be justified only with the frequency of government coordination reforms, but the other reason seems to be relevant that the scarcity of the coordination literature. The government coordination has rarely, if ever, been an emphatic analytical subject in scholarship dealing with Hungary's government system. Notwithstanding the government coordination has been, with the desire to strengthen it, - throughout the Hungary's post-transition history - a very frequent objective of administrative reform intentions and actions, the recurring waves of government coordination reform has been a relatively neglected area of systematic longitudinal research. However, the topic of government structure and the structural characteristics of public administration [Bércesi 2002; Balázs – Bércesi 2006; Bércesi – Ivancsics 2006; Ivancsics 2006; Barta 2012; Vadál 2012 Müller 2011, 2010c, 2010b; Sárközy 2006, 2010, 2012], the decision making process on central level [Pesti 2000] or the changing role of government actors [Gajduschek 2011, Müller 2011, Szente 1999, Szilvássy 1998] were analyzed in the Hungarian literature, mainly from legal and political perspective. Additionally to these scarcity of Hungarian governmental coordination literature, coordination concepts most of the time were, and still are, conceived in a very specific, extremely narrow way. The entire problem perception, or approach, in which policy makers, politicians and academics alike conceived the very problem of coordination was restricted to this “top-down” style conceptualization - the “(central) control versus (regional/sectoral) autonomy” dimension - and disregarding any non-hierarchical – let alone market or cultural – mechanisms of coordination. This scarcity of scholarship on government coordination is characteristic for the entire post-Hungarian area. Hence, it seems to be a beneficial contribution to adopt and outlines a broader perceptions and conceptual framework of coordination and coordination instruments in my dissertation.

## **1.3. Circumstances leading to the research**

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Community's Seventh Framework Programme under grant agreement No. 266887 (Project COCOPS ; [www.cocops.eu](http://www.cocops.eu)), Socio-economic Sciences & Humanities. The COCOPS project (Coordinating for Cohesion in the Public Sector of the Future) seek to comparatively and quantitatively assess

the impact of New Public Management-style reforms in European countries, drawing on a team of European public administration scholars from 11 universities in 10 countries. It analysed the impact of reforms in public management and public services that address citizens' service needs and social cohesion in Europe. [General information of the project; <http://www.cocops.eu/>] My research directly links to the Working Packages 5 (WP5) of this project. The WP5 aimed to search and identify innovative coordination practices and related steering instruments in public management in European public sectors and to compile a good practice database and case study catalogue of such coordination practices with direct utility to public managers and the research community. One of the innovative coordination measures from the Hungarian government practice was the Government Window reform case. This case study was described and analysed by me and my supervisor in the project. [Kovács – Hajnal 2014] The case selection can be justified by the reason that the purpose was to identify such new type coordination initiatives that enable to compare it with other countries' similar practices. (The organizational integration e.g. the establishment of county government offices or restructuring ministerial system - those might have greater importance – cannot really fit with this 'innovative' criterion.)

## 2. The research questions and the methods

To give an overview on the formulated research questions and pre-defined hypothesis I summarized them in the table below:

**Table 1: The research questions and the hypothesis**

Research questions		The (rival) hypothesis of the research
RQ (1): What were the main characteristics of the Hungarian government coordination and the effort to improving it during the post – transition period?	RQ (1/a): What were the main debates or discussion points around the government coordination? What characterized the post –transition Hungary’s academic and practitioner discourse on the conceptualization of coordination problems and coordination instruments?	<i>Hyp(1/a): The academic and practitioner discourse in post-transition Hungary is characterized by a predominance of conceptualizing the lack of coordination as the lack of clear lines of authority, and instruments of coordination as a hierarchical, command-and-control type relationships.</i>
	RQ (1/b) What types of coordination instruments (instrument mixes) – hierarchical vs. non – hierarchical - were adopted in the different reforms? What are the main structural features of them?	<i>Hyp(1/b)<sub>1</sub>: Hierarchical coordination instruments are likely to be introduced if, and only if, a given actor’s –central government actors– political and power base significantly strengthens. In the absence of such a clear shift in power relations, however, hierarchical instruments are unlikely to be introduced.</i>  <i>Hyp(1/b)<sub>2</sub>: If such a clear shift in power relations does occur then non-hierarchical instruments are, in contrast, unlikely to be adopted. This type of instruments is mostly relied upon only if balanced power relations are sustained.</i>
	RQ (1/c) What are the main features of the Hungarian one stop shop – the Government Windows -, and how do these features relate to other countries’ similar experience?	-

