



Datar



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Minutes of the thematic seminar – 30 May 2011

I. Rationale and definition of “regions” in a place-based approach

Mr Barca introduced the concept of place-based approach. “Place-basedness” is not just a policy tailored to context and integrated. A place-based approach rather means tackling the context, integrating policy action and combining endogenous (mobilising local agents) and exogenous factors (promoting change). Therefore a place-based approach aims at combining the empowerment of the people and challenging at the same times the values of the community by open it up to external values. Such a combination represents an opportunity for innovation.

Mr McCann underlines the importance not to forget that cohesion policy is a territorial spatial policy. The place-based approach should reflect all the dimensions shaped by Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Philip McCann presents a cube showing regional characteristics and the different dimensions of Europe 2020 Strategy to show that regions are places with their own historical paths defined by all the different dimensions simultaneously. The cube proposes 24 regional types. The possibilities to respond to the challenges it raises are context specific.

Moreover in terms of geographical dimensions, four different approaches can be used to develop priorities and strategies:

- urban approach referring to a monospatial context,
- regional approach relates to the relationship between issues and between different places,
- inter-regional approach looks like the previous one but to a much bigger scale and therefore the thematic priorities to be addressed need to be narrowed,
- super-regional approach involves a multi-sector and multi-type strategy.

Policies need to be focused on the challenges of each region and therefore strategies and objectives are not substitutable.

General discussions:

- What is the legitimacy of exogenous actors considering that the EU is becoming a group of states and not a political issue?
- What is the relevance of the vocabulary? The notions of local and regional could be better adapted than urban and regional
- How do you see the future of the super-regional approach?
- How to involve the key actors to design strategies?



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- How could the design of operational programmes be adapted to concentrate on key specific issues for the place?
- Why in 20 years haven't we been able to show that structural funds could work? Why have technocrats and researchers been unable to convince that place-based could be part of the answer?
- Don't you think that the crucial point would be to discuss the preparation of the new programmes?
- How to implement and implicate typology?

II. Thematic concentration and integrated approach in EU Cohesion Policy

Vincent le Dolley comes back to the notion of thematic concentration. The point is that only 12% of the priorities are territorial approaches. Now Member States will have to define their priorities according to the objectives of Europe 2020 Strategy, which means that they will have to choose a limited number of priorities, each priority being linked to specific tools and therefore to conditionalities, incentives, indicators, performance measurement etc.

The advantage is that the structure of the operational programme will be unified and will be easier to manage. The drawback is that local actors will have less freedom, less possibility for developing their own strategies with a risk to come back to a policy based on sectors and programmes. In such a framework there is no room for place-based strategies. In such a process, there is a clear risk that cohesion policy may lose its main aim and discourage the best local integrated projects.

What can we do against this trend? One possibility would be to add a priority which could be the territorial. The projects that would be ranked in this category should be enhanced and considered as exemplary and sustainable projects. But indicators need to be invented for such a new category. These projects can be disconnected from thematic objectives so that they can be adapted to territorial specificities. Another possibility is to come back to a true regional strategic programming.

Henri de Groot emphasises the fact that regional policy in a rapidly changing world is an extremely complex issue. Europe is facing important challenges such as widening disparities, a deep financial recession and Euro-crisis, global unbalances and ageing population. Such orientations represent important challenges for the regional policy. Trade-offs between growth and inequality, between efficiency and equity or between specialisation and diversity need to be found in order to address all the dimensions. The trade-offs may vary from one country to the other according to their national institutional settings, challenges and paths of development. In order to better adapt regional policy, good evaluation tools are needed in order to be part of a continuous learning process.

Peter Heil reasserts that the "one size fits all" model doesn't work for regional policy. At the moment, we can note some buzzwords at EU level such as EU2020, conditionalities, results-oriented, integrated policy, territorial cohesion or solidarity. Parallel to that, positions are increasingly polarised between the actors. Such a situation leads to top-down approaches to implement EU2020 Strategy and is far away from cohesion which needs a bottom-up approach. It results in a strategic dilemma between concentrating on EU2020 Strategy or extending the debate on cohesion policy towards other policies. There is also a practical dilemma: do we know what we should do? For example is a contract better than the strategic national reference framework? There is also a dilemma between concentration and absorption. We should keep in mind that cohesion policy is strategic, integrated, place-based, evaluated and transparent. We should try to come up with good ideas to innovate for cohesion policy. Territorial cohesion needs to be upgraded. If competitiveness is put in contrast to solidarity and cohesion then solidarity will lose out.

Therefore what is needed is to stress the link of cohesion policies with other policies. Programme structure should be reformed, priorities need to be defined, core indicators should be used as well as



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strong positive conditionality. It is important not to forget that cohesion policy is badly needed to contribute to the integration of the economic union.

General discussions:

- Is there a way to define thematic priorities?
- What are the tools that we will come up with the amendments of regulation?
- Where does the present debate on simplification lead to?

III. Indicators and integrated approach in EU Cohesion Policy

Fabrizio Barca introduces this part of the seminar saying that there is a growing demand for EU policies to be more result-oriented. What is important is the process composed of 6 stages:

- first a policy has to be chosen and its intended outcome defined
- then from the outcome you have to design the outcome indicators
- for any outcome indicator, you need to establish a baseline to target
- you then resort to the theory of change and think about how your choice is going to reach the target
- you need also reporting about progress in an open way
- and finally an impact evaluation.

Cohesion policy is lagging far behind this process even though it has been improving. But if we follow the process, the measure may be sectoral, the output may be sectoral but the end is not sectoral.

In order to illustrate this process, Monica Brezzi presents the indicators implemented by OECD for regional development. Indicators are important because they enable international comparison, help make informed choices and orient policies and they also help moving the regional policy development. The point is that it is important to have common definition of what is the place of territory in the indicators. Is there enough territory in the existing indicators? There are important constraints on the inputs depending on the available information and the time needed to elaborate them. A methodology needs to be agreed upon.

Susan Baxter illustrates how the UK evaluation model takes into consideration the integrated approach of EU cohesion policy in the indicators used for policy evaluation. She presents the basic model framework used which is divided into five main steps: the monitoring part is divided into inputs, activities and outputs and the evaluation aspect into outcomes and impacts, the evaluation part giving feedback to the first one. There is therefore a hierarchy of evaluation giving analytical tools for the policy makers who have to justify how they spend public finances and for which results.

General discussions:

- You shouldn't have too many indicators.
- What does OECD do in the respect of EU cross-border integration?
- What is the role of the managing authority in the evaluation?
- Macro-regions are often presented as an innovative tool of EU intervention but what are the relevant indicators to measure this type of intervention?



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