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Typologies of Governance Models

Assessing the impact of rural development policies (incl. LEADER)

Deliverable D3.2

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FP 7 Project no. 213034

Funded by the 7th Framework Programme for Research and Technology Development
of the European Commission

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* The author is very grateful to Ken Thompson and Janet Dwyer for their helpful comments and contributions to the revision of the first draft of the report.

1. The importance and nature of the governance of rural development policies

The theme of governance is ever more topical in all countries that, with various approaches, are trying to implement policies that involve a considerable number of social and institutional actors. This report focuses attention on the governance of rural development policies, which deserves particular attention for several reasons. These reasons are to be found in the emerging general trends in the governance of public policies in all European countries, as well as some of the most industrialised countries (Goodwin, 2005; OECD, 2006):

- a) first of all, the institutional systems in the various European countries, albeit with obvious historical/political differentiation, are tending increasingly toward administrative decentralisation in favour of the regions and sub-regional bodies/institutions (Bobbio, 2002);
- b) in parallel, the role of supra-national institutions tends to be strengthened (e.g. the European Commission), which increasingly guides public policies, establishing a framework of common rules for all the Member States;
- c) from the local level, there are growing pressures upon higher levels (regional and national) for wider participation in the formulation and management of policies. This also regards social subjects, representatives and institutions other than those traditionally involved: not only the administrative levels immediately below the Region (municipalities, provinces, aggregates of municipalities, etc.) and the representatives of the commerce and of labour, but also civil society groups and voluntary associations. The range of these stakeholders has grown substantially, in response to different needs and as a consequence of various factors including the crisis of traditional values and representatives, the perverse effects of the globalisation of the economy, and the worsening of the state of the environment in the various industrialised countries;
- d) the demand for participation underlies certain changes in the organisation and functioning of policies. In fact, various forms of cooperation spring up and spread between/among local actors in the territories, essentially aimed at formulating strategies for development, encouraging the involvement of the local population, exercising a certain control and monitoring of the same policies, etc. These forms of cooperation have not exclusively involved countries with a strong tradition of regional decentralisation, but also countries where such tradition is lacking (Moseley, 2006). Among other things, these impulses were evident in the debate over the reform of rural development policies on the occasion of the Conference of Cork (1996), which preceded the changes in Agenda 2000, and that of Salzburg (2003), which helped to define the contents of the 2007-2013 phase.

These general trends have imposed new needs on the organisation and management of development policies and, overall, have introduced new variables in the governance of public policies. Practically speaking, the system of governance of rural development policies, like that of local development policies, has witnessed the progressive coming into play of:

- a) several levels (national, regional, intermediate and local);
- b) many more actors than before, not limited to the public administration and traditional representatives of the world of agriculture;
- c) new instruments and approaches, no longer based on the mere transfer of farm-based aid, but conditioned by better organised procedures and criteria for selection, and by programmes reaching beyond a single production sector.

Governance is therefore surely one of the central themes for understanding the functioning of public policies and the opportunities for improving the overall efficiency and effectiveness thereof. If we fail to understand the crucial points of governance in the various countries, we shall not succeed in understanding why policies work only to a limited extent and poorly, if at all. This is true not only in most developed countries, but also in the poorest countries. In a

recent book on the failures of development processes in the poorest countries (the so-called “bottom billion”) Collier (2007) states that bad policies and governance are among the most crucial “traps” which limit these countries from realizing their opportunities.

The recent Barca Report (2009) puts governance at the centre of the reform for the new Cohesion Policy 2014-2020 when it states that place-based integrated development policies are the new challenge and that *“their chances of success depend on how they are implemented, how risk is reduced and what form of governance is adopted....Outlining a model of governance is necessary for assessing any concrete model of cohesion policy, including the present EU one”* (Barca, 2009, p.40).

In many countries the so-called “institutional framework” is reasonable if one considers the stratification of national, regional and local administrations that characterise them, with a highly decentralised structure. Not only that: this “institutional framework” has been enriched by experience with local cooperation stemming from regional, community and national development policies promoted in various forms (Territorial Pacts, Territorial Integrated Projects, LEADER, etc.) In particular, these experiences have given rise to different forms of place-based project partnerships, including many in the field of agriculture and rural development. They have encouraged new forms of governance, certainly closer to the territories themselves and more participatory, which persist today and have also developed a capacity to operate in fields other than agriculture. But at the same time they have made the governance of public policies in the different territories even more articulated and complex.

In this report, therefore, we shall try to examine:

- a) the concept of governance in the field of rural development policies;
- b) the use of governance as a way to understand problems of policy performance, especially as regards horizontal and vertical coordination between actors;
- c) the importance within governance of Leader approaches and new form of partnerships;
- d) the novelties in governance to be found when comparing Agenda 2000 and the new 2007-2013 programming period;
- e) finally, the role of governance in understanding the delivery of Rural Development Policy.

2. The concept of “rural governance” in literature

The concept of *“rural governance”* has been thoroughly examined and developed in literature only recently. In an article published several years ago, Goodwin (1998) underlined the existence of an incomprehensible lack of interest in rural studies about the modalities with which rural areas are governed. That appears in sharp contrast with what has instead taken place in other fields of the social sciences, where issues relating to *governance* have long since assumed a certain theoretical importance. An attentive reading of the various contributions reveals a certain complexity in the definition of *“rural governance,”* whose essential characteristics at times turn out to be difficult to explain. The contributions of Goodwin (1998 and 2005) and, even earlier, of Stoker (1997) help frame the problem of what is meant by *governance*.