<p>RQ (2) What are the main motives underlying the initiation of different coordination instruments/instruments mixes? In particular, which explanatory model seems to have larger explanatory power in the context of Hungary's recent one-stop-government reforms?</p>	<p><i>Hyp (2/Null):</i>  <i>Coordination reforms and measures are not necessarily made because there are well-defined demands, real needs and facts which require governmental action. Rather, coordination measures are guided by the norms and rules that are commonly shared among actors, governments actions are driven by the standards of appropriateness.</i></p>	<p><i>Hyp (2/Alt.):</i> <i>According to the instrumental rationality governmental coordination measures are seen as decision makers' purposeful, rational actions addressing specific, well-defined conditions, constraints, needs and/or problems.</i></p>
<p>RQ(3): To what extent did the different instrument mixes work as intended? In particular: is there a significant difference in this regard between hierarchical and non-hierarchical instruments?</p>	<p><i>Hyp.(3/Null):</i>  <i>Coordination patterns change – in the sense of real immediate effects occurring in the field – only as a consequence of applying hierarchical coordination instruments. In the absence of them no actual change is likely to occur.</i></p>	<p><i>Hyp.(3/Alt.):</i> <i>Different – in particular: hierarchical versus non-hierarchical instruments - do not systematically differ in terms of their ability to trigger actual change in coordination patterns.</i></p>

*Source: own compilation*

The data and the method by which the above research questions are answered are outlined below. In order to answer the research questions three sources of data are used.

- Legal measures (laws and other regulations) and official documents are predominantly used to describe the changes of governmental structures;
- The coordination landscape of post-transition Hungary is examined on the basis of a review, and secondary analysis of available (mostly Hungarian language) literature. A review of (quasi-)academic literature on the topic in Hungarian language – including academic discussion on the issue, official government communication materials, personal interview materials with practitioners that summarize practitioners' personal views and experiences regarding a given issue.
- In addition, primary empirical sources are utilized. In-depth interviews with present and former senior officials and experts particularly knowledgeable about the field were conducted. So far 15 interviews have been performed with such governmental key figures and/or experts. The interviews were conducted between 2010 and 2014. Two of the

interviewees have been serving for six or more years in the Hungarian central government as civil servants and during the recent election cycle – between 2010 -2014 - both of them were in charge of coordination issues. Both of them owned a key position in the central ministries of governmental coordination - in the Ministry of Public Administration and Justice - as a permanent state secretary or a deputy state secretary. Another range of interviews were conducted with experts of the field. One of them served from 1990 to 2006 continuously in the Prime Minister's Office in the same position, as the highest ranking civil servant in charge of central government coordination. The fifth key informant owned a strong and continues political position in the Hungarian parliament and within different governments during the post – transition period since 2014. She was in ministerial position between 2002 – 2007. Another interviewees were (or still are) the heads of one of the agencies affected by the public administration territorial reforms.

The emerging empirical material was analyzed using a document analysis worksheet.

### **2.1. The method of the analyses of central and territorial governmental coordination**

The dissertation gives an overview and analyses on three main areas of government coordination. I examined the coordination mechanisms on (1) central level, (2) territorial level of government and I particularly focused on the newly initiated one stop shop coordination initiatives, the 'Government Windows'.

My core research subject – the central level and territorial level of coordination and its reforms – can be best described and analyzed as four – both at central and territorial level - , clearly separable, waves of reform, each characterized by a particular context and content clearly differentiating it from the others. Therefore in presenting and analyzing evidence and arguments my primary unit of analysis is the 'reform cases'. Four to four such cases are described and analyzed in my dissertation both on central and territorial level, utilizing the same analytical framework and structure.

When choosing such a framework one should keep in mind that the research of administrative reforms is "often complicated by discrepancies between the world of ideas and the world of practices". [Brunsson 1989 cited by Christensen and Laegreid 2002: 577.] In order to avoid the pitfalls of incomplete documentation of the public administration reform stories, my investigation of the reforms applies three analytical points: context, content and process. (This analytical framework is applied with a special emphasis in the examination of territorial reforms where each analytical point is presented separately.) I use the 'content' in terms of normative/de jure components of the reform and particularly to the extent/form to which the coordination

instruments are taken into account by the legislator. The content of administrative reform is strongly determined by nature and location of functional challenges [Toonen 2002:568.] that I call ‘context’. Under the label of context the functional and operational challenges in the given system are studied and analyzed in my dissertation. The external (e.g. Europeanization) and internal (historical and political background and traditions, financial resources, number/strength/interest of stakeholders) conditions often determine the direction of the reforms and constrain the room for manoeuvre of the government. The third analytical angle is the ‘outcomes’ refers to the degree to which the government ambitions composed by the reform ‘content’ become reality or de facto being pursued in practice at all. Under the label of ‘outcome’ I emphasize the distinction between the planned versus emerging change; that is, I am primarily interested in the extent, to which different (mixes of) coordination instruments introduced by the different reforms work in reality as expected or, rather, deviate from the ‘blueprint’.

For a better overview and understanding of the finding and results of my research, the different coordination initiatives are presented and classified in tables.

## **2.2. The method of the structural analyses of ‘Government Window’ one stop shop**

The empirical basis of analyzing the Government Windows initiative is a qualitative case study conducted in the course of summer 2012 (with continuous follow-up field research). The 1/c research question – which has predominantly a descriptive ambition – seeks to identify the structural features of Hungarian one stop shop and intends to link the study to existing, more ambitious studies on one-stop government. Askim et al. (2011) examine and compare three countries’ one-stop government experience in the field of labor and welfare administration. The comparative analytical structure they propose consists of the following dimensions:

- Task portfolio (narrow vs. broad and shallow vs. deep);
- Participant structure (simple vs. complex);
- Level of participants’ autonomy (low vs. high);
- Proximity to citizens (distant vs. close);
- Instruments used (low vs. high degree of integration).

