



Ambiguities of the Community-led Local Development

An Instrument Hovering Between Neo-liberalism and Participatory Democracy

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Research Project

*Under which conditions can the **Community-Led Local Development** become a tool for enhancing the **well-being** of disadvantaged residents in **deprived urban neighbourhoods**?*

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About the CLLD

- The Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is a new **area-based instrument** introduced for the 2014-2020 Programming Period of **European Cohesion Policy**
- Aimed at **involving local partners** in the design and implementation of **integrated strategies** for the **physical, social and economic regeneration** of deprived territories at sub-regional level
- Address relatively **small areas** with a population between 10,000 and 150,000 inhabitants
- Adopt an **integrated and multisectoral approach** in the definition of **place-tailored comprehensive projects**
- foster a **bottom-up approach** by organising **Local Action Groups** through which partners from the private, public and voluntary sectors are involved in all phases of the project

CLLD's Potential

- Reach **shared visions** for the future of the target area
- Generate **social and economic development** at local level
- **Tackle deprivation and inequalities**

Territorial Cohesion

“Territorial cohesion is about ensuring the **harmonious development** of all [European] places and about making sure that their **citizens** are able to **make the most of inherent features of these territories**. As such, it is a means of **transforming diversity into an asset** that contributes to sustainable development of the entire EU” (Commission of the European Communities, 2008).

Multilevel Governance

- Territorial **reorganisation of regulatory powers** along the vertical dimension (Kazepov, 2010)
- Increasing the regional **embeddedness, visibility and accountability** of the policy (Kamlage, 2008)
- Greater **involvement of civil society** in the horizontal dimension of the **policy-making process** at subnational level

Partnership

- Enhance the **legitimacy, accountability and effectiveness** of European governance, therefore increasing its **democratic quality**
- Increase the general quality of the policy → **effective problem-solving**

Local Development Approach & LEADER

- **Area-based integrated strategies** that **activate a variety of local stakeholders** through specific tools (such as partnerships), and that are mainly focused on **the attainment of long term structural changes**
- **LEADER** (Local Action Groups): **no one sector**, whether public, private or civil society, should be able to **impose its will** on the other members of the partnership

URBAN Initiatives

- **Engagement and empowerment** of the local community is a **key** factor not only for the areas' **economic regeneration** but also to **build capacities and enhance social capital** in the target neighbourhoods
- Acknowledgement that **deprivation** needs to be addressed in **an integrated and cross-sectoral way**

Rescaling

- Rescaling concerns the **nexus** between changes in the **rationales of spatial development** policy and planning, and changes in the **scalar dimension of governance** (Gualini, 2006)
- Rearrangement of modes of governance and regulation, which bring about **changes** in the **relationships between state and society** and their **influence on spatial relations** (Gualini, 2006)
- **Transition** from a hierarchical- vertical regulation towards a more **cooperative-horizontal** one have an **ambivalent nature**, precisely because rescaling is, at the same time, **legitimised by divergent ideologies**, namely neoliberalism, and participatory democracy and grassroots empowerment (Kazepov, 2010)

Divergent Ideologies

Neo-Liberalism

- New scales at which regulatory settings **may enhance the development of a neoliberal frame** for economic activities” (Kazepov, 2010)
- Promoting the **competitiveness of particular territorial locations** within a European and global context, rather than stimulating balanced urban and regional development (Brenner, 2000, 2004, 2009)

Participatory Democracy

- **Everyone** who is affected by a decision should have adequate and **equal opportunities** to be included in the **collective decision-making process** and express their preferences as to the final outcome (i.e. Dahl, 1982; Habermas, 1992; Lefebvre, 1996)
- **Empower disadvantaged people** or groups where they live, through **tailored**, and thus more **effective, interventions** (i.e. Craig & Porter, 2006; Kazepov, 2010; Powell, 2007)
- Pursue of Social Justice

Heterarchy or Hierarchy?

- **Partnerships** are constructed through a **political process**. Thus, depending to the context, they can become either a potentially **democratising and politicising** instrument, or a **de-politicising** and anti-democratic device promoting **technocratic efficiency** (Bache, 2010)
- **Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion**, because the alliances forged at given territorial scales “have a decisive influence over **socio-spatial power positions**” (Swyngedouw, 2000)
- Tension between “the promises of enhanced **democratisation through participatory governance** versus the actualities of non-representational forms of **autocratic elite technocracy**” (Swyngedouw, 2005)
- Rise of **heterarchy and the diffusion of power** OR reinforce **hierarchies and mask underlying power relations** (Bache, 2010)

Local Development for Whom?

- The **scopes and objectives** pursued by each CLLD initiative would **vary case by case depending on which kind of actors will participate** to the local decision-making body
 - The **focus** of CLLD **on local attraction factors as a leverage** for local development, the ways in which these are exploited can produce **diametrically opposite outcomes**:
 - Take advantage of **local potentials** to produce more income and employment opportunities, thus **to generate and redistribute wealth and ensure equitable responses to societal needs** (i.e. Avdikos & Chardas, 2015; Servillo, Atkinson, & Russo, 2011)
- VS**
- **Rent-seeking elites** might try to use the development process in order to **exploit local resources to generate and accumulate profit**, and possibly triggering gentrification processes, with the ultimate result of **not addressing local needs but rather augmenting inequalities** if not even displacing the most disadvantaged groups.

An Ambiguous Instrument

- The ambiguities of the CLLD clearly reflect a **conflict** between **competition goals** on the one hand, **versus equity, cohesion and balanced development objectives** on the other
- Policy **ambiguity is not merely incidental**. On the contrary, it positively facilitates the pursuit of primarily distributive objectives in the guise of a policy that should ultimately be concerned with redistribution and equality. The ambiguity **provides a cover for the political debate on the objectives** to be pursued (De Rynck and McAleavey (2001))

However, if the Community-Led Local Development aims at becoming a widespread instrument capable of bringing about a significant contribution to the inclusive and sustainable regeneration of deprived neighbourhoods in Europe, it cannot any longer hover in ambiguity

Implications for Practice

- In order to ensure that the main outcome of any CLLD initiative will be in the first place the **enhancement of the well-being for disadvantaged residents**, there is the need for a regulatory framework in which the conflicting **instances of neoliberalism and social justice are mediated**, in pursue of a **participatory solidarity economy**.
- Allow **local communities a high degree of autonomy** in determining the development trajectory of their territories
- Guarantee **common standards of inclusiveness, sustainability, and people-oriented outcomes**