First of all, a distinction must be made between *governance* and *government*, in the sense that the former is far broader in scope: *government* refers to the formal institutional structure and decision-making process of the modern State, while governance instead *“... directs attention to the distribution of decision-making power both within and without the State. Its focus is on the interdependence of government and non-government subjects in dealing with economic and social challenges. Governance concerns collaboration between government and non-government organisations. It regards how the goal of a collective action is reached and all the issues and tensions are resolved in the model of governance”* (Stoker, 1997). The same distinction applies to the local scale, as Bobbio explains with great effectiveness (2002,

p. 11): *“The English language has two different words at its disposal for making a distinction between government as an institution and the activity of government: government and governance. The study of local government has as its object the institutions of local government. The study of local governance has as its object the whole of the interactions that give rise to choices of government on a local scale.”* Governance, in the specific case of rural areas, thus involves the different levels of government, the complex of institutions and actors that participate in collective decision-making processes, their role and function, and the relations of a horizontal and vertical type that are established between institutions and informal and formal networks of actors. In the literature the development of the theme of *rural governance* is undoubtedly tied to forms of local cooperation and the involvement of local communities: *“At the local level, the institutional map of rural government has been transformed into a system of governance that involves a wide range of agencies and institutions coming from the public and private sectors and voluntary service”* (Goodwin, 1998).

Such questions are doubtless of great interest to public policy scholars, but how can they be formalised in a more organic theoretical framework? Above all, what value can they have for the comprehension of the mechanisms that make rural development policies more effective? From this standpoint, the value of the theory of governance lies in its capacity to provide an instrument for understanding the nature and evolution of decision-making processes (Stoker, 1996). Essentially, then, the theory of governance helps us understand what mechanisms lead to the formulation of strategies and their management within policy implementation. What, then, in light of theoretical elaboration, are the crucial elements of *governance* that help us to understand such mechanisms? Essentially, five constitutive aspects of governance can be identified (Goodwin, 1998):

- a) the complex of institutions and actors involved, including outside the small circle of institutions that govern the policies;
- b) the degree of involvement of the private sector (agencies, non-profit organisations of the third sector and, more generally, the social economy sector);
- c) the forms of interrelation and coordination (horizontal and vertical) between/among institutions involved in policy;
- d) the forms of local cooperation between the public and private sector, formal and informal subjects, networks of actors, etc. that contribute to creating new forms of local government;
- e) finally, the forms of direction and planning beyond Government, derived/arising from direct intervention in the economy and society, and from policy management, provided by new modalities/kinds of “enabling government,” i.e. of support and incentive to other actors in attaining effective public policies.

Growing attention has been given to point d), precisely owing to the continuing spread of local partnerships previously mentioned. The “new rural policies” that in recent years have been and are being created in Northern Europe assume, among their basic principles, the strengthening of local governance through the support of partnerships and “community involvement” (Marsden and Murdock, 1998).

We have underlined the fact that the theory of governance can provide us with an instrument for understanding the decisions reflected in public policies. Consequently, it also offers a key for analysing and trying to understand why public policies produce certain results and perform in certain ways.

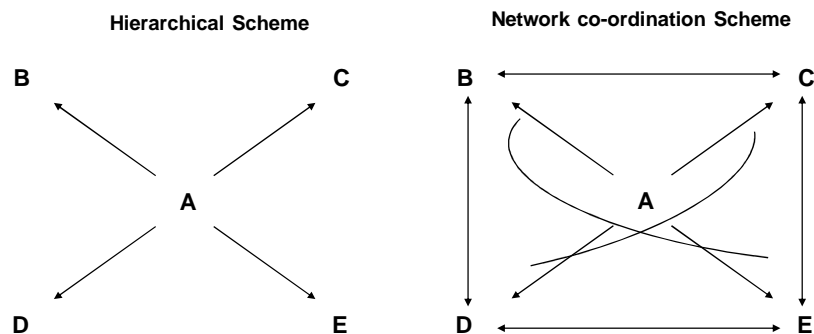
3. Governance seen as vertical and horizontal coordination

A different way of viewing governance under the profile of economic analysis defines it as modalities for the solution of problems of coordination among the economic agents in a system, in terms of the definition and achievement of socio-economic goals. In this sense, it reflects the principal function of economic policy, which is to help the economy overcome failures of coordination by stimulating the system to move from a worse to a better balance, from the standpoint of efficiency. The matter of coordination arises since economic systems are considered to be complex and dynamic, such that the various economic agents experience difficulty in reaching an aggregate result consistent with general/public objectives. Therefore, the following question is immediately posed: Through what mechanisms can the coordination of economic agents be ensured?

There are basically three types of coordination mechanism, which do not exist in a pure state, but overlap:

- a) that of *the market*, based on individual responses to price indications on the part of economic agents;
- b) that of a *hierarchical, regulatory type*, based on some form of authority that imposes rules and procedures on the agents in order to cause them to behave in certain ways;
- c) *network coordination*, realised through a set of economic institutions that manage or broker relations and dealings between/among the agents. These economic institutions can be considered as coordination mechanisms because they introduce a complex of penalties and rewards, incentives and disincentives that induce the economic agents to follow certain models of behaviour. They can be identified with systems of formal/informal agreements, standardisation of decision-making processes, with specific systemic “cultures” that produce coordination through values and forms of behaviour shared by the agents. A typical example of this is “*industrial districts*” (very well known in Italian economic literature), where there are no formalised relational rules *a priori* but rather the evolution of rules or norms that the economic actors have made for themselves over time, thanks to a collective learning process that has prompted the actors to share forms of cooperation advantageous for all. In network coordination, which is increasingly widespread in complex societies, the number of relations is greater than in the hierarchical system (Figure 6.1); for example, in a hierarchical system composed of five agents with Agent A at the top, the number of relations is four, while in a network system composed of the same agents, the number of relations becomes ten.

Figure 6.1 – Different models of relation among actors



4. Actors and models in the governance process: main typologies of governance emerging from the literature

The network coordination system permeates the governance of rural areas. According to a thesis, “the governance of rural areas can be seen as multidimensional” (Marsden and Murdoch, 1998). This statement must be interpreted, first of all, in the sense that it involves a multiplicity of actors, different levels of government and participation in the policies, different functions and various modalities of relations between levels of government and actors. The first step for reaching an understanding of the systems of governance is to perform a kind of mapping of the levels of government and participation, and of the actors involved at each level. This is no easy task because over time, institutional changes and public policies have created and overlapped different levels, and have caused different actors to enter the scene, with general and/or specific competencies (depending on the public policy involved). It is not at all rare to find cases of responsibilities, roles and functions that overlap and clash internally at the various levels. This accounts for the need to also reconstruct, in this path leading to an understanding of the systems of governance, steps c) and d) as the preceding paragraph, i.e. the forms of interrelation and coordination (horizontal and vertical) among the institutions involved in the policies and, at the local level, the forms of local public-private co-operation, the networks of actors, etc. that contribute to creating new modalities of local government.

