



## The evolution of institutions in transition

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**Abstract:** This paper aims at explaining the role and importance of the evolution of institutions for sustainable agri-environmental resources during the transition process by referring to examples of agri-environmental problem areas in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEECs). It is often stated that the mere replacement of institutional structures in post socialist countries by EU institutions would be an opportunity to implement rapidly new policies and institutions. However, not all kinds of institutions, especially at local level, can simply be implemented and certainly not instantly. Instead, they evolve as a response to ecosystem and social system characteristics, and this is a rather slow process, especially as people's social networks and affiliations have dramatically changed since the socialist era. A central question, therefore, is whether the required institutional arrangements for achieving sustainability in the area of agri-environmental resource management can be built more easily in periods of transition as they fill institutional gaps, or whether processes of transition make institution building a far more difficult and time consuming task than previously thought. Above all, we want to find out how these two processes of institution building at different scales affect the sustainable management of resources such as water and biodiversity in agriculture? It will become clear that the nature of agri-environmental problems faced during transition are complex and dynamic and require appropriate institutions both by political design and from the grassroots, to be developed by the respective actors involved. The process is supposed to lead from institutions in transition to institutions of sustainability. The transition from centrally planned to pluralistic systems has to be considered in some respect as a non-typical process of institutional change. Popular theories of institutional change do not necessarily apply.

**Keywords:** Institutional change; ecosystem; social system; transition; EU integration.

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