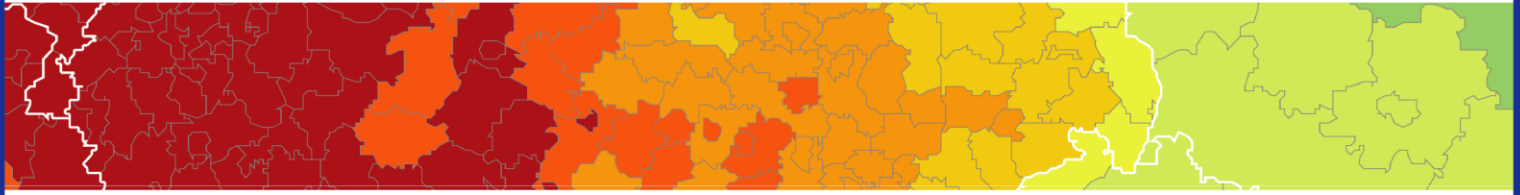


Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



ReSSI

Regional strategies for sustainable and inclusive territorial development – Regional interplay and EU dialogue

Targeted Analysis

**Annex 1 – Conceptual and methodological
framework**

Version 30/11/2017

This targeted analysis activity is conducted within the framework of the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme, partly financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

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Regional strategies for sustainable
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Abbreviations

EU	European Union
OP	Operational Plans
TIM	Territorial Innovation Models

1 Introduction

This Annex to the ReSSI (Regional Strategies for Sustainable and Inclusive Territorial Development) project provides details of the conceptual and methodological framework used throughout the project. The conceptual framework (section 2) outlines the key understandings of the project around regional economic development and the changing role of regional authorities, informed by the EU's strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive development (EC, 2010). This helps address the broader global research questions raised in the ReSSI Terms of Reference:

- **How to promote sustainable and inclusive regional development strategies**, taking into account the changing role of regional authorities and the proliferation of stakeholders in functional territories?
- **What are good practices** in delivering economic development policies in this new territorial governance framework?

The methodological framework (section 3) explains the methods applied in the project, which included document reviews, case studies, institutional mapping, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and learning. The final section (section 4) presents the case study template which, based on the conceptual and methodological framework, was used to structure the case study reports and ensure coherence between them. The objective of this was to address the stakeholder-specific knowledge needs (questions 3-6 in the ReSSI ToR):

- What can be appropriate structures that will enable **Coventry** to share resources and align policy objectives with other participants in the newly created Combined Authority?
- What can be new forms of cooperation and dialogue amongst municipalities in **Southern Denmark** around a wide spectrum of issues?
- What is the role of **Piedmont Region** in governing the change in the non-metropolitan part of its territory, to ensure that these areas are not excluded from the main development trajectories?
- How can territorial institutions in and around **Oeiras** be aligned to promote sustainable development and well-being in the region?

2 Conceptual Framework

2.1 Smart, sustainable and inclusive regional development

The core priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy (achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth) reflect the challenges faced by the European Union (EU) in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, but do not suggest specific mechanisms by which such growth might be achieved. This is a common feature of most definitions of economic development, which often focus on the desired end state rather than on the process by which economic development takes place. This lack of specificity in the processes by which economic development can be achieved results in unsatisfactory guidance to policymakers, who require a road-map of usable policy tools. With this limitation in mind, the ReSSI project investigated the processes of 'doing' smart, sustainable and inclusive development in practice. The sub-sections below present the main conceptual framework adopted for this purpose.

2.2 Promoting regional development: the interplay of governance and government in a space of flows

Territorial administration across Europe is currently undergoing numerous changes, including the emergence of new bodies (e.g. metropolitan cities and regions, inter-municipality collaboration platforms etc.), as well as the merging of entities and transfers of power, competences and resources between administrative layers. Operational Plans (OPs), the main administrative instrument employed until the 1990s, have been replaced by 'development perspectives', used as starting points for building governance coalitions in shifting territorial settings. In terms of economic development this is reflected in the turn towards territorial innovation models (TIMs). The best known of these are probably Innovation Systems (Lundvall, 1992) and Clusters (Porter, 1990). While both of these were initially conceptualised at the level of national economies, Cooke (1992) highlighted the importance of the local and regional level, based on the observation that distinctive local and regional economies developed differently within the same national environment.