A characteristic of many systems of governance, including those that involve rural policies, is that they are multi-level. The multi-level aspect is a reality in many countries with developed economies; whereby emphasis is placed on the distribution of powers among the different levels of government not according to a hierarchical order, but according to a logic that recognises the existence of interdependence among levels and actors, where each contributes with specific resources and skills. However, long experience with governance in these countries shows that there are many obstacles and difficulties in attaining real multilevel coordination. All the same, there are many success stories (OECD, 2006). In order to understand the multi-level dimension, it is first necessary to identify the principal levels and leading actors involved (Mantino, 2005; OECD, 2006). There are at least four of them:

- a) *the national level*, generally coinciding with the State (in some systems, the federal State);
- b) *the regional level*, where the concept and dimension of region can also vary greatly internationally, which among other things creates problems of comparability between/among countries;
- c) *the intermediate level* (sub-regional), which can be very important in highly decentralised systems and/or ones with very large regions.¹ This basically involves a level somewhere between the regional and local level, which can play a role especially in countries with a variety of territorial contexts;
- d) finally, *the local level*, which is the one closest to local communities, civil society, and public and private operators that promote development projects on a local scale. While the intermediate level generally involves an administrative unit, this is not necessarily the case at the local level. The term “local” is generally synonymous with communes, municipalities, villages, and districts (England), but also may involve non-standard units of limited size where specific agencies promote development projects. In the latter case, the term “local” may refer to combined public and private actors for promoting partnerships.

In the European context, multilevel governance is obviously made more complex by the presence of a fifth level that is supra-national: the European Union, comprising such institutions as the European Council, European Parliament and European Commission, which play a decisive role in the definition of a legislative and conceptual framework of reference for many common policies, including rural development policies in all the Member States. The debate over the role of the European Union in the governance of single countries basically involves three focal points: (i) the room for manoeuvre of national and regional policies is increasingly determined by regulations and procedures originating from the EU; (ii) this shift in the decision-making centre of gravity notwithstanding, many analysts recognise that governance and management capacity with respect to rural and regional development policies has registered undoubted progress precisely owing to the effect of this EU influence; (iii) the very process of decentralisation has likewise been stimulated in quite a few countries due to the influence of policies co-funded by the EU Structural Funds. One thus concludes from these considerations that the effect on governance of EU policies has been essentially positive.

¹ Such is the case with the provinces in Italy, the *départements* in France, the counties in England, etc. While this level is often confused with the local level, it actually differs in terms of scale, functions, and distribution of powers and competencies. In the analysis of governance we believe that this level has a role and function at times autonomous from the others. That notwithstanding, it is often underrated or even overlooked.

FIGURE 6.2 MULTI -LEVEL GOVERNANCE OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Different actors operate on each of the levels identified, not only of an institutional type, but also including farmers' organisations, associations, and economic and social representatives (Figure 6.2). The relative importance and specific role of the various levels varies depending on the institutional structure of each country. In the more centralised countries the national level predominates, whereas in the more decentralised systems the intermediate and local levels have greater articulation and more important roles.² A better understanding of the organisation of the different system can be reached if we separate the different activities of the planning and management of rural development policies and analyse how they are distributed among the levels and actors. Thus, three different systems of governance can be distinguished:

- centralised systems.* In these systems the lion's share of the planning and management functions come under national competencies. The selection of local partnerships and/or local-scale projects is of national competence or up to regional offices that are subordinate to the State. The most frequent problems of coordination arise at the national level among different sectors of the national administration.
- decentralised systems.* Here the presence of the national administration in current management is less pronounced (the programmes are mainly defined and approved at the regional level) and exclusively concerns strategic planning, the allocation of financial resources among the lower levels (above all regional) and, finally, the establishment of common rules for functions important for planning, such as monitoring and assessment. What distinguishes these systems is not only the greater role of the regional level, but also – and perhaps above all – the greater participation of the intermediate and local levels. Indeed, we believe that a strong regional presence does not suffice to qualify a system as decentralised, but that a whole set of functions performed at a lower level are necessary. For example, the selection of individual projects and decentralised financial management represent functions crucial for verifying the existence of real decentralisation at the level of local partnerships. Another fun-

² As we shall see in greater detail later on, the regional level certainly has an influence in determining the degree of decentralisation, but for purposes of understanding the model of local governance what is really decisive is not who governs policies from the top down (whether it is the State or Region), but if and how the local and intermediate level influence government from the bottom up.

damental characteristic of decentralised systems is the presence of a greater number of actors (institutions, associations, different types of organisations, etc.), which entails a need for coordination at several levels, including local.

- c) *mixed systems (based on concerted action among the actors)*. These systems are marked not only by the presence of a great number of actors, as in the preceding case, but also by a system of rules and procedures making it possible for the vertical and horizontal actors to mutually agree on decisions concerning the functions of planning and management. Such rules and procedures are formalised by special contracts between/among the various actors, likewise mutually agreed. This contractual approach guides the actors and obliges them to assume precise responsibilities and to observe the operational objectives assumed. The peculiarity of this model is that certain crucial steps in the planning and management phases are established within a framework of co-decision by important groups of actors. The more operational phases of implementation are assigned to the regions or other intermediate bodies/agencies, depending on the institutional system of each country. Examples of this model can be found in France's system of "Contrats de Plan État-Régions" and Italy's system of "Intese Istituzionali di Programma" and "Accordi di Programma Quadro" introduced by negotiated planning, which by now have become an integral part of the system of governance of national and regional public intervention in the economic field. Another example of the contractual approach was introduced in the management of the Structural Funds 2000-2006, which gave rise to a system of rewarding effectiveness and efficiency (Mantino, 2002), on the basis of which the European Commission, State and Regions have established by mutual agreement a set of rules for allocating additional resources to programmes with the best performance.

