ABSTRACT:

Energy policy did not enjoy as much attention in European studies as other European policy areas due to the lack of specific jurisdiction granted by the treaty. Although energy was the main focus of two of the initial treaties, as the European project evolved, states proved they were not keen on allowing EU institutions to get involved in areas of national interest and security and energy continued to be considered just from the point of view of trade and not as a policy area of its own. Along with the shift in the use of certain resources - oil and gas becoming primary resources, the Union’s institutional setup was not updated to deal with this change. Nevertheless, this seems to be changing and important steps have been taken with the aim of establishing a common energy policy in the EU, especially after the decision to expand towards the east. In this sense, the present paper brings forward a historical institutionalist approach to assess the impact of the eastern enlargements of 2004 and 2007 on the evolution of the EU’s energy policy. It deploys a number of core concepts like unintended consequences, learning, path dependency and critical junctures while exploring the interaction between institutions and preferences.
INTRODUCTION

Before the 1990s and the decision to expand towards the east, energy policy was not on the top of the agenda at the EU level. Despite being the main focus of two of the initial treaties, as the European project evolved, states proved they were not keen on allowing EU institutions to get involved in areas of national interest and security and energy continued to be considered just from the point of view of trade and not as a policy area of its own. Along with the shift in the use of certain resources - oil and gas becoming primary resources, the Union’s institutional setup was not updated to deal with this change. Nevertheless, the 2004 and 2007 eastern enlargements coincided with significant steps taken towards achieving a common EU energy policy. Between 1996 and 2009 three energy legislative packages have been adopted and with the introduction of Title XX in the Lisbon Treaty¹ the energy policy received the ‘official’ recognition by the European Union. This upheaval in the EU energy policy may be surprising considering scholars’ expectations of gridlocks, paralysis or slowdown in the decision-making process in the context of the eastern enlargement (Hosli, 1999: 387; König and Bräuninger, 2004: 432) and even more optimistic accounts of the impact of enlargement which assumed that business continued as usual (Pollack 2009a: 241).

Taking into account this increase in rules, the present paper proposes a framework to assessing whether the eastern enlargement had an impact on the evolution of the EU’s energy policy and if so how, while focusing on how the dynamic of negotiations changed, how new member states got involved in the evolution of the policy and how the EU institutions took advantage of the opportunities presented by the expansion to promote deeper integration in areas where the EU lacked jurisdiction. It has become generally accepted that at the EU level, energy policy is characterized competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability (European Commission, 2015) and the impact of enlargement on subfields of the policy, like environmental aspects (Burns et at 2012; Bocquillon and Maltby, 2017) or energy security (Belyi, 2003) has been discussed by scholars. Nevertheless, here, the research argues in favor of a common approach which brings together all three aspects considering them interrelated and interdependent. Identifying preferences and institutions as key factors, since the interest is on the EU level, where policy is negotiated and provisions discussed and adopted, a historical institutionalist approach is put forward. I consider that, at this stage in the research, the purpose is not to prove the primacy of either institutions or preferences, but rather to focus on the interactions between

¹ The Lisbon Treaty was signed in 2007 and entered into force in 2009
them. Being seen fundamentally as a theory of action within institutional constraints (Campbell 1998), historical institutionalism through its concepts of path dependency, gradual change, unintended consequences and critical junctures pays a great deal of attention on how the process unfolds over time, thus, providing an overall image on the evolution of the policy, especially in terms of scope of the policy, policy practice, policy content and bureaucratic organizations.

Taking stock of the existing literature, the next section provides an overview on how the concepts of EU energy policy and impact of enlargement are defined and used within the present research. Section 3 will focus on outlining the particularities of historical institutionalism justifying the focus on this particular approach, while section 4 will present the proposed framework. Finally, the last part will provide some concluding remarks.