Whereas these TIMs focussed on regional specialisation and accumulation, recent interest has turned to so-called 'Jacobian' spatial economies (Jacobs, 1969), where knowledge diversification, rather than specialisation and combination, are the keys to economic growth. Relevant agents include, for example, local or regional authorities or municipalities, training providers, non-governmental organisations and others.

From this perspective, regional innovation systems have been re-described as multi-sectorial platforms of 'related variety' (Frenken et al., 2007). Knowledge interaction, exchange and development amongst different business sectors are seen as platforms for creating new and radical ideas and innovations. This combination of local (near) and external (distant) knowledge (Bathelt et al., 2004) opens a new territorial policy agenda. Thus, we can envisage societies as being constructed around different flows including capital, information,

technology, organisational interactions, images, sounds and symbols. Castells (1996) proposed the idea of a new spatial form, characteristic of social practices that dominate and shape the network society, which he called the 'space of flows'. Both global and local in nature, the space of flows includes interactions amongst a variety of agents and institutions but also with the citizen. Such interactions may be 'passive' and mostly concerned with information provision, but they might also have the potential to be multi-interactive.

Reflecting these developments, planning has changed fundamentally from an implementation-led activity to a learning process (ESPON and Nordregio, 2013; ESPON and Politecnico di Torino, 2014). General planning models have been replaced by territorially specific models, which envisage and draw upon local regional potentials for change and development, using a place-based approach (Barca, 2009). These changes are often conceptualised as a turn from 'government' to 'governance'. However, existing administrative and political systems have kept previous statutory planning requirements and obligations, meaning that local and regional authorities remain responsible for disparate aspects such as welfare, infrastructure and territorial development, amongst others. The turn from government to governance did not wipe away government; the two co-exist. What has changed in the process is the *locus* of power, which must now be shared amongst a wider network of stakeholders, as noted by Balz and Zonneveld (2015) and Bogason (2003), and amongst different territorial levels – as pointed out by the growing literature on multi-level governance (Hooghe and Marks, 2001).

The project addressed these developments by seeking to discover good practice in the promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive development in Europe. Of particular interest has been the analysis of local/regional development, which examined relevant territorial endowments and cooperation, together with consideration of the intra- and extra-regional knowledge flows taking place between regional and/or extra-regional stakeholders. The ReSSI project thus focused on the *interplay* between governance and government at regional level, as mediated by the partnership agreements between the EU and the Member States within the framework of *Europe 2020: A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*. In doing so, it explored the opportunities and challenges that specific configurations of territorial governance and spatial planning systems pose to the promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive development in the stakeholders' territories and, more broadly, in the European regions.

2.3 The changing role of regional authorities

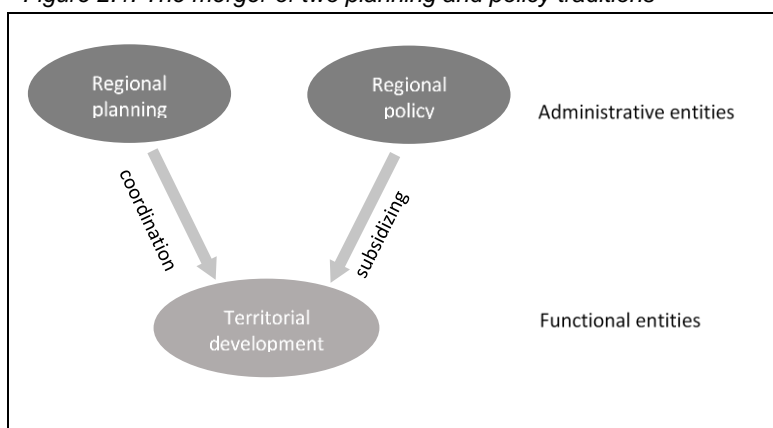
Despite the new paradigms discussed above, within the hierarchy of national, regional and local authorities the regional level has, in many Member States, been the least embedded and most susceptible to political change. This is likely due to the overlapping nature of the regional scale, which is tasked with handling both national interests at sub-national level and, simultaneously, the supra-local coordination of municipal interests (Kuklinski, 1970). As a

result, regional authorities are often tasked with mediating between national/supra-national policy and local priorities. This mediation effort is often complicated by differentials in democratic legitimacy at different governance scales. In order to shed some light on this matter, the ReSSI project explored the roles of regional agencies in their interplay with various stakeholders and across scales, including the dialogue between EU, national, regional and local territorial policies (See chapter 2 of the main report). Conceptually, this interplay was explored in the context of two ‘turns’: 1) from spatial to territorial development; and 2) from managerial to strategic planning.