It has been said that one of the peculiar aspects of the concept of governance is its being multilevel. It must be underlined that the systems of governance that we have concisely described are dynamic, as well as multilevel, because subject to change over time. From this standpoint, there are two major factors for change: 1) the institutional and administrative reforms in the different countries; 2) the process of globalisation: *"Local governments are gaining greater importance in all (or nearly all) countries in the world: they obtain new powers and greater financial autonomy, and tend to count more in the national arena and, in some cases, even in the international arena. The processes of globalisation weaken the nation states, but strengthen local ambits and their governments"* (Bobbio, 2002). As regards agriculture and rural areas, there are, in our opinion, two processes that characterise the recent phase of globalisation: a) the development of technological and organisational capacities of production supply chains on an international scale; b) the emergence of major reserves of human and technological capital in such high-potential countries as China and India. Both processes translate into a more accentuated competitive challenge as regards agriculture and rural areas. But they also shift the terrain in which to find the most effective policies: they must be the right combination of horizontal policies designed at the national and regional level, and policies on a local scale that come from cooperation between local actors and regional or sub-regional institutions.

5. Governance of rural development between Agenda 2000 and the 2007-2013 programming period

Agenda 2000 has accentuated the importance of the principles of subsidiarity and decentralisation in the implementation of regional development and cohesion policies. These principles obviously have also been extended to rural development. Actually, emphasis on these principles was not extraneous to the previous reforms of the Structural Funds. It can be said that over the years there has been a certain evolution in the elaboration of a model, making these principles its own and suitably codifying them in the EU legal framework. It needs to be remembered that the model is still the object of intense debate, which today touches on the very nature of the European Union and, above all, the new institutional architecture that it has given itself in the face of the challenges of the third millennium with the inclusion of the countries of East and Central Europe.

The model that the European Commission holds out in Agenda 2000 pertains above all to the definition of the roles of the principal institutional and socio-economic subjects (partnership) in the formulation and implementation of policy. The model is organised according to the following principles:

- a) the Commission and national, regional and local authorities select, using an agreed modality, the development priorities, to which can be associated precise objectives that are quantifiable and therefore verifiable;
- b) the management is completely assigned to the Member States and Regions, which must systematically account for the use of resources granted by the European Union;
- c) to ensure that the management of EU resources is transparent and complies with EU rules, the Member States and Regions must be provided with suitable, efficient systems of management, monitoring and audit.

In keeping with the principle of the transfer of management duties to the Member States and Regions, the Commission assumes a strong role in the early phase (in the approval of programme strategies) and afterwards (in the ex-post audit of the support measures). The Commission's power of guidance and the function of the instruments of verification have both been carefully calibrated for this reason. As regards the former, for example, the Commission compiles an indicative list of common indicators for monitoring and assessment, as well as for the awarding of the effectiveness and efficiency Fund, directed toward rewarding programmes that have distinguished themselves for adhering to the schedule and achieving the objectives provided for. As regards the latter, the Commission has the function of awarding, in partnership with the Member States, the effectiveness and efficiency fund and of performing the ex-post assessment of the support measures.

Despite the fact that its duties have been redefined, the Commission continues to play an active role in itinere, both by participating in the Monitoring Committees (albeit in an advisory role) and by intervening critically, wherever necessary, in all aspects of programme management.

If we move down to a more operational level of coordination and administration of support measures in the territory, the subject that assumes the lead role is the Managing Authority (MA), charged with responsibility for the effectiveness and regularity of the management and implementation of such measures. The MA is the true driving force of an intervention programme: it evaluates the eligibility of all applications for a contribution and authorises financial commitments and payments to the recipients. Not only that: as regards the "decentralised" management of EU Funds, the MA has primary responsibility before the Commission for the use of such resources. The MA must be designated for each form of intervention, whether involving an EU support framework, an operational scheme, a single planning document or, finally, a programme of EU initiative. The MA is generally a public body: a national administration for national programmes and a regional administration for regional programmes.

The Agenda 2000 programming period (2000-2006) has seen almost everywhere an increasing demand for more decentralised management of EU policies. By “decentralised management” must be understood a management entrusted above all to Regions and local communities, in line with the assumption, by now largely accepted throughout Europe, that decentralisation should increase the effectiveness of development policies by bringing support measures closer to the needs and priorities expressed by local communities. This planning phase therefore ought to have enhanced the role of decentralised policy management much more than in previous periods. Actually, though, this process of decentralisation has met with remarkable resistance and conflicts, almost everywhere in Europe. Furthermore, it has been decidedly partial. Indeed, there is a widespread trend to centralisation of policies characterising one set of countries, along with a trend to decentralisation characterising another set of countries (Mantino, 2006a).

What explains such diversity of approaches and what is the reason for the still major importance of the centralised model for rural development support in Europe?

In our opinion, the answer to these questions is provided by a concurrence of factors:

- a) in the first place, the administrative tradition and institutional arrangements found in the various countries heavily conditions their decisions concerning the assignment of responsibility for direct management of the programmes. In the European panorama and traditionally, Germany, with its pronounced federal structure, and France, with its tradition of centralisation, represent the two extreme archetypes. The other countries are positioned between these two extremes;
- b) in the second place, in our judgement there is a sort of antagonism, as a result of experience gained in previous planning cycles, between the centralised and decentralised models, which over time has tipped the scales in favour of the former, encouraging its spread at the European level. This antithesis largely derives from the conviction, ever more widespread, that while decentralisation may go hand in hand with more effective rural policies, centralised management usually results in more efficient spending, particularly in the matter of keeping to the schedule in carrying out the support measures and economies of scale in administrative management. Furthermore, centralised management simplifies not only administrative implementation, but also the planning phase, since it reduces the number of subjects involved in the process, the time required for negotiation and, finally, the number of programmes to be elaborated.
- c) To these elements, which can contribute to explaining the growing interest in the centralised model, must also be added the mechanisms of financial penalty now applied to programmes which prove inefficient in spending, even more harshly than in previous planning cycles.³ The step back taken by certain countries as regards the management of the LEADER programme, almost everywhere assigned to the regions in previous planning, can also be explained in light of these mechanisms;
- d) finally, there is a third element of interpretation that can explain the trend towards maintaining centralised governance of the policies or important parts thereof: the need to ensure greater effectiveness of measures whose scope is not necessarily regional but supra-regional, such that regional management perhaps would confine to ambits that are too restricted and in any case incompatible with the objectives for which they were designed. For example, this reasoning applies to irrigation infrastructures, which in Spain are included in a special national programme.