These have proven to be useful analytical concepts for describing one-stop government experience; therefore I utilized them, and – by doing so – it is possible to compare the Hungarian one-stop government experience with that of some other countries.

### **2.3. In search of explanations: The framework for analysis the motives underlying the 'Government Window' reform**

According to the second research question, my dissertation seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the motives and driving forces underlying the Government The neo-institutional theory appears well-suited to examining the problem of machinery-of-government reforms such as the creations of Government Windows. According to Peters ([1988:21.) “such an institutional theory would be crucial for understanding how the machinery of government influences the development of public policy”. This theory has been grappling with one major problem: emphasizes the role of institutions and explaining of human actions within an organization, social order, or society [March and Olsen 1998]. New institutionalism suggests two competing explanatory factor – alternative “institutional logics”- regarding the basic logic of action by which human behaviour is interpreted. Within the tradition of the first type of logic, the logic of appropriateness, “actions are seen as rule-based” [March and Olsen 1998], where human actors evoking an identity or role and matching the obligations of that identity or role to a specific situation for solving problem. According the second logic, the logic of consequences sees action as driven by expectations of consequences where conscious human actors choose among alternatives by evaluating their likely consequences for personal or collective objectives [March and Olsen 1998]. Three out of the four competing explanations of the Government Windows reform can be classified as marked by the logic of consequentiality: (1) the rational problem solving model; (2) the power model and (3) the Europeanization model. The fourth explanation: (4) the Myth of Central Control, however, belongs to the realm of the logic of appropriateness.

To answer the second research question and to gain insight and understanding about qualitative case data I use the method of “pattern-matching” between competing, rival theoretical propositions (mentioned above) and observations in a set of data. This approach is one way of achieving a critical test, which is, testing the relative empirical strengths of competing theories. Testing consists of matching an “observed pattern” (a pattern of measured values) with an “expected pattern” (a hypothesis), and deciding whether these patterns match (resulting in a confirmation of the hypothesis) or do not match. The main idea of the pattern matching is to explore whether or not the pattern of a case matches the pattern predicted by a theory [Lange 2013:53]. I use this method in the dissertation as a hypothesis testing procedure to examine theoretical propositions in my case study research.

The core phase of the analysis is the development and testing of a ‘prediction matrix’. “The prediction matrix sets up the ‘pattern’, based on theory, to be either confirmed or disconfirmed by the case data.” [Wilson and Woodside 1999:217] One dimension of this matrix is stretched

along the different explanations / models to be tested and thereby confirmed or disconfirmed. These hypothetical explanations will be enumerated and described in the next subsection.

The other dimension of the prediction matrix involves different elements, or features, of the decision making and feedback process. Having regard to the fact that the Government Window project is an ongoing reform with open ended leaving all sorts of problems the scope of our analysis is limited to the decision making and follow-up /feedback activities, and excludes elements of actual implementation.

### 3. The main findings and results of the dissertation

#### 3.1. The main characteristics of the conceptualization of coordination in Hungary

Earlier research conducted by us on system (national) level government coordination [Hajnal and Kovács 2013] suggested that ‘the core problem of coordination’ as well as the tools and instruments applicable to alleviate it are, throughout Hungary’s post-transition history, understood and treated in a way that is peculiarly different from the conceptualizations and practices usually characterizing the international practice and academic literature.

Namely, there seems to be an unquestioned consensus that the ‘lack / insufficiency of coordination’ is more or less the same as ‘the lack of command-and-control’ over those to be coordinated; and, consequently, that the dominant instrument of coordination is hierarchy. Accordingly, except for some minor exceptions, there is a general disregard and unawareness of other conceptualizations of what the problem of coordination entails, as well as of the instruments available to alleviate them.

**Table 2: Comparing the main characteristics of the conceptualization of coordination in the Hungarian and the mainstream international literature**

<b>Perceptions of coordination</b>	<b>International literature</b>	<b>Hungarian literature</b>
<b>Problem perception</b>	Overlaps/ parallelism/redundancy between organizations and programs; ‘wicked problems’, fragmentation	“top-down” style conceptualization - the “(central) control versus (regional/sectoral) autonomy” dimension
<b>The reason of coordination problems</b>	The elements of initiated NMP reforms (fragmentation/siloisation); globalizations	Lack or insufficient hierarchical/ bureaucratic command and control
<b>Alternative solutions</b>	<b>Hierarchical – Network – Market type mechanisms</b>	<b>Bureaucratic type mechanism:</b> strengthening central command and control over subordinated bodies.
<b>Type of coordination instruments</b>	Mixes of Horizontal and vertical/ Compulsory and voluntary co - operations	‘Hard instruments’: compulsory organizational integration, central command and control vs. ‘soft instruments’: horizontal (ineffective) cooperation

*Source: own compilation and analyses based on the mainstream international and Hungarian literature*

According to the findings presented above, the formulated hypotheses can be confirmed, namely:

*Hyp(1/a): The academic and practitioner discourse in post-transition Hungary is characterized by a predominance of conceptualizing the lack of coordination as the lack of clear lines of authority, and instruments of coordination as a hierarchical, command-and-control type relationships.*

### **3.2. The main characteristics of government coordination reforms in Hungary**

With the detailed description of the consecutive waves of structural reform in the dissertation I gave responded to the (1/b) research question posed in earlier, namely:

*RQ (1/b) What types of coordination instruments (instrument mixes) – hierarchical vs. non – hierarchical - were adopted in the different reforms? What are the main structural features of them?*

Focusing on (the changes in) the coordinative functions appearing on the central and territorial tier of state coordination machinery I showed how the governmental reformers perceived the problem of insufficient coordination and how they tried to solve them.

The former issue shows a rather stable pattern: coordination efforts targeted a few areas throughout the post-1990 era. On the central level of government the recurring coordination issue was whether the ministers represent their own sectoral interests within the central government, or the ministers rather act for the will of the whole of government within sectoral ministries. On the territorial level of public administration a (smaller) part of the problem was the lack or insufficiency on inter-agency collaboration in the field of policy implementation, while most of the efforts attempted to “roll back” the (allegedly) chaotic / overlapping / contradictory mushrooming of agencies and functions on the territorial level. Of particular importance in this latter aspect were some sort of standardization and unification in such vital support functions as HRM, ICT, financial management, and facilities management.

It is important to note that the analysed reforms differ in that sense of what measures and what type of instruments were initiated to enhance coordination. Below these instruments are listed and classified.

**Table 3. : Coordination instruments changes in subsequent structural reforms in central government (1990 – 2014)**

Type of the instruments		Changes in central coordination instruments			
		1990-1998	1998- 2006	2006-2010	2010-2014
<b>Rather hierarchical</b>	<b>Structural instruments</b>	The <b>PMO</b> with a narrow scope of coordination competence	-A <b>'referral' system</b> is in the PMO entitled to examine/filter/reject initiatives coming from the ministry before it could get the Cabinet's agenda. - <b>Four political state secretaries</b> were appointed to supervise the operation of 'referral' system.	- <b>Merging ministries and a number of agencies.</b> -The mirror departments were merged with the legal department of the PMO in 2009 that results a highly diminution in importance of the institution.	-Eight <b>integrated 'super-ministries'</b> emerged by merging former ministries. -PMO was re-structured into a <b>MPAJ and a Cabinet Office.</b> Both organizations characterized by growing staff and units and a broadening task portfolio.
	<b>Procedural/ management instruments</b>	-PMO supervise the ministerial submissions from legal and codificational aspects.	-PMO was entitled to <b>prepare submission</b> on highly important and political salient issues. These drafts represented the central government's, or rather the PM's interests	- <b>The formal and informal extension of PM' s authority</b> (e.g. the strategically most salient coordinating bodies led by the PM by himself). - <b>The 'policy consultation'</b> required each ministry to have its proposition approved by the PMO prior to the administrative consultation process.	- <b>Central control of recruitment and hiring process</b> of central state administrative apparatus by MPAJ. -The PSS of MPAJ decides whether <b>policy initiations</b> may enter to the Cabinet meeting (in place of committee of state secretaries). -The <b>standardisation among ministerial organizations</b> by the central control of MPAJ. -The 'policy consultation' was renamed as <b>'preliminary judgement'</b> takes place within MPAJ.

<b>Rather non – hierarchical</b>	<b>Structural instruments</b>	<p>-<b>Council of Permanent State Secretaries</b> discussed all and any items on the agenda of the next Cabinet Meeting.</p> <p>-Cabinet meetings was the highest forum of political consultation.</p>	None substantial changes.	<p>-Abolishment the position and councils of Permanent State Secretaries</p> <p>-<b>The Committee of State Secretaries</b> was established as a new form of ‘administrative’ consultative body staffed by political appointees.</p>	<p>-The <b>pre-2006 arrangements</b> of Permanent State Secretaries (PSS’s) and the committee of them (CPSS) were re – introduced.</p>
	<b>Procedural/ management instruments</b>	<p>-<b>Preliminary opinion process</b> provides horizontal flow of information and ideas between ministries in the initial phase of governmental decision making process.</p>	None substantial changes.	<p>-Establishing <b>coordination committees</b> for the coordination of special policy fields (e.g. the European Union Harmonization Committee)</p>	<p>-The importance of horizontal <b>preliminary opinion process</b> between ministries has been decreased or entirely eliminated.</p>

*(Source: own compilation and analyses)*

Based on the overview of the literature, academic debates and governmental documents surrounding the issue between 1990 and 2014 four important milestones were identified in relation to the structural features of central government coordination. These periods shows a rather stable pattern: the central government coordination has been, with the desire to strengthen it, - throughout the Hungary's post-transition history - a very frequent, one could say escalating objective of administrative reform intentions and actions.

As regards the solutions chosen for enhancing coordination (the coordination instruments) the following key findings have been established regarding the commonalities of reforms.