The turn from spatial to territorial development represents a shift from general ideas and principles of planning to concrete ones. In this process two aspects run in parallel: 1) former top-down perspectives in regional planning and policy are balanced against a growing interest in bottom-up strategies; and 2) former general spatial models of regional and urban assets are replaced by concrete and locally specific analyses of regional assets, potentials and problems. This results in increasing attention being paid at national and sub-national level to developing ‘softer’ governance strategies (Haughton, 2010), reflecting the European understanding of territorial assets, and an increased focus on regions as *loci* of innovation and economic development (Cooke, 1992).

The approach raises the problem of how to delimit territories. Territories are increasingly defined by networking and cooperation between stakeholders situated in a coherent territory (Figure 2.1). Furthermore, geographical entities do not belong to one territory alone, but to several overlapping functional territories, some of which may be characterized as networked territories rather than coherent administrative units (Groth et al., 2011).

Figure 2.1: The merger of two planning and policy traditions



Source: authors

The turn to strategic planning refers to a communicative turn away from managerial planning executed by regulatory power and allocation of resources, to an ongoing process between stakeholders, sharing and developing common understandings of the role of the territory. Rather than being the realm of planners or local/regional authorities alone, plans become co-

constructed projects to be developed alongside a wider realm of stakeholders, all of whom bring their own visions, roles and identities. A special impetus for this turn is provided by increasing connectivity and external dependencies; opportunities and threats from the outside world often kick-off local efforts on strategy making.

In this context, plans become the product of stakeholders' design efforts, and the discourses and arguments put forward (Adams et al., 2011). Based on Fischer (1995), Balz and Zonneveld (2015) set up a conceptual ladder of arguments derived from social representations: 1) *analytical verification* on the effectiveness of policies, 2) *situational validation* on the relevance of a policy in the light of a problem, 3) *societal vindication* on compatibility of the policy with accepted political values and societal aims, and finally 4) *social choice* on the core principles of policies. The higher the level of arguments, the higher the claim for commitments by stakeholders; therefore, strategies must be identified not only by their content, but also in terms of the proposing stakeholder's commitment, reflected by their position on the ladder of policy argumentation.

In addition, the degree of participation of stakeholders can also vary. Three types of stakeholder partnerships (Table 2.1) can be identified (Skelcher et al., 2005: 1) *agency* partnerships, used to implement central government objectives at the local level, 2) *club* partnerships, building upon consensus-oriented elements from a discourse shared by stakeholders with an organisational background; and 3) *polity-forming* partnerships, the goal of which is not only to reframe developmental problems in terms of local solutions but also to engender a political community or network devoted to their deliberation.

Table 2.1: The merger of two planning and policy traditions: Agency, club and polity-forming partnerships

Aspect of partnership	Type of partnership		
	Club type	Agency type	Polity type
Discursive orientation	Elite co-decision	Managerialism	Community participation
Focus	Mutual benefits for members	Implementing central government policy	Authoritative decisions that allocate values
Legitimacy	Members organization	Central government	Community
Consent	Member organizations	Member organizations / central government	Member organizations / community representatives / higher tier of government
Accountability	Member organizations / higher tiers of government	Central government	Community / higher tiers of government

Source: Skelcher, Mathur and Smith (2005)

Furthermore, it is necessary to address regional stakeholders, not just in terms of individual partnerships, but also as a 'stakeholder-milieu' involved in regional strategies – although their motivations for joining regional partnerships will still depend on their objectives, membership of existing sub-regional partnerships, or simply comparative strength. Consequently, ReSSI examined regional stakeholders in terms of both their type and their commitment.

The theoretical understanding of the turn from government to governance, from spatial planning to territorial development and from managerial to strategic planning is well consolidated. However, the understanding of how to create plans and strategies jointly between stakeholders who are not forced to cooperate as a result of statutory obligations is less clear. In ReSSI, successful partnerships were identified and ideas on making use of 'spatial visioning' as a tool for coordination of stakeholders and design of joint strategies were discussed with the stakeholders themselves (Balz and Zonneveld, 2015; Hajer et al., 2010; Zonneveld and Waterhout, 2005). This contributed to 'turning knowledge and analysis into action', through frequent cross-fertilization between the research activity on the various cases and the direct experience of the stakeholders involved. At the same time, it allowed for the identification of good practice for the creation and implementation of smart, sustainable and inclusive policies in the stakeholders' territories and across Europe more broadly.