With the completion of the Agenda 2000 cycle, the new reform of EU policies for the period 2007-2013 likewise introduced some new features that have had an impact on governance.

³ These mechanisms were introduced by the regulations approved with Agenda 2000. They entail financial curtailment (automatic disengagement) in the event of failure make payments or late disbursement with respect to the 2-year time limit beginning from the financial commitment entered in the EU budget.

One of the guiding priorities of this reform was the simplification of the funding, planning and management mechanisms. The principle of “one fund, one programme” actually has created different funding and planning channels, simplifying the management of the various EU support measures. The second principle that permeated the new planning was the strategic approach, which has introduced a new way of setting up the programmes and even new roles and functions involving the principal institutional actors. These changes have remarkable implications for the governance of the rural development policies which were already the object of reform under Agenda 2000. In detail, these are as follows.

- a) The introduction of separate channels for the funding of the programmes according to the “one fund, one programme” principle has created a separation of EU Funds (both among the structural funds and between them and EAFRD) that previously did not exist. It therefore has made the integration of the administrations holding the various funds more difficult.
- b) The strategic approach introduced a new instrument, the National Strategy Plan (analogous to the National Strategy Framework of the Structural Funds), with a rather powerful and significant function of providing guidance for rural development policies.
- c) The simplification of planning and management has caused the LEADER approach, previously the object of a special programme, to be included in the single planning of rural development.
- d) Finally, several innovations, again with the aim of simplifying and strengthening the strategic approach, have been seen especially in the management phase of the programmes: (i) an even clearer separation (in comparison with planning for 2000-2006) of the roles of management, payment and audit; (ii) a further strengthening of the activities of monitoring and assessment; (iii) more flexibility in changing programmes in progress, in terms of both the possibility of revising the measures (with changes in the planned measure and/or the introduction of new measures) and the modulation of the financial plan (bound by EU decision to the priority Axes, and no longer to the detail of the measures); (iv) finally, the obligation placed upon all Regions to have a paying agency (and no longer just Regions outside Objective 1 and for so-called direct aid measures).

One of the most significant new features in the matter of governance is surely the National Strategy Plan (NSP) because it introduces obligatory roles, orientations and procedures that bear heavily on the configuration of the existing governance system. These obligations have an almost explosive effect on planning practise in most EU Member States, particularly in countries with a highly regionalised structure, where – as we have seen – true strategic planning actually does not exist: this is because in such countries these obligations tend to assign the State (and central administration) a role of authentic guidance in regional planning. The NSP thus introduces powerful elements of novelty and even conflict in the relations between and among the various institutional subjects of governance, in all countries with regional decentralisation⁴ (Italy, Spain, Germany, UK, etc.). This is due to several factors:

- a) first of all because it requires the making of clear strategic choices at the national level, albeit agreed in concert between State and Regions, in a field of public intervention (agriculture and rural development) which has been primarily of regional competence;
- b) second, because, by requiring a national strategy and coherence vis-à-vis the regional programmes, the EU regulations entail that certain basic national orientations shall be pursued at the regional level. For example, reference is made to the definition of a common basis for singling out the rural areas and intervention priorities for each of them, and to the definition of priority objectives for each Axis. Such strategic

⁴ The fact must be underlined that during discussion of the EU draft regulations the chamber of the regions (Bundesrat) of the German Parliament made a clear official pronouncement against the introduction of the NSP in European rural development planning.

choices contained in the NSP, even though agreed in concert with the Regions, represent a framework for the RDPs of no little importance and, to all intents and purposes, a first outline of national planning which was previously wholly lacking. This lack has often led to contradictory strategies and policies or overlapping between/among Regions, giving rise to inefficiencies and ineffective support measures. The NSP thus had to solve a problem of governance and the framework imposed by the regulations to do so was anything but weak, given that the European Commission's approval of the RDPs hinged on verification of their effective consistency with the NSP;

- c) third, the NSP contributes greatly to the strengthening of the central level's role in co-ordination, making it something more than a mere collector of various demands (on the part of regions, professional organisations, environmental associations, etc.) Actually, however, in this respect the instrument has not realised the full potential that the regulations have offered the Member States, because in many of them the NSP has not defined really strong strategic choices for agroindustry and rural areas (Critica, 2007).

The introduction of the NSP in the EU and national planning of rural development has therefore put on the agenda the theme of the role of the national level in governance, and the concrete translation of strategic planning within highly decentralised systems. From an examination of the various European NSPs it can be affirmed that, although not adding substantial value to the choices made within the framework of rural development programmes, in several cases the NSPs have introduced significant innovation in the quality of planning and governance of planning processes. The definition of a typological classification of rural areas has, in some cases, fostered the positing of a set of priorities in the allocation of resources for the weakest territories. The existence of a "national" instrument such as the NSP, with requirements established by the regulations, has induced a certain reinstatement of the role of the central level as a place for the definition of strategies agreed in common between State and Region, in all countries with pronounced regional decentralisation. Finally, in several countries the NSP has necessitated the creation of *ad hoc* committees/fora for concerted agreement on national strategies among the various actors involved (above all the State and Regions, but also organised interest groups). In particular, in Italy a National Table for rural development was been set up, which has followed all phases of the definition of the Plan, while in France the preparation of the NSP has been followed by a "National Strategy Committee" composed of different administrative services, territorial representatives and various actors of the agricultural and rural world. Such seats of concerted decision-making have contributed to bringing to light divergent positions – which sometimes clash – but likewise have represented an occasion for the settlement of the related conflicts and the formation of shared strategy.

Along with the theme of the role of national planning in relation to regional planning, the reform of rural development policies 2007-2013 has introduced new features in governance, pertaining to:

- a) horizontal coordination of rural development, national policies and cohesion policies;
- b) the role of the intermediate level in regional planning (i.e. the level between Region and local context), which appears upgraded in certain regional contexts;
- c) the continued expansion of different forms of local planning and partnerships, with the aim of better integrating the different RDP measures in each regional territory;
- d) the introduction of a new subject in certain Regions, namely the single Paying Agency (for all measures of the programmes).

