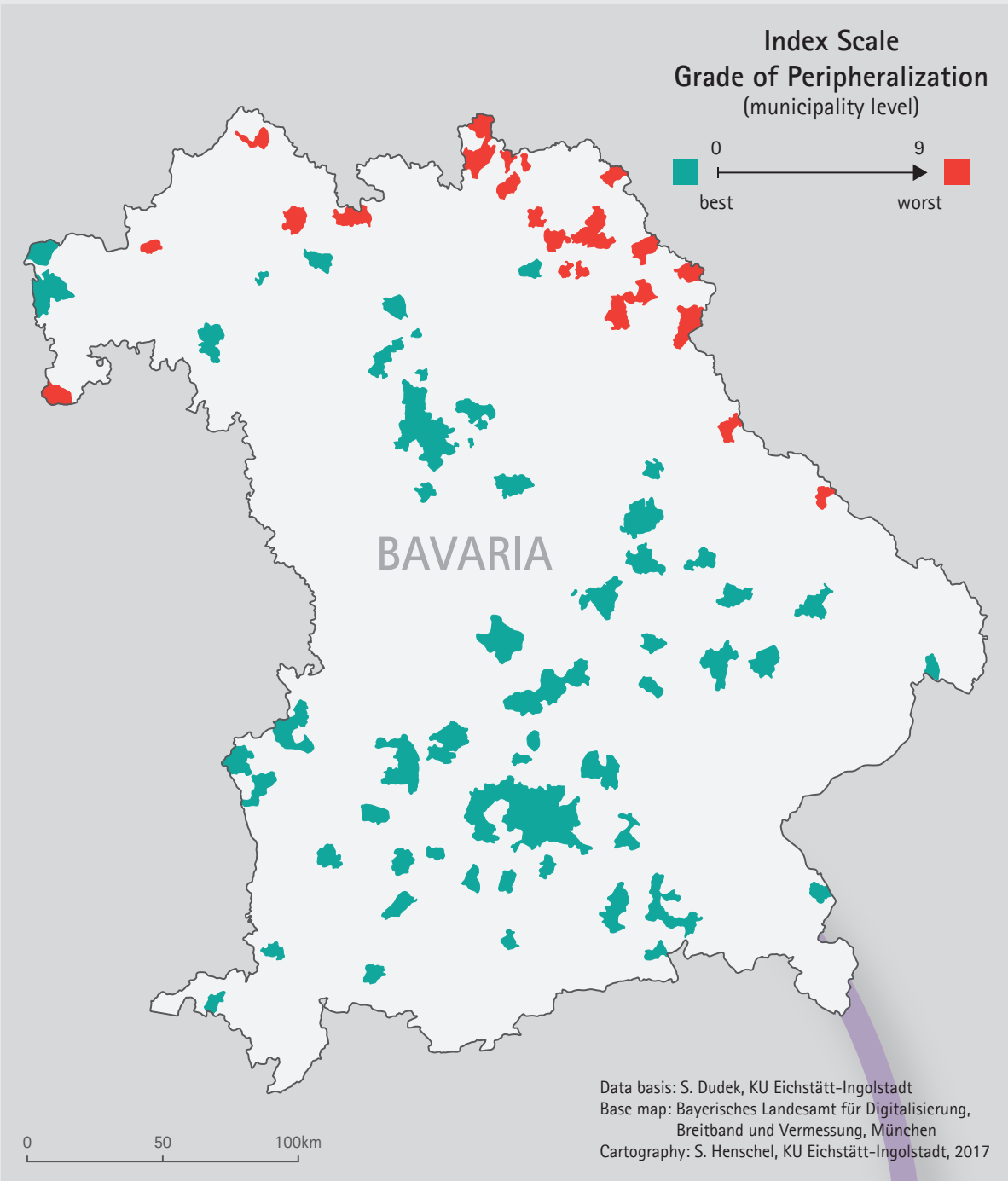




The Production of Structured Coherence through Energy Transition

by Simon Dudek



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Research Problem

Scientific research on the peripheralization of regions emphasizes the difference between spatial and socio-economic peripheries (Kühn 2016). Nevertheless, there is a high congruence between peripherality as a description of locality and as a socio-economic condition (see map). The project explores how *economic remoteness* can be counterbalanced through energy transition projects. The preconditions for new regional accumulation (Harvey 1985) in peripheral regions are:

- low land prices
- agricultural resources
- low population density

Aims of the project

Even though all peripheral regions do have the capacity to build the mentioned new regional accumulation regimes, not every peripheral region can benefit economically from projects of energy transition. Within in a region, different economic imaginaries compete for a hegemonic position in the regional development processes. Accordingly, this study aims at a more detailed understanding of how an economic imaginary becomes hegemonic and leads to a structured coherence. This will be analyzed by particularly applying the following perspectives.

- The concept of economic imaginaries will be introduced to analyse the development of structured coherences that is often referred to by politico-economic approaches
- Special attention will be paid to processes of variation, selection and retention of competing imaginaries that can be observed in the regions
- Empirically, leading imaginaries of green energy transitions in Germany's peripheries are at the core of the project

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Guiding questions

- How do economic imaginaries compete in processes of regional development?
- How do different scales influence the decision-making processes?
- What are the leading imaginaries in recent regional development processes?

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Theoretical approach

The project builds upon two theoretical assumptions (see left table). First, it uses the concept of structured coherence within political economy that is referred to as a precondition for intraregional accumulation. Secondly, the cultural political economy approach is applied to understand the genesis of economic imaginaries that fix (Harvey 1985) a structured coherence. By combining both approaches that share the strategic-relational concept of state as a hegemonic relation of power, I am aiming at a more detailed understanding of decision-making processes in regional development contexts.

	Structured Coherence	Cultural Political Economy
Function	How can regional accumulation be initiated?	How does the initiation work?
Concept	Regional class alliance	Economic Imaginary
Definition	"The extent to which economy, state and civil society mesh together in a relatively stable fashion." (Halfacree 2006: 52)	"Semiotic systems that frame individual subjects' lived experiences of an inordinately complex world and/or inform collective calculation about that world." (Sum & Jessop 2013: 165)

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Methodology

Critical Semiotic Analysis (van Leeuwen 2005) allows to enquire the semiotic system of an economic imaginary. This system is defined as "a specific configuration of genres, discourses and styles" (Jessop 2004: 70) and becomes more influential in the decision-making process by the amount of social areas it holds a hegemonic position in (see right table).

Area	Typical semiotics
Technology	Decarbonization
Economy	Peak Oil
Capital	Financialization of Natural Resources
Labour	Green Jobs
Science	Global Warming
Education	Sustainability
Culture	Energy sufficiency; Resilience
State	Decentralization of Energy Production
Law	Kyoto; Paris Agreement, EEG (GER)
Politics	Nuclear Phase Out

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