

The role of regional authorities in the global governance of science and technology

- a specific case of multi-actor space
- trend to multi-level governance structure
- region as a specific arena ?

Problématique

- Innovation processes are field-specific, but also more or less determined by *local conditions*.
- In the eighties, the European programme MUST has underlined the *variety of national conditions for the creation and the diffusion/adaptation of technologies*.
- More recently, economic geography has contributed to better understanding of the various concepts of territory in relationship with innovation process: *districts, regional systems, learning regions*, etc.

Methodological assumptions

- regions as new *spaces*
- sometimes as new *arenas* (when there is enough political structuring)
- two polar cases:
 - *Districts* look like *de facto* governance spaces.
 - *Regional systems* (when they exist) are more to be considered as *intended* governance structures
- when the systemic dimension is weak, it is better to speak of a regional “context” of innovation.

Regional or local arenas are an interesting research site to study the multi-level aspect of spaces.

- Where *local arenas* exist they are always embedded in global ones.
- We must therefore consider *complete multi-level governance structure*, to be realistic in the analysis.
- At least three levels apply for *administrative governance* (regional, national, European).
- When addressing *other governance spaces*, the number of levels is probably higher (or undetermined).

The role of regional authorities

- Some important institutional evolutions are operating in several countries, like political *decentralisation* or administrative *devolution* process.
- Such institutional evolutions lead to a drastic increase of complexity in decision procedures, *i.e.* the creation of new spaces of confrontation and/or consensus building.
- Multi-level governance system in centralised countries: the French decentralised planning procedure introduced by the 1982 Decentralisation Law; the UK devolution trend
- The case of decentralised countries: USA, Germany, Spain

Towards a research programme

Research axes to develop through case studies:

- First, the comparative analysis of mechanisms through which regional policy makers co-ordinate with upper level authorities (multi-level articulation). What are the effects of such interaction?
- Then, the comparative analysis of the strategies of regional governments/authorities: Which ones have a real science policy and why? What are the “good” and (most interesting) the “bad” examples of innovation policies? How can successes or failures be related to other aspects of the multi-actor space? Etc.
- Specific factors: role of universities, of global firms, of specialised business services, etc...

Examples of issues

- Science policy and innovation policy: the perception of regional authorities/governments
- *Décentralisation* and *déconcentration*

Final remarks

- Even in federal countries, like Germany and USA, we increasingly encounter regionally rooted development policies and STI policies fulfilling functions which were typically “national” in the past.
- Regions are now scenes where many actors of various levels are playing.
- Consequently, “regional innovation systems” cannot be studied without considering their insertion in wider spaces.
- Necessity to study not only multi-level policy and the role of public authorities, but more generally multi-actor spaces (acting on a given region).
- Districts and universities are studied in other parts of the PRIME programme, but we cannot exclude them from the regional landscape when we observe the role and strategy of regional authorities.