CONCEPTUALIZING ENERGY POLICY AND IMPACT

EU ENERGY POLICY

Energy policy comprises rules concerning various energy resources and the analytical framework used for research usually depends on the energy source of interest (Tosun, 2017). The reason for this may be traced to the work of Lovins (1979) who differentiates between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ energy production, where hard refers to large-scale centralized fossil fuel and nuclear facilities, and soft to small entities producing energy from renewables. At the EU level, the shift in energy resources, oil and gas becoming primary resources (Duffield and Birchfield 2011:3) and the crises that followed, the Arab oil embargo and the end of the 1970s gas crisis, highlighted a series of challenges, like lack of access to resources, great dependence on Russian gas and difficulties in ensuring security of supply. As such, the range of energy directives and policies, strategies and other documents issued by the EU with the aim of creating a framework focused on what has been called the European energy triangle (De Jong and Weeda 2007: 51). The triangle is based on three dimensions, related to the EU's three main energy objectives: sustainability, the internal energy market and security of supply. Out of these three aspects, energy security distanced itself, gaining a lot of attention from scholars due to the problems with Russia, which were expected gain more attention with the eastern enlargements which received former communist countries which had been under the influence of the Soviet Union, both in terms of trade measures as well as aspects of diplomacy and international relations. This has been mirrored in an increased number of studies on the EU’s energy policy.
concerned with issues of dependence or interdependence between EU and Russia, focusing only on import/export of gas and studying just certain events or initiatives (Kaczmarski, 2011; Fernandes, 2011; Khrushcheva, 2011, Simão, 2011; Harsem and Claes, 2013, Kuzemko, 2014, Sakwa, 2011). Energy policy ‘spans across sectoral boundaries, including among others security policy, social policy, but also environmental policy (Tosun et al, 2015: 5). Considering this and because environmental policy was an area developed at the EU level, in which the EU did have jurisdiction and set itself as a world leader, this was also a highly targeted subfield of the energy policy, with research following the impact of enlargement as well (Burns et al 2012; Bocquillon and Maltby, 2017). This shows that research on energy policy has been focusing on subfields of the policy and as such we do not have an overall image on the evolution of the policy.

Taking into account all of the above, this research understands energy policy in terms of initiatives that have been formulated and adopted at the EU level with the aim of establishing a common framework, which, according to the EU, does not have the purpose of harmonizing legislation across member states, but to ensure common rules which allow markets to function in an integrated manner (European Commission, 1995a). A common framework where member states work together towards agreed objectives also enables the European Union ‘to respond effectively to the destabilising effects of changes’ in the energy field (European Commission, 1995b). As such, responsibilities deriving from energy policy and regulations in this area aim at achieving a common policy regime defined by three main aspects: competitiveness, security of supply and sustainability (European Commission, 2015). Therefore, the three aspects are considered here as interdependent and interrelated, all three working together for the same purpose. Lack of resources and high dependence on exports is one of the main characteristics of the EU energy system, as such solutions have been searched for diversification of resources and that is why, in the EU, there is a great accent on renewables, which were promoted through climate change policies at a global level. This will increase production from such sources which will eventually lead to a decrease in dependence on imports, at least for households’ consumption. For the same reason, the internal market needs to be established as it will blur the differences between member states, it will increase solidarity and will make them work together and be responsible together for ensuring consumers access to affordable energy.
**IMPACT OF ENLARGEMENT**

The European Union was subject to seven rounds of expansion until now, so scholars have been particularly interested in the impact of enlargement. Literature has dealt with this in different ways, but, before the eastern enlargement, the idea most often embraced was that the enlargement will be a strain on the European Union decision-making and institutions (Settembri, 2007: 3). Nevertheless, in the aftermath of the enlargement, a growing body of research showed that, far from creating gridlocks and paralysis, business continued as usual and both individual institutions and the system as a whole adapted to the increased number of member states (Pollack, 2009a: 241). In their study on the impact of enlargement on the Council of Ministers, Edward Best and Pierpaolo Settembri conclude that the Council assimilated the new comers into its decision making mechanisms and that there was not a case of ‘old’ versus ‘new’ states coalitions (Best and Settembri, 2010). The same was found when analysing the Commission (Peterson and Birdsall, 2010). But this is the case only if one is to conceptualize impact as total transformation in the sense of perturbations which would lead to instability (Best et al, 2005).

In the context of this research, impact will take a more relaxed meaning, drawing on the work of Edward Best and his colleagues (Best et al 2005), as to include assimilation and adaptation as well as transformation. Assimilation refers to the case where ‘actors incorporate the new factor [and] change is minimal’, while adaptation defines the case where ‘actors accommodate pressure through the adaptation of existing arrangements and their understanding’ (Best et al, 2005: 7). In this way, they encourage paying attention to different (and even small) details underlying change, thus making it possible to have a clearer image on the impact of enlargement. Having defined impact like this means that the research will focus both on *continuity* and *change* and the hypothesis advanced is that the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007 has led to adaptation in the area of energy policy.

**HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONALISM**

Following Hall and Taylor’s ground-breaking article, it has become commonplace to distinguish between rational choice institutionalism, sociological institutionalism and historical institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 936). The differences between these schools have been described on various occasions (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2001; Hall and Taylor, 1996; Jupille et al, 2003) so, here I will focus on the particular characteristics of the historical institutionalist approach. Historical institutionalism focuses on impact over time being considered as a *theory*
of action within institutional constraints. ‘At its broadest, historical institutionalism represents an attempt to illuminate how political struggles are mediated by the institutional setting which take place’ (Steinmo and Thelen 1992:2). Often referred to as a ‘hybrid’ variant of new institutionalism (Jupille et al, 2003: 11), this approach builds a bridge between the other two traditions emphasizing the temporal processes (Pierson, 1998: 34). Scholars focus on how timing and sequence of events lead to the creation of formal and informal institutions and how ‘their emergence and change impact policies and distributions of political authority’ (Fioretos et al, 2016: 4). Historical institutionalism defines institutions as ‘formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating procedures that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of polity and economy’ (Hall quoted in Peters, 2005: 74) thus, incorporates both formal and informal elements. Unlike the rational and sociological variants of institutionalism, historical institutionalism does not aim at proving the primacy of either institutions or preferences. It focuses on the interactions between these two factors, allowing the researcher to study the evolution of the policy over time. Even more, by concentrating on snap shots, both rational and sociological institutionalism may present distorted images and establish causal relations which do not reflect the reality. In addition, historical institutionalism encourages a study concentrated on the long term effects of rational decisions (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2001:5).

Historical institutionalism ‘provides a way of explaining both institutional change and continuity' (Bulmer and Burch 2001: 75). In contrast with the rational institutionalism, research in the historical institutionalist camp rejects ‘functionalist’ explanations of institutional arrangements where ‘institutions are assumed to have been deliberately designed by contemporary actors for the efficient performance of specific functions’ (Pollack, 2009b: 127). Here, scholars argue that institutional choices taken in the past can become ‘locked in’ shaping and constraining actors and creating long term effects. Nevertheless, what makes this approach truly different from the others is the way in which it answers second-order questions. Such second-order questions regard the understanding of preferences and action, the role of ideas and material forces, ‘the relationship between interests and institutions, as well as the mechanisms foregrounded in accounting for varied patterns of institutional development’ (Fioretos, 2011: 373). Unlike rational institutionalism, where preference and action is ordered by end-point comparisons, the historical institutionalist tradition makes individuals balance the evaluations of costs and benefits of adapting to new circumstances with the costs and benefits of keeping or losing their stakes in
the past setups by point-to-point comparisons. Thus, the degree of change plays a major role in shaping preferences. If in the rational tradition the emergence of a better options influences preferences, in historical institutionalism transformation of preferences occurs only ‘when the benefits of a prospective alternative outweigh the losses associated with giving up access to past designs’ (Fioretos, 2011: 375).

Although work under the label of historical institutionalism saw institutions persistence in time defining them as ‘sticky’ (Pollack, 2009b) or using the concept of ‘inertia’ (Pierson), the new wave of research talks about theories of gradual institutional change. If scholars were initially focusing on how political and social behaviour is influenced by institutions, more recently, the focus has shifted to analyses of institutional change. Theories of gradual institutional change argue that change may occur due to endogenous factors. In other words, the attention is not on how institutions transform preferences or social behaviour but on how the accumulation of preferences within institutional arrangements leads to change. Therefore, change becomes endogenous. ‘Theories of gradual institutional change have focused more on how social and political interactions transform institutions than on how institutions themselves structure those interactions’ (Capoccia, 2016: 1096).

Based on these characteristics, this paper argues that turning to a historical institutionalist approach is productive for the study of the impact of the eastern enlargement on the evolution of the EU’s energy policy. In order to be able to talk about evolution one must refer to something that happens over time. In order to see impact over time it is necessary to pay attention to the sequence of events which, in this case, is essential to prove causality. All these provide an overall and real image helping to understand the reasons for change and how this happened allowing an analysis that will focus also on the long terms effects taking into account an increased period of time.

A FRAMEWORK TO ASSESS THE IMPACT OF THE EASTERN ENLARGEMENT ON THE EVOLUTION OF THE EU’S ENERGY POLICY

The aim of this article is to propose a framework for analysing the impact of the eastern enlargement on the evolution of the EU’s energy policy taking stock of existing literature and identifying a series of gaps within the research. Having outlined in the previous sections how energy policy and impact are understood here and the particularities of a historical
institutionalist approach, this part outlines the proposed framework, explaining how it will use the specific concepts of HI and what are the aspects on which it will focus.