The following sections examine in greater detail the basic characteristics of the new features introduced in Europe in the phase 2007-2013.

6. The role of horizontal coordination in governance

The theme of horizontal coordination of rural development policies and, more generally, of policies of a territorial nature assumes a crucial role in the analysis of governance (Bryden, OECD, 2005). At the national level, horizontal coordination regards the different ministries that have competencies in the matter of support measures for rural areas. In this regard, the OECD points out how in the various institutional contexts the solutions most pursued essentially go in two directions: (i) first, the broadening of the competencies of the Ministry of Agriculture in the direction of new functions, such as those concerning the environment, food safety and consumer health, territorial planning in rural areas, etc. This is essentially the direction taken in some European countries, including the United Kingdom and Germany⁵; (ii) second, the creation of interministerial or interdepartmental organisations (workgroups or *ad hoc* committees) formed by staff belonging to different administrations. Also among the operating modalities of horizontal coordination are the programme agreements among different administrations for the funding of specific infrastructure support measures, as occurs in negotiated planning in Italy. The theme of horizontal coordination obviously also arises at the regional level in all countries with a high degree of decentralisation of programmes and resources.

The reform of the 2007-2013 Structural Funds has accentuated the problem of horizontal governance: in the interest of great simplification, the principle of the integration of Funds was sacrificed, no longer being provided for within the legal framework of the EU (except for rather generic provisions) and in actual fact being delegated to the Member States and Regions. In the case of Italy, characterised by a preponderance of regional programmes, the problem is posed above all at the level of regional governance. On the one hand, the ERDF and ESF in fact come into existence separately from the EAFDR, with strategies that are either non-communicating or communicating at a very generic level of definition. On the other hand, in the subsequent phase of implementation of the programmes appropriate fora for the ongoing coordination of strategies are lacking. Naturally, the problem passes from the regional to local level, where the local government and actors must not only try to pick their way among different channels and procedures in order to fund projects, but must also attempt to shape separate policies into a coherent system, with great operational difficulties (in terms of time, admissible actions, etc.)

7. New subjects emerging between the intermediate level and the local dimension (local partnerships)

As previously stated, the evolution of rural development in Europe is distinguished by two opposite trends: one, the maintenance in certain countries of the powerful role of national government, with the programmes firmly in the hands of the national administrations; second, the overwhelming and widespread emergence in all countries of the role of local governance, with the birth and consolidation of instances of cooperation and local partnership. These two trends are not necessarily contradictory, as, for example, in the case of England, where national programmes are accompanied in rural areas by a proliferation of various local experiences.

Along with these two trends must be added a third: the emergence of an intermediate level between the regional and local level. Moreover, in certain countries these different trends co-exist in a heterogeneous framework of models of governance: this occurs in particular in countries with marked regional decentralisation, where each Region defines and implements its own programmes tailored to its history, institutional traditions, political majorities, etc. Today in Europe we see the emergence of a map of governance that assumes the configuration of a sort of patchwork. This confirms the idea that over time, governance has become

⁵ In the United Kingdom the central authority is DEFRA, which includes responsibilities for agricultural, food and environmental policies. In Germany the competencies extend to food consumption and consumer health.

something ever more complex to manage and attend to, but at the same time, is a very rich reality and in constant motion.

Here we want to highlight some of the models of this differentiated reality, also emblematic of the organisation of intervention in respect of rural development. We shall concentrate our attention on the case of Italy because in the European panorama it surely represents one of the richest and most variegated contexts in 2007-2013 planning. As we shall see, some solutions adopted in Italy are analogous to those of other countries as well.

The emergence of LEADER-like integrated approaches and local partnerships in 2007-2013

The experience of territorial projects in Italy, launched in the 2000-2006 programmes in all Regions, has been further expanded in the 2007-2013 programmes. Albeit with some differences, Italy's Regions have opted for the integrated and partnership approach, which makes it possible for local communities and the various actors to bring planning ideas to life in a given territory. The most frequently used approaches are essentially of three types: a) by sector, with a focus on single supply chains and/or sectors; b) territorial, where the focus is on the area and partnerships define the matters/sectors for intervention⁶; c) thematic, where single priority themes constitute the principal object of intervention, spanning both sectors/*filière* and single territories. In addition to Italy, such experiences are supported by the 2007-2013 plans in other countries (Critica, 2007): in Portugal through *filière* projects in the food and forestry field, and in Scotland through a contractual approach (Land Management Contracts) that attempts to integrate at a local scale the financing of the First and Second Pillars to enable the group support of agricultural enterprises. Sector type experiences are involved, whereas in our country an attempt is being made to broaden the vision to the whole territory with territorial integrated projects.

This flowering of integrated and partnership approaches must doubtless be viewed positively, even if much perplexity remains over the real will of the regions to support them and in respect of the capacity for technical/administrative backup, which turned out to be wanting in the 2000-2006 period. As stated, the emergence of these forms of local planning certainly make governance richer and more complex, severely testing the capacities of governance, already less than perfect, in the regional and national public machinery. The principal problems that emerge in terms of governance stem from the fact that such approaches require more time and human resources than more traditional one-off interventions. Moreover, territorial integrated projects and LAG plans can come to compete among themselves if they provide for the same territories. This is the reason why in some countries the integrated and partnership approach is assigned wholly to LAGs (as in the case of Ireland).

New subjects at the local level: the emergence of development agencies

Attention has been focused for a number of years – especially in the field of investigation of local development – on new subjects that are acquiring a certain role in the local dynamics of governance: Development Agencies. These subjects occupy a role between the local and/or regional public institution/body – of which they often are also in part an evolutionary form – and local operators.

The literature on Development Agencies is fundamentally drawn from two main threads of analysis: (i) that of Regional Development Agencies or RDAs; (ii) that of local development agencies, of more recent formation under the spur of European Union policies and the era of negotiated planning. Generally speaking, the existence of development agencies is justified by market failure (inability of the market to generate positive processes of valorisation of local resources and the generation of businesses/economic activities) or by failure of the State (incapacity of the public structure to manage local development programmes in an efficient and effective way). In the face of the constant failure of the State (and of the public structure

⁶ Italy's NSP has boosted this phenomenon.

more generally), the local development agency represents a flexible model of governance because it adopts objectives, roles and a structure in line with the needs of the local context; moreover, it is capable of effectively performing functions not otherwise found under the current public intervention set-up (development assistance, animation, territorial supply of services and skills, etc.)

