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Os textos estão organizados de acordo com a sequência com que foram apresentados e incluem todos aqueles em que o seu autor ou pelo menos um dos autores (em caso de coautoria) esteve presente e assegurou apresentação. Uma vez que o envio de textos foi facultativo, o seu número é inferior ao das apresentações.

Embora tal tenha sido solicitado aos autores, nem sempre foi possível apresentar resumo em dois idiomas, nem considerar as regras de citação propostas

The *functional* gap: a reflection on the limits to institutional capital

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Abstract

Functional regions have earned a growing relevance in EU documents and proposed regulations for the EU financial framework for 2014-2020. In fact, the European Commission proposals for the five Funds of the Common Strategic Framework, as well as several other strategic documents, let believe that the concept of *functional region* may be an important tool in the design and implementation of some instruments of EU cohesion, rural development and even specific sectoral policies in the 2014-2020 financial programming period. The use of *functional regions*, as a policy tool, brings along a large set of challenges that test the limits of the institutional capital of the territories where they will be implemented. In this paper we will expand on the institutional constraints and capacity gaps that may emerge in the face of the use of *functional regions* as a policy concept and forward a set of pre-emptive guidelines towards an institutional environment that will better accommodate partnership-based *functional* policies.

Key Words

Functional regions, public policy, planning, institutional capital.

Resumo

As *regiões funcionais* ganharam crescente importância nos documentos e propostas de regulamento da preparação do quadro financeiro da União Europeia para 2014-2020. De facto, as propostas da Comissão para os cinco fundos do Quadro Estratégico Comum, e outros documentos estratégicos, deixam antever que o conceito de *região funcional* pode ser importante no desenho e implementação de alguns instrumentos da política de coesão, desenvolvimento rural e até de algumas políticas sectoriais no período de programação financeira de 2014-2020. O uso das *regiões funcionais*, como instrumento de política pública, testa os limites do capital institucional dos territórios onde serão implementadas. Neste artigo iremos debater os obstáculos institucionais e lacunas de capacitação que podem emergir do uso das *regiões funcionais* e iremos sugerir algumas linhas de orientação para a construção de um ambiente institucional mais acolhedor de políticas públicas *funcionais*.

Palavras-chave

Regiões funcionais, políticas públicas, ordenamento do território, capital institucional.

1. Introduction

The preparatory work for the forthcoming European Union (EU) Financial Framework for 2014-2020 is currently underway. Although its final outline is yet to be defined, several core differences to the previous financial frameworks can already be identified. For example, there is a major shift from a mainly sector/region-based operative philosophy to a (multi) theme-based, multi-fund, place-based operative approach. The foreseen implementation of this increasingly territorialised financial framework builds on a strong emphasis on partnership-based governance solutions. These are the cornerstone of the new proposed programming instruments such as the Integrated Territorial

Investments (ITI) or the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and are equally fundamental to the planned use of *functional regions* as a key policy concept. However, this shift is far from being a given fact. Although the emphasis on partnerships is evident throughout the proposed regulations under discussion, in the end, its impact is fully dependent on the Partnership Contract to be established between the European Commission and each EU member state for the duration of the 2014-2020 programming period.

In this paper, we will explore the potential impact of a proactive response from the member-states to the Commission's proposals. In order to do so, we will focus on *functional regions* as a policy concept. We will begin by exploring the different perspectives on the concept of *functional region*. We will later identify and discuss the main challenges of its use as a policy tool. Finally, we will reflect on how *functional* approaches to territorial development strategies represent a test to the limit of the institutional capital of the territories where they are implemented. The paper ends by systematising a set of recommendations in order to mitigate the negative impact of this limit.

2. The Policy Context: The Forthcoming 2014-2020 EU Common Strategic Framework

The development of the forthcoming 2014-2020 EU Common Strategic Framework (CSF) builds on three core elements outlined by the European Commission: the Europe 2020 strategic document¹, the Budget for Europe 2020 financial outlook² and a draft set of regulations for the future Community policies. Europe 2020 outlines three priorities:

- i) intelligent growth: to develop a knowledge and innovation-based economy;
- ii) sustainable growth: to promote a more ecological, competitive and efficient economy in terms of resources usage;
- iii) inclusive growth: to promote an economy with high levels of employment that secures social and territorial cohesion.

In order to achieve these three main goals, the Commission outlines five main objectives, framed by a quantitative benchmarking framework. Furthermore, the Commission proposes that each member state should translate Europe 2020 into national objectives and development guidelines. Europe 2020 holds many references to territorial cohesion, but its three priorities, its five main goals and also some additional flagship initiatives are outlined in a non-territorial way. In that sense, there are no explicit references to *functional regions*.

The Commission's project in line with the objectives and goals of Europe 2020 requires a Common Strategic Framework at the EU level and a set of partnership contracts between the Commission and each one of the member states. The CSF envisages to achieve the common thematic objectives and the

¹ COM (2010), 2020 final, 3.3.2010.

² COM (2011), 500 final, 29.6.2011.

intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth goals outlined in Europe 2020 via the use of the different Community funds set in place in a integrated form (art. 10, CPR).

The Community proposed regulations (CPR) aims to ensure a more coordinated and coherent use of the five Community funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

The partnership contract identifies the commitments established between national and regional partners and the Commission in view to achieve the objectives set by Europe 2020 (art. 13, CPR). These contracts closely correspond to the National Reform Programmes that the member states have to develop and implement in the context of the Europe 2020 Strategy. They set out priorities for investment, allocation of resources and targets to be achieved.