Before moving on to explaining the framework the present article puts forward, it is important to mention that the analysis takes as a starting point the rational actor. The concept of rationality used here is that of bounded rationality. By embracing the idea of bounded rationality, preferences are understood as being influenced by the context in which actors live (Selten, 2001). This means that national identities and beliefs cannot be ignored, at least before states join the EU and immediately after, because actors are driven by levels of aspiration ‘dynamically adjusted to the situation’ (Selten, 2001:14) and they do not act in a social or ideational vacuum. As such, actors take decisions based on their limited knowledge and experience.

As mentioned in the beginning, I am interested in whether the eastern enlargement impacted the evolution of the energy policy at the EU level and if so how, focusing mainly on how the dynamic of negotiations changed, whether if and how new member states got involved in the evolution of the policy and how and if the EU institutions took advantage of the opportunities presented by the expansion to promote deeper integration in areas where the EU lacked jurisdiction. As such, the proposed analysis is concerned with changes just at the EU level, where such negotiations take place and legislation and policies are discussed and approved. Taking this into account, it is considered that institutions and preferences play a major role.

Without engaging in an endless theoretical discussion on how competing theories and approaches have conceptualized and used such key factors, the following part advances some explanations on how these are understood within the proposed framework.

Preferences

The present article argues against fixed, given, exogenous preferences, considering that temporal processes can ‘generate and reinforce actors’ preferences, power relations, and patterns of resource allocation’ (Fioretos et al, 2016: 6) embracing Hall’s idea that

Instead of assuming actors with narrow material interests that arise unambiguously from the world, we might posit actors with multiple goals, reflected in multivariate preference functions, who attach weight to each of those goals in the context of a decision situation. The process whereby those weights are attached can be modelled as a function of
Taking into account the focus on continuity and change and considering the new wave of research highlighting theories of gradual change, attention will be paid not just on how preferences are influenced and transformed by institutions but, also, on how the accumulation of preferences within institutional arrangements leads to change (Capoccia, 2016: 1096).

Based on Hall’s distinction (Hall in Katznelson and Weingast, 2005), there are three ways in which preferences can be described and understood. First, these are considered to be ‘imputed to actors within the framework of assertive theory’ (Katznelson and Weingast, 2005: 2). Secondly, they are caused by the historical process, ‘theory attempts to suggest how historical developments cause a particular set of preferences held by a given actor’, and thirdly, ‘they are induced by strategic circumstances and human interaction’ (Katznelson and Weingast, 2005: 3). Considering the second and the third way of conceptualizing preferences and based on the model of bounded rationality and organizational learning presented by Herbert Simon (Simon, 1991) I consider that initially states representatives, both from old and new member states, negotiate based on the limited knowledge they have one over the other and on taking into account, especially in the case of new member states, their national identities. After member states representatives start working together, having the same rights within the institutional framework of the EU, a process of learning takes place. So, here, new member states adapt to the ways of negotiating, thus the short term effect would be that institutions shape preferences. Nevertheless, in the long term, learning at individual level has consequences at organizational level leading to organizational learning and to the idea presented above, embraced by theories of gradual change.

**Institutions**

According to Joseph Jupille and James Caporaso (Jupille and Caporaso, 1999) most theoretical pillars, either IR or comparative and EU studies use institutional analysis, but what differentiates them is the way in which they understand institutions, and, even more, the influence the attribute to institutions (Aspinwall and Schneider, 2001: 1). By taking on Hall’s definition of institutions as ‘formal rules, compliance procedures, and standard operating procedures that structure the relationship between individuals in various units of polity and economy’ (Hall quoted in Peters, 2005: 74) here, both formal and informal elements are considered. In support
of the idea presented above, on how preferences are understood, here, in the short-term institutions are thin ‘providing incentives for instrumentally motivated actors to rethink their strategies; they are a constraint on behaviour’ (Checkel, 2001a: 20) but get thicker on the long-term. Thus, the notion of institution includes bureaucratic organizations, formal rules and informal practices.

The focus is not on proving the primacy of one concept or the other in the analysis. Rather, it is argued, that the study of the impact of enlargement has much more to gain by concentrating on the relationship between preferences and institutions. Such a model of analysis allows to examine how enlargement produces an impact on institutions and preferences and how the interplay between these affects the evolution of a policy.

