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**Abstract**

This paper investigates historical and current developments regarding governmental policies aimed at enhancing spatial equity (access) or decentralisation of higher education provision in three countries—Australia, Canada and Norway. We then shed light on the links or interrelations between policy objectives and initiatives and institutional diversity and regional development more broadly. We found evidence of convergence trends in Norway and Canada resulting in the rise of hybrid organisational forms, as well as the critical importance of policy frameworks in either maintaining or eroding the traditional binary divide. The cross-country data suggest a rather mixed or nuanced picture when it comes to regional development. Finally, the paper identifies a number of key challenges facing the systems, suggests possible ways of tackling them and sheds light on avenues for future research. (HRK / Abstract übernommen)