The fact that the missions of rural development agencies can be differentiated depending on the context and policies to be implemented gives rise to variable typologies of agencies. A recent survey conducted in Italy (FORMEZ, 2002) has made it possible to classify at least three such types:

- a) formal agencies, which stem from the application of national normative provisions;
- b) territorial agencies, which take shape as a sort of outsourcing of functions pertaining to development on the part of the local public administration;
- c) informal agencies, which are created by institutional and social subjects with the aim of fostering/managing processes of local growth and of providing planning support.

More specifically, two types of agency can be distinguished in respect of the type of mission that they pursue: those of a generalist nature in matters of local development, and those specialised in certain services. The generalist agencies are of greater interest in terms of both the effectiveness of local development policies and their implications for governance processes. The strong link with local institutions allows the agencies to enter the local governance process and to occupy an important position in it, acting as a bond between institutions and the market. In doing so, the agencies perform a dual role: 1) providing support for the implementation of policies for local institutions; 2) searching for new funding opportunities for this purpose, drawing on the diverse supply of resources for local development existing in the market today (European programmes, national and regional development programmes, and resources made available by foundations, Chambers of Commerce and associations). The agencies that show the greatest capacity for introducing themselves in the local development resources market are precisely those with a higher degree of autonomy, more diversified in terms of technical support, more adept at offering themselves as suppliers of services for other territories and, finally, better able to take part in larger networks of agencies.

8. Between State, Regions and beneficiaries: the single Paying Agency

Under the recent EAGGF reform, which abolished the distinction between Guarantee Section and Guidance Section and introduced two funds with distinct missions (EAGF and EAFRD), the body entitled to disburse payments will have competencies for all agricultural spending. Previously, EAGGF-Guidance outlays were disbursed by a special paying authority that operated in the same way as with the other Structural Funds. After the reform of Reg. 1290/2005, the structural measures also go through a single Paying Agency. Reg. 1290/2005 also provides for the possibility of having more than one Paying Agency in a Member State provided that they are under the control and supervision of a Coordinating Body. Such is the case in Italy, where the national AGEA plays a dual role: that of Coordinating Body for the regional bodies created to date and that of central Paying Agency for all Regions without their own.

The regulation assigns tasks to the Paying Agency that go far beyond the mere making of payments, also including a check of the eligibility of applications and procedure for granting aids, which are usually performed by the regional administrations in charge of the programmes. In most programmes such functions remain under the same administrations, but in some cases are assigned to the Paying Agency (this is especially true of premium measures).

In any case, in planning for 2007-2013 the Paying Agency plays a greater role, especially in Regions that have created one of their own. Indeed, the Paying Agency represents a crucial element in the new rural development policy for at least two reasons:

- a) because it controls the regularity of applications for payment and represents a fundamental point in Region/European Commission liaison as regards financial disbursement;
- b) because a fair share of spending efficiency depends on the efficiency with which such tasks are performed.

This importance is even more obvious if we take into consideration that Axis IV (LEADER) spending also goes through the single Paying Agency, while in previous planning periods it was mostly assigned to LAG management. Under the new programmes LAGs are instead tasked with selecting the projects of single operators and preparing payment applications. Therefore, the management of local projects is also increasingly conditioned by the degree of efficiency of the Paying Agency.

9. Some relevant implications of the analysis of rural governance: a typology of governance model adopted by RuDI

Experience with rural development policies in Europe has shown that the models of governance in the various countries are highly differentiated in the matter of:

- a) the degree of decentralisation of planning and management functions;
- b) relations between/among the various levels involved (national, regional, intermediate and local);
- c) horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms between/among the various institutional levels in policy definition and management;
- d) the degree of diffusion of new forms of agreements for cooperation between/among institutional and socio-economic actors (e.g. public/private partnerships), tied not only to the LEADER experience, but also to other national and regional policies.

The existence of differentiated models of governance and, above all, the dynamics of governance in the various countries is strongly influenced both by national reforms of the institutional and administrative framework, and by the evolution of EU policies, particularly regional and rural development policies. Previous paragraphs have concentrated on examining the more recent phases running from Agenda 2000 to the 2007-2013 reform. The EC's influence on national models of governance of rural development is essentially expressed through:

- a) its definition of the distribution of responsibilities between the European Commission and the Member States;
- b) its establishment of rules for the planning and management of support measures, outstanding among which are mechanisms for penalising inefficient spending and mechanisms for rewarding the meeting of organisational and spending efficiency standards;
- c) the introduction of approaches and instruments that in some ways modify relations between/among the institutional actors (strategic approach and national strategy plan);
- d) the introduction of instruments that promote and strengthen local governance, including through forms of public/private cooperation able to propose and manage integrated development projects.

The evolution of EU policies has greatly contributed to shaping the configuration of governance at the various levels (national, regional and local) in the different Member States. For example, we can consider the introduction of penalisation/reward mechanisms on the governance of spending, or more cogent rules in the application of monitoring and assessment

or, finally, the introduction of minimum levels for the allocation of RDP resources among the four priority Axes as defined by the regulations.⁷

However, not all effects on the configuration of governance have been positive. After Agenda 2000, the great emphasis that the EC reforms have placed on simplification has generated controversial results, which certainly do not go in the direction of improving the systems of governance. Consider the application of the “one fund, one programme” principle, which in actual fact has cancelled the principle, in force until Agenda 2000, of the integration of EC funds and the various policies that each fund supported. The separation of funds and programmes, while undoubtedly simplifying the internal management thereof, has further weakened the links and forms of coordination between sector administrations that had laboriously been created over time thanks precisely to multi-fund programmes, thus taking a step backwards with respect to the improvements previously realised. It has in actual fact made inter-institutional cooperation no longer a priority, which is one of the fundamental conditions for strengthening the governance of public policies.