The intention is to assess whether the expansion of the EU produced an impact at the level of the EU, focusing on how the dynamic of negotiations changed, as well as the subject of negotiations taking into account the energy characteristics and problems of the new member states. Therefore, change and continuity will be followed over a period of time which starts with accession talks, and the first set of directives, and continues after the enlargement. Based on this, it was considered that there are four aspects on which the analysis should focus, that could provide information on whether there was an impact and how this can be measured. The four aspects on which impact will be traced are: policy content, policy practice, bureaucratic organizations and scope of the policy. With regards to policy content, such impact can be traced by linking the problems identified by the country reports in the pre-accession period with the subject of legislation adopted. In the 1998 country report on Poland, the Commission identifies as problems monopolies, access to networks and energy pricing and import restrictions for oil products. The second legislative package promoted in the following years focused on ensuring third-party access through unbundling and clear criteria for network tariffs.

At the level of bureaucratic organizations, changes in terms of giving new prerogatives for the existing organizations and establishing new institutions with prerogatives in the area of energy will be followed. An example here is the Directorate General Energy. In terms of policy practices, the analysis will be concentrated on how new member states got involved in the decision-making process. Following the enlargement, voting trends and dynamic may change taking into consideration the weight of votes of the new member states. In addition, new comers can promote their interests by forming coalitions and, as such, influence the final version of legislation. Finally, in terms of the scope of energy policy, impact can be traced by looking at
how energy policy was defined, what regulations focused on and which were the areas of influence before and after enlargement.

One of the main characteristics of a historical institutionalist approach on which the framework is set is the attention to the sequence of events. In other words, events are placed on a time axis on which impact will be traced by turning to the causal mechanisms identified by the HI: critical juncture, path dependency, unintended consequences, learning.

Drawing on the argument that history reflects a ‘punctuated equilibrium’ (Krasner, 1984), researchers believe that history can be divided by moments of great impact. According to Hall and Taylor, critical junctures are ‘moments when substantial institutional change takes place thereby creating a ‘branching point’ from which historical development moves onto a new path’ (Hall and Taylor, 1996: 942). They appear as a consequence of an external internal event creating ‘windows of opportunity’ which actors may exploit ‘to introduce innovative institutional changes, producing a clear departure from previous configurations’ (Juncos, 2013: 14). Thus, critical junctures are brief episodes during which: ‘(a) the range of possible outcomes that might take place in the future briefly but dramatically expands; (b) events occur that quickly close off future possibilities and set into motion processes that track specific future outcomes’ (Mahoney et al, 2016: 77). Despite various ways of conceptualizing critical junctures (Mahoney et al, 2016; Soifer, 2012), here it is understood as a short period of time in which an event that creates lasting impact happens. Based on this, the eastern enlargement is considered to be a critical juncture, determining the upheaval in adopting rules on energy policy.

Path dependence argues that decisions of the past constrain the options of actors at a later time. Therefore, according to it ‘actors do not inherit a blank slate […] instead [they] find that the dead weight of previous institutional choices seriously limits their room for manoeuvre’ (Pierson quoted in Reynolds, 2007: 55). In other words, new institutions are not created in a vacuum.

Based on the distinction between self-reinforcing sequences and reactive sequences made by James Mahoney and his colleagues (Mahoney et al, 2016: 82) when describing path dependence, the framework proposed by this article understands path dependency by turning to the self-reinforcing sequence. As such it is considered that path dependence ‘refers to a process in which the structure that prevails after a specific moment in time (often a critical juncture) shapes the subsequent trajectory in ways that make alternative institutional designs substantially less likely to triumph’ (Fioretos, 2011: 376). When taking the side of self-reinforcing
sequences path dependence can be related to positive feedbacks and increasing returns (Pierson, 1994). Here, each step in one direction increases the chances that future developments will follow this direction. Hall defines path dependence in this sense, saying that:

positive feedback effects arising from the entrenched entitlements, coordination effects, or network externalities generated by institutions alter the attractiveness of the options facing political actors profoundly enough to foreclose some paths of political development, while making movement along others more likely (Hall, 2016: 38).

Because of the importance of the earlier steps in increasing returns, scholars have usually linked critical junctures with the study of path dependency considering critical junctures as moments that launch the path dependency process (Capoccia and Kelemen 2007). Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the ‘increasing returns dynamics that follow a critical juncture could be viewed as processes of gradual change’ (Mahoney et al, 2016: 83).