1. Firstly, most of the governmental efforts at improving coordination centred on the Prime Minister Office and the state secretaries committees. Coordination was hoped to be improved by shifting power distribution towards the central government (the PM and his political executive apparatus) away from the ministries and “their” sectors.
2. Secondly, it can be detected that there was an increasingly government intention – particularly due to the building blocks, that resulted “regulatory impotence” - to increase the party political influence over the whole government machinery, and to enhance the centralization within public administration. This trend can be best observed from the third phase of my analyses (from 2006, but one could say this tendency already started in 1998 with the first Orbán - Government [cf. Köröseyi 2001]). This political interference in public administration peaked during the second Orbán government (between 2010 - 2014).
3. Thirdly, the different structural and procedural measures being (re-)introduced can be characterized as containing varying mixes of mostly hierarchical but also non-hierarchical instruments were introduced in the different reforms. Notably the hierarchical instruments were dominated in the formal coordination mechanism.

As regards the solutions chosen I have established the following key findings regarding the commonalities of the territorial coordination reforms.

1. Firstly, coordination efforts came, without exception, “from above”; that is, they were put on the agenda and – to broadly varying extents – enforced by the government. Evidence of spontaneous coordination initiated either by the county level branches or by their national level parent agencies did not appear.
2. Secondly, most of the governmental efforts at improving coordination centered around the general-scope middle-tier organ of the government (Prefects’ Offices and their successors). Coordination was hoped to be improved by (shifting) structural arrangements, in the focus of which these organs stood (the only – albeit important – exception being the hierarchical coordination by the minister heading the Prime Minister’s Office between 2006 and 2010).
3. Thirdly, the different structural measures being (re-)introduced can be characterized as containing varying mixes of hierarchical and non-hierarchical instruments were introduced in the different reforms. Notably however, these instrument mixes – and the experiences with them – differed in some important respects. It seems that ,without the strong support from the central government, or in the case of insufficient governmental commitment and political power, the 'hard'/ hierarchical coordination instruments stayed ineffective during the reforms. These types of instruments were only partially - or not at all – implemented under these circumstances. In this context - when there was no insufficient political power – the coordination mechanisms primarily based on horizontal coordination instruments. These were highly dependent on interpersonal relationships and the willingness of stakeholders to cooperate. Real and substantial coordination outcomes could be observed only, if the implemented hierarchical coordination initiatives are supported by significant political power and central government commitment. These differences are briefly summarized in the table below. (Table 4)

**Table 4: Coordination measures (M) and their effects (E) in subsequent reforms of territorial state administration reforms**

Reform / period	Changes in hierarchical instruments	Changes in non-hierarchical instruments
The prefect system (1990-94)	M None	M Requesting information, forming proposals/opinion, convening (ad hoc) coordination meetings
	E None	E Little systematic effect. Effects based on personal, informal relations
County Administration Offices (1994/96-2006)	M Integration of certain branches into County Administration Offices	M (In addition to the previous ones) - The coordination meetings got institutionalized (County Coordination Committee with subcommittees doing substantive jobs). - “Initiating” coordinated actions such as joint inspections by different authorities
	E The expected effects (elimination of parallel functional units, standardization of operations) are likely to have ensued.	E There are some modest but noticeable results achieved by the Coordination (sub)Committees e.g. related to training, civil service registry systems, and ICT. These happened through mutual adjustment of field branches.
Regional Administration Offices (2006-2010)	M - Further standardization of HR registry, ICT systems, procurement  - Areas for concerted action (joint inspection) are clearly defined  Note that both happened through centrally (through ministries/national headquarters), largely circumventing Administration Offices	M The County Coordination Committees were turned into Regional Coordination Committees, thereby their size significantly increased.
	E - The measures seems to have worked as expected	E Work in the larger, merged Committees became more cumbersome and ineffective.
County	M - Creation of a system of general-	M None

Government Offices (2010-)	<p>scope state administrative organs from the ministry level down to the District level characterized by a very tight system of control – both administrative and (explicitly) political</p> <p>- Wholesale, radical integration of most county branches’ support functions and client services into the County Government Offices</p> <p>- Entities within this hierarchy are given clear and unquestioned authority over both lower (District) level units and county level branches of other sectors.</p>	
	<p>E The tight system of top-down control and accountability seems to be working as expected in the sense that actors obey the new rules to a significant extent and have little room for “sabotaging” them. (Much of the allegedly) parallel structures and functions have been eliminated. Whether or not this improves coordination at large is uncertain at this point.</p>	<p>E It seems that spontaneous coordination / mutual adjustment has diminished / become more formal.</p>

(Source: own compilation and analyses)

On the basis of the evidence and research results the two hypotheses seem to be confirmed. Namely:

*Hyp(1/b)<sub>1</sub>: Hierarchical coordination instruments are likely to be introduced if, and only if, a given actor’s – central government actors– political and power base significantly strengthens. In the absence of such a clear shift in power relations, however, hierarchical instruments are unlikely to be introduced.*

*Hyp(1/b)<sub>2</sub>: If such a clear shift in power relations does occur then non-hierarchical instruments are, in contrast, unlikely to be adopted. This type of instruments is mostly relied upon only if balanced power relations are sustained.*

Moving towards and turning to the third research question, namely:

*RQ(3): To what extent did the different instrument mixes work as intended? In particular: is there a significant difference in this regard between hierarchical and non-hierarchical instruments?*

This third research question regarded the outcomes of different – more specifically: more versus less hierarchy-based - instruments and instrument mixes. Here I formulated two competing hypotheses corresponding to two different theoretical perspectives. The instrumental-rational perspective would imply that different (more versus less hierarchy based) coordination instruments create actual effects, at least “statistically”, to a similar, or at least not vastly and systematically different, extent.