Overall, on the basis of the presented conceptual understanding, the ReSSI project analysed the relationships and knowledge exchange within the stakeholder regions (understood as functional territories). This was done by paying attention to the relationships that the stakeholders developed upwards (such as with European and national governments); downwards (with citizens and local delivery bodies, but also amongst components of the stakeholders' own organisations); and horizontally (direct knowledge exchange with entities such as other municipalities and regions, businesses and third sector organisations). In this light, it has been possible to observe the process of 'doing' smart, sustainable and inclusive development in practice, identifying the knowledge flows amongst governance levels, and how development is progressively imagined in this process. The specific ways in which this has been achieved are detailed in the next section.

3 Methodological Framework

The advances in thinking about regional development, and the planning turns discussed above, have consequences for addressing the ReSSI objectives. In exploring the relationships established by planning authorities, it is not enough to consider those with traditional planning actors; rather, it becomes necessary to understand the role played by other stakeholders in society, such as non-governmental organisations, businesses, the third sector and the general public. Also, it is relevant to address the interplay between real actors and institutional settings, as proposed by Scharpf's actor-centred institutionalism (1997).

In order to address the project's objectives of identifying and promoting good practice in the changing planning contexts, the ReSSI research: 1) identified the stakeholders involved in the process; 2) characterised the commitment of each participant stakeholder; and 3) described the types of partnership in evidence. This allowed for a thorough analysis of the discourses and types of polity under construction, and of the potential tensions and bottlenecks in the planning process. Thus, to conduct the research, a number of methodological approaches were utilised. Broadly, these can be divided into three main components: document review, case studies, institutional mapping, semi-structured interviews, participant observation and learning.

3.1 Document review

The first outcomes produced in the context of the ReSSI project are (a) an overview of existing governance regimes in European cities and regions, and (b) a review of the opportunities and challenges they face (see section 2 of ReSSI main report). Both these outcomes were achieved through document analysis, a systematic procedure for reviewing and evaluating scientific and policy documents (Bowen, 2009).

The analyses followed a framework approach (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Srivastava and Thomson, 2009), a research method especially well adapted to policy research, where:

- 1) The research involves clear questions;
- 2) It must be completed in a limited time frame; and
- 3) A set of issues of interest is defined beforehand.

Framework analysis is suited to addressing four types of questions: contextual (the form and nature of what exists); diagnostic (reasons for, or causes of, what exists); evaluative (appraisal of the effectiveness of what exists); and strategic (identification of new theories, policies, plans or actions) (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994). The research needs which the ReSSI project addressed fall under these categories. In terms of procedures, framework analysis involves the sorting and charting of data according to key issues and themes, for the purposes of mapping and interpretation of the phenomena under study. Through this procedure, the relevant information in terms of the most prevalent regional governance

regimes in Europe were identified, and descriptions of the opportunity and challenges for European regions produced.

Policy documents and academic literature constituted the backbone of the analyses, as they indicate the individual planning and governance approaches used in practice, and the rationales for doing so. In particular, through the analysis of relevant academic literature it was possible to identify and take stock of existing historical overviews and typologies. The use of other materials as sources of data – such as reports authored by non-governmental organisations, consultancies and interest groups – raises difficulties, as the validity of the arguments and findings presented in these is harder to assess. However, such materials can present a window into actual socio-economic practices, hinting at tensions and imperfect fit between official policies and implementation. With these in mind, non-peer reviewed materials collected and analysed were used carefully in the documental analysis.

The processed data specifically included policy documents, scientific documents and academic literature which addressed the variety of planning regimes in European cities and regions. These documents were gathered through online searches, using dedicated search engines (e.g. EBSCO and Web of Science for academic papers, Google Scholar for policy documents and other reports) as well as the ESPON projects' database.