New models of governance are emerging in rural policies in Europe. This is the result of pressure from both the EU and the single States, being a product of more general trends in economic and institutional arrangements. This is producing innovations in the quality of rural policies, visible at various levels (national, regional and local). Local governance in particular exhibits the most significant dynamics in this sense.

As a result of this analysis of governance, we need a simple grid to represent the main characteristics of the differentiated governance systems in the European context. The task isn't very simple, as institutional contexts are quite differentiated across Europe (Dwyer et al., 2008). So the main methodological problem is how to represent effectively this diversity in delivery systems. Diversity can be very great and we need a focus on the main factors of diversity. A possible methodological approach is based on the main variables of governance already considered in designing the research project:

- a) the type of decision making process, especially the distribution of the decisional power between centre and periphery, that is the degree of centralisation/decentralisation of the decisions;
- b) the types of actors involved in the making of decisions. This means not only considering the administrations involved but also other subjects which can be relevant in the delivery of RDP and, more generally, of rural policies in the country/region.

It must be noted that we intentionally don't use the distinction between national and regional programme simply because it isn't very helpful in understanding the type of decision making process: we can have very centralised regional delivery and, on the opposite side, decentralised national programmes. Moreover, we will see that within the same programme a particular Axis is delivered in a centralised manner and another Axis in a completely different manner. It's much more valuable to understand what kind of approach is adopted for a measure or an Axis, independently from the regional/national nature of the programme.

For the classification according to the type of decision making process it might be studied for each measure, who is responsible for crucial decisions concerning the following sub-phases of delivery:

- a) the preparation and approval of the selection criteria;
- b) the preparation of application forms and guidelines;
- c) the collection, assessment and scoring of applications;
- d) the approval of lists of eligible applications, the financial commitment and the formal decision of approval.

These decisions are crucial for orienting the delivery in one policy direction or another.

It is possible to distinguish two fundamental situations:

⁷ Above all in favour of the LEADER approach.

- a) the first case is when the delivery system of the single measure is totally driven by the sectoral administrations, usually the structures of the Ministry/Department who is responsible of agricultural policies or more generally of the rural policy dimension (including in some case food security and environment). In such case the delivery remains fully decided within the administrative structure which is institutionally responsible at national/regional level;
- b) the second case is when a measure is delivered through the sectoral administrative structure partly sharing the decision-making process with other actors playing a relevant role in this process. There is a variety of actors whose presence and role depend on the institutional features of the country/region (agencies, public authorities like provinces and municipalities, private stakeholders). These actors intervene in one or several phases of the delivery process.

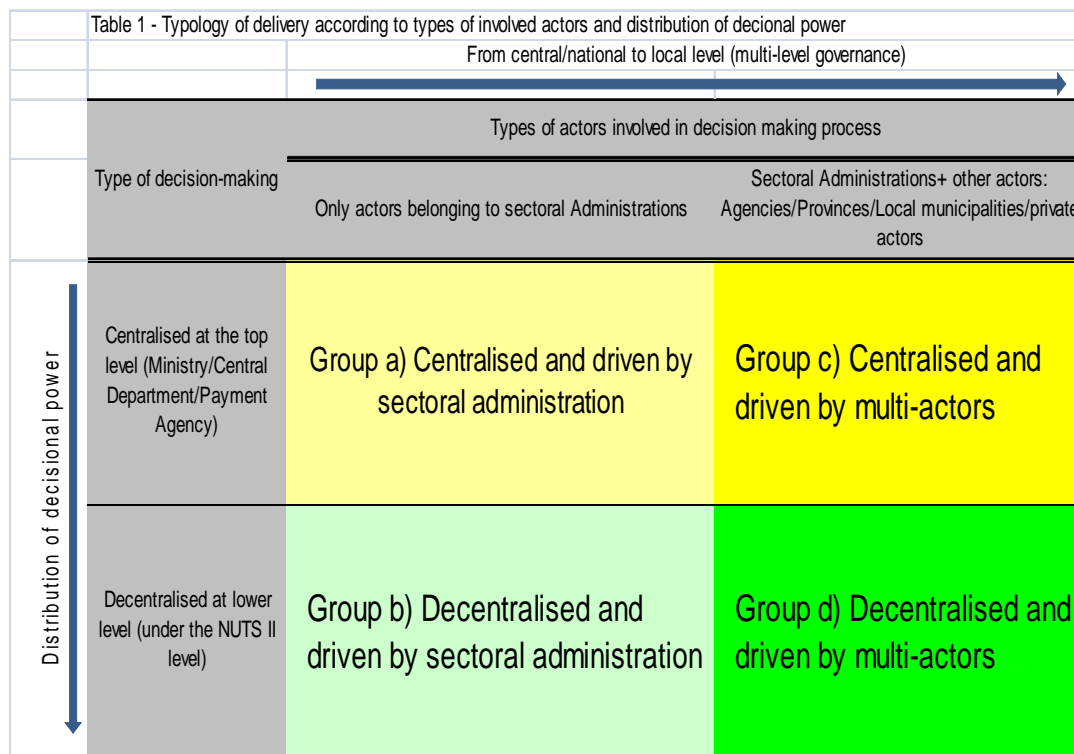
We combine the typology of actors as previously defined with the distribution of the decisional power between centre and periphery, defined by two situations:

- a) when the above decisions are totally taken at the central level;
- b) when most of decisions are taken at the lower level. We mean by “lower level” a level which is a sort of intermediate between the regional and the very local.

From combining these two variables (type of actors involved and distribution of decisional power between centre and periphery) we get a typology of governance (see table 1) which can be very helpful in classifying our systems of delivering. Four types can be distinguished, as follows:

- a) Centralised and driven by sectoral administration;
- b) Decentralised and driven by sectoral administration;
- c) Centralised and driven by multiple actors;
- d) Decentralised and driven by multiple actors.

This typology is similar to that was adopted in WP2 for the classification of institutional maps for RDP design (Dwyer et al., January 2009). But there are some relevant differences: it is based on the distribution of decisional power concerning crucial phases of the delivery and it takes into account the wider notion of stakeholders, including actors operating outside the administration identified with the Managing Authority of the RDP.



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