*Hyp.(3/Alt.): Different – in particular: hierarchical versus non-hierarchical instruments - do not systematically differ in terms of their ability to trigger actual change in coordination patterns.*

The contrary perspective however would imply that only instruments congruent with key actors’ latent or explicit expectations and assumptions regarding the nature of the problem and its solution have a potential to alter their actual behavior.

*Hyp.(3/Null): Coordination patterns change – in the sense of real immediate effects occurring in the field – only as a consequence of applying hierarchical coordination instruments. In the absence thereof no actual change is likely to occur.*

In this regard my findings are somewhat mixed. Most of my findings seem to rather support the neo-institutionalist perspective: the vast majority of actual changes detected in the target areas of governmental intervention happened exclusively as a consequence of applying hierarchical coordination instruments. One should however not leave unnoticed the – albeit limited but definitely existing – effects of horizontal coordination instruments (e.g. the County Coordination Committees) Albeit the actual effectiveness of this instrument varied over time, at least at some periods it did significantly alter actors’ behavior.

### 3.3. The Government Windows experience in a comparative perspective

The 1/c research question inquired about the structural features of Government Windows one stop shop.

*RQ (1/c) What are the main features of the Hungarian one stop shop – the Government Windows -, and how do these features relate to other countries' similar experience?*

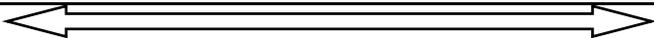
A useful comparative framework for analyzing one-stop-shops is offered by Askim et al. (2011). Below I examine and locate, using the evidence presented earlier, the Government Windows experience in most important analytical and comparative dimensions these authors offer.

- The width of Hungarian Government Windows' task portfolio is, compared to the three cases discussed by Askim et al. (2011), extremely broad. It covers dozens of very diverse case types ranging from citizen registration to matters related various social, health and family administrative affairs, construction affairs, and entrepreneurial licensing. This is in sharp contrast with the relatively narrow task portfolio of the Danish, Norwegian and UK one-stop-shops focused on labor and/or social affairs.
- The depth of the task portfolio, on the other hand, is quite shallow as – at least in most of the case types they serve – Government Windows can be considered as “first-stop-shops”; that is they receive requests and documents but operate only as front offices of the administrative apparatuses actually being in charge of handling and deciding the cases.
- The next analytical dimension is the participant structure of agencies. This concept denotes several sub-concepts a key one of which is the number and heterogeneity of agencies participating in the one-stop-shops. The Hungarian case represents an extremity in this regard too as Government Windows integrate almost all – that is, about 30 different and very heterogeneous – agencies present in the middle tier of administration. This is in sharp contrast to the cases discussed by Askim et al. where the number of participants is in the range of 1 to 3. Not only the number of participants but also their structural relation to one another seems to be unique in the comparative perspective offered by Askim et al [2011].: in this regard their analytical dimension ranges from single-agency framework from a multiple agency framework, in the latter case however the agencies preserving their structural distinctiveness and integrating only their client services. The Hungarian Government Windows are however on the verge of this spectrum as participating agencies are partially integrated in the Government Offices (note that technical and operational management functions are integrated into the Government Offices (and, on an national level, into the National State Administration

Center supervised by the MPAJ) and only the policy related matters continue to be supervised by the respective national agency).

- The Government Windows case represents an outlier in respect to the autonomy of participants and the nature of management instruments involved, too. Participation is compulsory for the affected agencies, and much of the management systems – HRM, budgeting, ICT, facility management, supporting services – are centrally controlled, leaving agencies a minimal extent of autonomy.

**Table 5: Analysing the structural features of ‘Government Window’ within the analytical model by Askim et al. (2011)**

Variables/Dimensions 

Task portfolio	<b>Broad/Heterogeneous</b>	Narrow/Homogenous
	Deep	<b>Shallow</b>
Participant structure	<b>Complex</b>	Simple
Autonomy	High/ bottom-up	<b>Low / top-down</b>
Proximity to citizen	<b>Close</b>	Distant
Instrument	High integration	<b>Low integration</b>

*Source: own compilation and analyses based on Askim et al. [2011] analytical model*

On the basis of this brief comparative overview one may conclude that the Hungarian Government Windows, while technically satisfying the definitional criteria for being a one-stop-shop, stretches the concept in a number of key analytical dimensions.

### **3.4. Motives of government coordination initiatives: searching for possible alternative explanations**

One of the main intention of my research is to improve current understanding regarding the nature and the determinants / motivating factors of administrative reforms by examining the applicability of four influential (probably the four most influential) competing explanatory models enrolled under the two type of logics of behavior - the logic of appropriateness and the logic of consequences - to the Government Window initiative.

