

SYMBIOS FINAL SEMINAR

Territorial Inclusion Planning: a European Perspective

CURVING DEMOGRAPHIC DECLINE IN LOW-DENSITY PERIPHERAL
TERRITORIES – METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSALS AND INSIGHTS FROM
NORTHERN PORTUGAL

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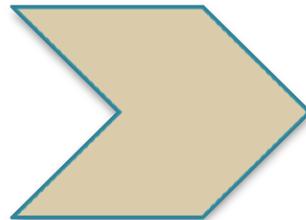
Addressing demographic decline in peripheral low density territories

what to do? (when territorial resources, services and labor opportunities tend to contract)

- invest to attract new residents
- bet on strengthening the living conditions of prevailing residents
- either ways: use and promotion of endogenous resources

The role of endogenous resources

- environment
- heritage
- people



- environmental sustainability
- employment
- local economic dynamization
- externalizing local economy
- tourism
- services for residents
- income creation
- ...

1. Squaring the circle: how to accomplish citizen's participation and political consensus while planning long-term territorial policy?

1. Recognize participatory action as a condition for public decision
2. Inscribe participatory processes in the architecture of governance systems
3. Identify stakeholders (public, third-sector, non-institutional, individuals) and acknowledge their specific agency and inputs within public governance
4. Create diagnostic tools capable of accommodating the people's inputs and "grass-roots" formulation of the problems
5. Create and "institutionalize" a transparent frame for stakeholder participation and consultancy
6. Define a communication plan that allows information transfer from central and higher ranks of political and technocratic decision to the base (general population, stakeholders)
7. All these items should lay the ground for a Governance Device considering the 3 axes:

1. Multi-level decision
2. Variable architecture
3. Intersectorial and formal/informal integration



2. The chicken and the egg: should government authorities plan in advance and discuss policy and projects with the people or previous local consultation should inform policy design?

1. It may go both ways:

- the opportunity for local consultation varies according to the nature, source and range of the projects
- most important: local participation is a fundamental condition of project and policy design, implementation and assessment, along all the stages

2. The key-issue is: an efficient governance system and territory-oriented policies demand participated processes

3. Technical issues should not be a detrimental factor of public participation:

- technical solutions should be decided according to local specificities
- local knowledge should be incorporated in project implementation
- technicalities should be “explained” to target population and participatory processes are a good way to accomplish it

3. Will participatory consultation constitute a delaying factor?

1. Only if we want hasty solutions, injudicious decisions, unaccountable resolutions, inflexible top-down governance
2. Listening to people, collectives, stakeholders, presents a time cost (as well as other financial costs), but may uphold enduring, sustainable, accountable decisions
3. A Territorial Governance Device might organize and clearly state the implicit time schedules

A proposal for a diagnostic device of low-density peripheral territories

Variables and dimensions to look at:

- economy (sector of economic activity, employment, unemployment, potential for job creation, possibilities for agricultural development, forest management, etc)
- demographic dynamics
- cultural dynamics (history, heritage, identity, social memory)
- public services provision
- service infrastructure (education, health, leisure and sport, communication, transport, etc.)
- social networking (community and institutional levels)
- political, civic and religious participation