3.2 Case studies

The second main outcome of the ReSSI project is an analysis of each of the stakeholders' territories and the planning strategies used to navigate territorial governance tensions and challenges in each case. This was achieved through the use of a case study approach. A case study consists of a research approach which allows for the in-depth investigation of contemporary phenomena, within its real-life context, and when the boundaries between the phenomena and the context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). This makes them appropriate for the study of the changing context of planning in Europe, in which the boundaries between 'what is planning' and 'what is its context' are increasingly porous, as a result of the turns towards territorial development and strategic planning.

The project employed a multiple cases approach, with either two independent case studies, or an individual case with multiple embedded units of analysis examined in each stakeholder territory. This involved the design of a common case study methodology for the four different regions, involving the same variables and data collection methods, including respondent populations, interview guides, coding, analysis, tabulation and interpretation of results.

The selection of the case studies was also guided by specific criteria. Specifically, each of the cases: 1) constitute a deliberate attempt to produce economic growth, and 2) make a specific reference to producing smart, sustainable and/or inclusive growth, as defined by the Europe 2020 strategy (EC, 2010). In the analyses of cases, the particular projects were evaluated

and the governance relationships characterized by their local, regional and extra-regional relations.

One of the greatest advantages of case studies is the use of multiple sources of evidence, utilising triangulation and corroboration to converge the data. This allowed for a number of research methods to be applied in each case study, increasing the reliability and validity of results, as well as producing more informative findings. Methodologically, the various case studies triangulated data from at least three different sources: institutional mapping, semi-structured interviews, and participant observation. These are now examined in turn.

3.3 Institutional mapping

Institutional Mapping (IM) consists of visual representation of groups and organisations in a given setting, including their relationships and importance in decision-making processes (Rietbergen-McCracken and Narayan-Parker, 1998). The objective of IM is to visualize relationships and reduce complexity, in institutional and geographical terms (Chilla et al., 2012). The reasons for employing IM are threefold: first, an analytical reason, allowing for comparisons of the basic outline of the institutional settings of each case. Second, a methodological reason, as the mapping exercise can be used to produce inventories of the institutions involved in each case, identify key players, and highlight the relevant institutions' roles and their linkages (Aligica, 2006). Finally, IM can be used for dissemination purposes, as it allows the researchers to communicate better with stakeholders. IM was therefore used as the first aspect of all the case studies for a combination of those three reasons. The data required were drawn from discussions with the territorial stakeholders (local and/or regional authorities), and from access to planning documents provided by the stakeholders.

3.4 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews are used to obtain an understanding of interviewees' perceptions, how they define situations, how they construct reality, and which meanings they attribute to events (Punch, 1998). Data analysis used a framework analysis method (Gale et al., 2013; Ritchie and Spencer, 1994; Srivastava and Thomson, 2009), as described above. The framework was shared and adapted across the various territories, in order to ensure comparability. Semi-structured interviews with a range of stakeholders were used as construction sites of knowledge, seeking to obtain descriptions of the interviewees' lived world with respect to specific phenomena involved in the planning process. This allowed for the understanding of how economies are being constructed, but also how the various stakeholder groups imagine regional economic development, and how they act to produce it. The stakeholders in each territory provided the research teams with access to and contacts with relevant actors. The researchers undertook all Interviews and organised data analysis.

3.5 Participant observation

Participant observation consists of the systematic observation of events, objects and artefacts in the setting of a research project, in order to enable researchers to learn about the activities of actors under study in their natural context (Kawulich, 2005). Participant observation is often a component of the case study approach, used to complement information collected via interviews (Kvale, 2007). In fact, the two methods are broadly complementary (Hammersley, 2006; Yin, 2009). Participant observation of relevant workshops or conferences was sought in all cases, and attended where possible and appropriate. The objective of this activity was to observe processes of decision-making and ‘doing’ planning for economic development in practice, further informing understandings of the phenomena under study. In all cases the responsibility for identifying appropriate meetings was shared by the researchers and the territorial stakeholders, with the latter responsible for obtaining access for the researchers.

3.6 Learning

The third and fourth main outcomes of the ReSSI project are a framework of good practice for the creation and implementation of smart, sustainable and inclusive development policies, and a series of proposals for developing and delivering more effective outcomes in each stakeholder region based on the findings from the case studies. Particular issues addressed concerned the identification of bottlenecks in the use of planning for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and suggestions to improve on such issues. Analytically, this involved feeding back the findings of the case studies to the stakeholders.