**Table 6: 'Prediction matrix ':testing the rival hypothesis**

Decision Activities \ Rival explanatory theories	Logic of appropriateness	Logic of consequences		
	“Myth of Central Control”	Europeanization	Power	Rational problem solving process
1. Problem definition	P	N	Y	P
2. Alternative solutions	Y	N	Y	N
3. Ex ante analyses	Y	P	Y	N
4. Role of external stakeholders	Y	P	Y	N
6. Monitoring the achievement of objectives	Y	Y	Y	N

**Y: yes (prediction confirmed);**

**P: partial (prediction partially confirmed);**

**N: no (prediction not confirmed).**

*Source: own compilation and analyses based on the analytical framework of Wilson and Woodside [1999: 217]*

According to the ambition of the second research question, the motives underlying the Government Windows reform were examined and tested with regards to which one of the four proposed explanatory framework fits actual data the best. The research question was:

*RQ (2) What are the main motives underlying the initiation of different coordination instruments/instruments mixes? In particular, which explanatory model seems to have larger explanatory power in the context of Hungary’s recent one-stop-government reforms?*

Based on the results and evidence, two out of the four hypotheses could be rejected with relative certainty. That is, the one-stop-government reform at hand

- can be neither explained as a result of Europeanization and transposing the relevant EU legislation,
- nor is it to be seen as a rational problem solving exercise aimed at improving coordination and administrative services.

These findings seem to add up to (elements of) a larger picture displaying a context obsessed with power and influence and disregarding technical imperatives of policy coherence, coordination and quality of institutions.

There are two other explanations, both of which are congruent with the empirical evidence having been detected so far:

- the Myth of Central Control – having characterized post-transition Hungary’s past two decades of government coordination – as well as
- the core executive’s strife for maximizing its formal and informal power and control over administrative processes and apparatuses seem to be plausible explanations of the Government Windows reform.
- Whether one or the other, or possibly some combination, of these (not necessarily mutually exclusive; cf. March and Olsen 2006) explanations holds true it is not possible to tell on the basis of the analysis presented here.

In sum, the hypotheses (2/Null) seem to be confirmed by the empirical material, namely:

*Hypotheses (2/Null): Coordination reforms and measures are not necessarily made because there are well-defined demands, real needs and facts which require governmental action. Rather, coordination measures are guided by the norms and rules that are commonly shared among actors, governments actions are driven by the standards of appropriateness.*

Coming to the overall conclusion, it seems that the pre-defined hypothesis were confirmed rather than disconfirmed by the empirical material.

I gave an overview of Hungarian government coordination landscape during the post –transition period in my dissertation. From the point of view of the current research the key conclusion to be reached on the basis of the analysis is that efforts at improving coordination were limited to an extremely narrow set of measures, restricted practically to the strengthening of bureaucratic-hierarchical control. Moreover not only governmental actions were limited to this narrow concept of coordination. Rather, the entire problem perception, or framework, in which policy makers, politicians and academics alike conceived the very problem of coordination was restricted to this “top-down” style conceptualization. Other approaches, understandings or instruments forming a standard element of the coordination discourse as well as the action repertoire in countries of Western/Northern Europe or North America – such as non-bureaucratic (network or market type) coordination mechanisms, “bottom-up” or horizontal coordination concepts or arrangements – were almost entirely absent.

The professional / scholarly discourse on coordination was possibly even more unequivocally “obsessed” with top-down bureaucratic coordination. It is indicative that, for example, the most ambitious overviews of Hungarian government of the past decades discusses and conceives of coordination analogously with the strength of hierarchical role played by the central actor over

the dependent, subordinated units. [pl. Müller 2011:120-138, Sárközy 2012, Ivancsics–Bércesi 2006, Bércesi 2006, Balázs 2006]

In thinking about the roots of this “obsession” of thinking as well as action on central coordination with command-and-control exerted by the PMO over ministries (the latter conceived of as political players, organized interests and bureaucratic apparatuses alike) the pre-history and genesis of the post-1990 politico-administrative framework appears as a key explanatory force. Before 1989 the Communist Party could – on the basis of various formal structural, informal (“nomenklatura”) and cultural-ideological instruments – exert a significant, nevertheless definitely far from being “total”, extent of coordinating influence over sectoral apparatuses. After the collapse of this steering and coordinating function no functionally equivalent system emerged. To the contrary: driven by various – political and ideological – considerations on the part of both the (then) pro-regime and opposition players as well as on the part of the key players of first democratically elected parliament a series of strong veto points and veto players were instituted in the liberal democratic, post-1990 system. Therefore the strong functional pressures acting towards the creation/strengthening of central oversight and control mechanisms were resisted very effectively for 20 years, the landslide victory of the FIDESZ government. No wonder that the new government continued to think and act in the command-and-control-style conceptual framework of coordination having dominated the entire post-1990 period – this time, however, getting rid of the political and institutional checks and balances blocking any major changes throughout the previous two decades.