After the critical juncture, steps slowly unfold over time, each of them contributing to directing a case to a specific outcome. As such, even if the path dependent process starts with a sudden change it may then turn into a ‘slow-moving process of incremental shifts’ (Mahoney et al, 2016: 83).

The evolution of the energy policy in the context of enlargement is considered path dependent, because, even if the enlargement created the opportunity for it to develop in the sense of establishing a common framework, actors make decisions based on their limited knowledge. As such, evolution, despite the fact that now takes the form of more binding rules is guided on what was previously negotiated, promoted and tested. An example are the three legislative packages aiming at establishing an internal energy market similar to that implemented by the Treaty Establishing the European Coal and Steel Community. The treaty created a common market for coal requiring, among others, elimination of all restrictions on trade, discriminatory prices, transportation rates, and state subsidies (Duffield and Birchfield 2011:2).

In order to explain gradual institutional change, the analysis proposed by this article turns to the concepts of unintended consequences and learning. Unintended consequences (Pierson 1994) may appear in the evolution of institutions since, even though preferences may change, the long term agreements and acquis negotiated by predecessors are left to inherit (Pollack, 2009b: 137). When negotiating the conditions for enlargement a distinctive legal framework not fully deriving from the acquis communautaire was created and this gave the EU the power to
exercise authority on candidate states in policy areas in which the EU treaties did not grant it jurisdiction. Although these powers were supposed to expire after accession, the EU remained active in most of these fields (Heidbreder, 2014: 747-748). The introduction of the chapter on energy in the negotiation package can be considered to have created such unintended consequences. The EU institutions gained powers in the field of energy where the treaty did not grant them jurisdiction, allowing them to promote legislation that impacted both old and candidate states.

Nevertheless, the lessons learned from some of the unintended consequences tend to be corrected by learning. Learning refers to ‘a change in beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one’s beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills, or procedures as a result of the observation and interpretation of experience’ (Levy, 1994: 283). Learning usually occurs when actors face uncertainty or new realities, because that is when they are ‘cognitively motivated to analyse new information’ (Checkel, 2001b: 562). Learning from its own experience and from others’ experience had a significant impact on EU energy policy. At the level of the EU institutions, by providing the arena for information gathering and sharing between old and new member states, learning has served to correct some of the unintended consequences. For example, the first energy package was designed to protect the markets of old member states ignoring the strain on candidate countries. The second and third legislative packages included clearer objectives for setting the internal market, focusing on a step by step strategy with longer periods of time and dealt with issues specific to the new member states as well, like security of supply. This way, legislation encouraged the energy policy to develop in the sense of a policy regime comprising interests of both old and new members.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper was to provide an analytical framework to assess the impact of the eastern enlargement on the evolution of the EU’s energy policy. Starting from a broader definition of the EU energy policy and arguing in favour of treating the three dimensions of the policy regime as mutually reinforcing and closely interrelated, the paper put forwards a historical institutionalist approach. Having identified an upheaval in adopting rules in the field of energy at the same time as the enlargement was negotiated or taking place, it is considered to be worth analysing whether the eastern enlargement had an impact on the policy and if so how.
Impact is considered as change, but this needs not to be equated always with major change. The three ways in which impact is defined represent different levels of change, starting from no change in the case of assimilation; marginal alteration or adaptation; and total change, which is termed here as transformation. This allows identifying different and even small details which make it possible to have a cleared image of the impact.

Having identified institutions and preferences as key concepts, the research is not interested in proving the primacy of one concept or the other in the analysis. Rather, it argues, that the study of the impact of enlargement has much more to gain by focusing on the relationship between preferences and institutions. Such a model of analysis allows to examine how enlargement produces an impact on institutions and preferences and how the interplay between these affects the evolution of a policy.

The historical institutionalist approach, with its focus on continuity and change and attention to sequence of events, helps understand how the dynamic of negotiations changed, how new member states got involved in the evolution of the policy, but also how the EU institutions took advantage of the opportunities presented by the expansion to promote deeper integration in areas where the EU lacked jurisdiction, all at the EU level, where policy is negotiated, provisions discussed and adopted. In this sense, the following causal mechanisms are identified: critical juncture, path dependency, unintended consequences and learning. These, together with the attention to the sequence of events help understand evolution over time at the level of the four identified dimensions of policy content, policy practice, bureaucratic organizations and scope of policy.
REFERENCES:


Best, E., Christiansen, T. and Settembri, P. (2005), The institutional impact of EU enlargement: towards an analytical framework, EU-Consent working paper.