Based on the outcomes of the literature review, case studies and workshops, a framework of good practice was compiled, to promote policy and knowledge transfer. As part of the development of this framework, policy transfer guidance was also developed, informed by the literature review used for the overview of existing regional governance regimes developed by ReSSI, and on the results of the ESPON TANGO (ESPO and Nordregio, 2013) and ESPON RISE (ESPO and University of Birmingham, 2012) projects. This guidance provides an indication of the extent to which the framework’s recommendations are applicable *outside* the four stakeholders’ regions.

4 Case-study template

The following template (Table 4.1) was developed to ensure coherence between the case study reports. The structure of the four reports was, however, adapted to the case-specific questions and needs stated by the stakeholders.

Table 4.1: Case study template

BACKGROUND

Introduction to the case

- Location;
- Type of case
 - o strategy or project;
 - o statutory (*required by law*) or voluntary (*not required*);
 - o statutory powers or partnership agreements;
- Type of territory (*functional or administrative*);
- Actors involved and their types (*public, private, third sector, others*);
- Objectives (*sustainable, inclusive, smart or combination thereof, as per EU2020 objectives; economic, spatial*);
- The strategy which the case contributes to (*if applicable*);
- Start and finish dates (*expected or effective*);
- Spatial planning tools involved (*if any*);
- Outcomes (*intermediate*) and impacts (*final*).

Governance context

NOTE: Fit with the analysis of governance regimes in Europe

Opportunities and challenges

NOTE: Fit with the analysis of opportunities and challenges framework

CASE

External drivers (case dependent)

- Local and regional priorities (*cooperation, coordination, funding*)
- National policies and reforms (*infrastructure development, military, health, education, administrative*);
- International (*changes in division of labour, financial crisis (e.g. 2008), territorial integration (e.g. Brexit), EU regional policy*);
- Regulation involved:
 - o Where it originates?
 - o What is the relevance of that regulation?
 - o Who is responsible for enforcing the regulation?

Internal drivers (case dependent)

- Wider strategy which the project fits in (*if any*); Original driver of the project (e.g. *territorial assets, territorial problems, internal response to national or EU funding opportunities*);
- Other contextual drivers (*economic and social dynamics, administrative peculiarity etc.*)

Actors

- Agents and institutions involved
 - o Who are the stakeholders
 - o What are the stakeholders' roles (*initiators/mediators/implementers*);
 - Characterize the type agents (*Club/agency/polity*);
 - Characterize the type of setting (*Territorial - propinquity between local actors in a coherent territory; or Strategic - characterized by the relevance to implementation of a project or strategy no matter where, meaning that strategic stakeholders often are external to the region*).
-

Means

- Funding:
 - o Source(s)?
 - o Flows of funds?
 - o Recipients of funds?

Knowledge and Communication

- Communication within the network;
 - o Hierarchic/Rhizomatic (*Does the network follow the logics of statutory working relations, or the logic of relevance crisscrossing the formal structure?*)
- Knowledge (*construction of the plan*)
 - o Sources of knowledge;
 - o How knowledge travel across the network;
 - o Has knowledge changed, how, why and when (*timeline*);
 - o Who implements knowledge;
- Communicative means:
 - o Framing;
 - o Territorial analysis;
 - o Spatial visioning;
 - o Territorial development perspectives.

Collaboration, Conflict and Negotiation

- Commitment
 - o Did the stakeholders become more or less committed through the process?
 - o Was reduced commitment caused by turning general development schemes to situated development schemes (*NIMBYism*).
 - o Did a progression of commitment occur due to mutual learning about prospects of the strategy/project?
- Stakeholder milieu: closed or open?
 - o Is the local/regional stakeholder milieu characterized by existing sub-regional alliances running their own plans and strategies or is it characterized by open 'ready for cooperation' stakeholders?
- Main obstacles and bottlenecks found in the project
- Main sources of disagreement and conflict
- Negotiation strategies employed
- Successes and failures to overcome obstacles and disagreements

Analysis and evaluation (Impacts)

- Project strategy relation
 - o If it is a project: How does the project contribute to the regional strategy?
 - o If it is a strategy: How is the strategy implemented?
- Impacts:
 - o Impact evaluation
 - impacts and outcomes vs objectives
 - evaluation systems
 - o Indirect impacts (*spin-offs, new flows of funds, new private activities related to, impacts of process, financial mechanism and symbolic/cultural impacts*)

Source: authors

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