#### **4. Utilization of Research Results**

My dissertation has an intention to give an overview of the results of my broader empirical research in the field of Hungarian governmental coordination.

Firstly, with my research I wish to fill an important gap in available Hungarian as well as English language literature by giving a descriptive account of developments of coordination landscape within the Hungarian public administration in the post-1990 period. My overview had a special focus on one particular issue: namely, the functioning, (perceived) problems and solutions of coordination, its ever-changing institutional landscape, and the recurring attempts at fitting these elements into a more workable whole. The results of my research and the case study, that was delivered seem to be a useful basis and starting point for further international comparative studies.

My second ambition was to explore the roots of the controversial relationship between reform goals and their results, thereby adding an important element to the peculiar mosaic picture of how the problems of governmental coordination are understood and managed in Hungary, and the important ways in which this understanding differs from, and possibly defies being fully grasped by, the mainstream concepts of coordination and coordination instruments. Hopefully, the different conceptualizations of coordination - and the problems, mechanisms and the instruments surround around it - that was presented and interpreted in my dissertation enable the Hungarian researchers and practitioners to think and act in a varied and more sophisticated way about government coordination, and enable to go beyond purely hierarchical approach of coordination.

## **5. The author's relevant publications in the research topic**

### **1. Book, book chapters**

#### **1.1. In English**

Kovács Éva and Hajnal György (2014): 'Government Windows': One-Stop Shops for Administrative Services in Hungary In: Laegreid, P. et al. (2014) (szerk.): Organizing for Coordination in the Public Sector. Practices and Lessons from 12 European Countries, Basingstoke/New York: Palgrave Chapter 20, ISBN: 9781137359629

Kovács Éva (2014): Public Administration Reforms for the Better Coordination within the Central Government in Hungary In: Government vs. Governance in Central and Eastern Europe: From Pre-Weberianism to Neo-Weberianism? Presented Papers from the 22st NISPAcee Annual Conference May 22-24, 2014, Budapest, Hungary. ISBN: 978-80-89013-72-2

### **2. Journal articles**

#### **2.1. In Hungarian**

Kovács Éva (2014): Kormányzati koordináció Magyarországon: Esettanulmány az egyablakos ügyfélszolgálati reformról. Köz-Gazdaság 9 (2). pp. 195-213. ISSN: 1788-0696

#### **2.2. In English**

Kovács Éva (2014): Analysing the New Patterns of Hungarian Government from a Coordination Perspective. In: Kovač, P.(ed.): Reflections on Good Governance in Visegrad and beyond. NISPAcee Press <http://www.nispa.org/files/publications/V4-Young-publication-final.pdf>

Kovács Éva (2013): The Hungarian One Stop Government Offices As governmental Coordination Mechanism. Curentul Juridic 16:(3) Letölthető: [http://revcurentjur.ro/arhiva/attachments\\_201303/recjurid133\\_7A.pdf](http://revcurentjur.ro/arhiva/attachments_201303/recjurid133_7A.pdf).

Hajnal György and Kovács Éva (2012): Analyzing the motives of reforming central government coordination in Hungary: A case study of one-stop-government reforms. Working Papers in Political Science 2012(9) pp.1-43. [http://politologia.tk.mta.hu/uploads/files/archived/1617\\_2012\\_9\\_wp.pdf](http://politologia.tk.mta.hu/uploads/files/archived/1617_2012_9_wp.pdf)

### **3. Conference papers**

### **3.1. In Hungarian**

Kovács Éva (2012): A központi kormányzati koordináció motívumainak vizsgálata Magyarországon: esettanulmány az egyablakos ügyfélszolgálati reformról, RODOSZ Konferencia, Kolozsvár, Románia, 9 – 11 Nov 2012

### **3.2. In English**

Kovács Éva (2014): Public Administration Reforms for the Better Coordination within the Central Government in Hungary. 22nd NISPAcee Annual Conference, Budapest, Hungary, May 22-24, 2014.

Kovács Éva (2013): The governmental coordination landscape in Hungary. NKE - PINET Conference 2013 Scientific and Research Ethic, Budapest, Hungary, 13-15 November 2013.

Hajnal György and Kovács Éva (2013): Coordination at the middle: Reforms of the county level state administration in Hungary (1990-2012), EGPA Annual Conference, Edinburgh, Scotland, 9-12 Sept, 2013

Hajnal György and Kovács Éva (2013): Motives of governmental decision making process in Hungary: the case of establishing Government Window, 4th Annual Conference of the European Decision Sciences Institute, Budapest, Hungary, 16-19 Jul 2013

Kovács Éva (2013): Hungarian governmental coordination practices, CEU 8th Annual Doctoral Conference, Budapest, Hungary, 25-26 April, 2013

Hajnal György and Kovács Éva (2013): One-stop government reforms in Hungary, old and new: A comparative case study, XVII IRSPM Conference, Prague, Czech Republic

Hajnal György and Kovács Éva (2012): Analyzing the motives of reforming central government coordination in Hungary: A case study of one-stop-government reforms, EGPA Annual Conference, Bergen, Norway 5-8 September 2012