The partnership contract mirrors one of the Commission's underlying goals for the future CSF: to reinforce the territorial dimension. This objective is a clear reflection of the expansion, in the Treaty of Lisbon, of the EU's cohesion goals. In other words, alongside economic and social cohesion it is now a clearly outlined purpose of the EU to pursue territorial cohesion. Concurrently, a growing significance is being given to cities, functional geographies and subregional level interventions. This is particularly clear when we consider the territorial development integrated approaches (art. 14 [b], CPR) that the partnership contracts should consider: the Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI).

The CLLD intends to mobilise local³ potential and facilitate multi-dimensional and trans-sectoral interventions. For that purpose, the Commission suggests that member states should make use of subregional community-led initiatives. Moreover the Commission encourages member states to promote CLLDs and Local Action Groups that represent the interests of local communities⁴. The ITI are expected to come into place when multi-theme, multi-fund interventions are in order (art. 99, CPR). In retrospect, the European Commission proposals for the five Funds of the CSF let believe that the concept of *functional region* may be an important tool in the design and implementation of some instruments of EU cohesion, rural development and even specific sectoral policies in the 2014-2020 financial programming period. But what can be defined as a *functional region*?

³ “There is no definition of local in the legislative proposals, this will depend on the institutional set-up of the Member State. The important thing about the local development approach proposed is that it be community-led. Therefore the local area should have sufficient critical mass to implement a viable local development strategy and, at the same time, be sufficiently small to allow for local interaction. A delegated act will set out criteria for the definition of the area and the population covered by the strategy” (art. 29 [6] CPR).

⁴ Local Action Group “does not have to correspond to, and can cut across, administrative boundaries but how this will be organised is up to the Member States” (DG G 1 Regional Policy Team).

3. *Functional Regions as a Policy Concept*

It is nowadays acknowledged that political-administrative boundaries not always provide the best territorial framework for the design and implementation of public policy. In fact, administrative boundaries overlook, and therefore artificially break up ecological, socio-economical and cultural continuums that overlap and extend beyond those borders. In other words, *functional regions* are sub-regional spatial units, non-overlapping with political-administrative boundaries and with relevant levels of (real or potential) internal interdependency.

The conflicting nature of the mismatch between political-administrative spaces and the optimal territorial implementation frameworks for public policy has been growing. This divide results from the growing mobility of people, goods and capital, and the consequent strengthening of the interaction and inter-dependency relationships between different political-administrative territories. On top of this, we must also acknowledge the growing awareness of academics, practitioners and decision-makers to the systemic nature of many natural and human phenomena. This trend has gathered increasingly stronger political significance, namely when sub-regional policies are concerned. In fact, the growing number of inter-municipal cooperation and associativism, the emerging territorial pacts, etc., have fuelled a growing number of studies about the relationships between political-administrative spaces, neighbouring territories, functionally integrated spaces that extend beyond administrative borders and policy relevant territorial frameworks.

The growing number of supra-local but infra-regional integrated territorial interventions and the consequent new territorial forms of political organisation call for new concepts that encompass these realities and demand the production of new indicators that seek to understand and assess these new geographies. This debate has grown particularly strong in the research concerning the processes of periurbanisation, suburbanisation and metropolitanisation. For example, it is nowadays acknowledged that metropolitan areas can be understood from three very different but complementary viewpoints:

- i) their political-administrative nature: they stand on legal ground as an administrative instrument of the State, they are bound by political legitimacy principles defined through electoral processes and they overlap official statistic information collection units;
- ii) their morphological nature: based on the spatial continuum of physical phenomena such as built area, demographic density, land use, etc.;
- iii) their functional nature: defined by the interactions between the urban centre and the surrounding areas (e.g. travel-to-work commute).

The most common designation for these geographies of a functional nature is *functional regions*. The concept of *functional region* is polymorphic and multi-scale. It can be used in the context of great metropolis, of networks of mid-sized cities close to each other, or of predominantly rural regions with urban centres of small dimension. Although usable in all of the cases mentioned above, most references to *functional regions*, both in the academic and policy literature, are drawn from an urban,

and mainly metropolitan, perspective. Hence the common, explicit or implicit, association between *functional regions* and urban-rural relationships.

In other words, *functional regions* may reflect: i) a urban-rural perspective (e.g. commuting patterns, etc.); ii) a rural-urban perspective (e.g. access to public goods and services by rural areas inhabitants, etc.); or iii) a transversal perspective (e.g. integrated management of ecosystems that cross both urban and rural territories; mid and small size cities polycentric development strategies, etc.). Let us briefly review what each of these entails.

3.1. Functional Regions from a Urban-Rural Perspective

The urban-rural perspective was the first one to be developed, which justifies the greater maturity and precision of its concepts and debate, namely when we compare it with the rural-urban perspective of *functional regions*. Table 1 systematises the different concepts used in the context of *functional regions* from a urban-rural perspective. Most of these concepts evolve from a cornerstone of the definition of *functional regions* (i.e. travel-to-work areas). Table 1 aggregates information from different origins. Therefore the degree of articulation and overlap between concepts varies. The last three concepts are broader and there has not been, so far, in the literature, an attempt to further clarify their differences nor their articulation and systematisation.

Concept	Nature	Description
Travel-To-Work Area (TTWA) ⁵	Functional	Area that corresponds to the employment basin of a major city or conurbation defined by travel-to-work commute. In the United Kingdom, TTWAs mean that: i) at least 75% of the active resident population works in the area, and ii) at least 75% of those who work in the area reside in the area.
Morphological Urban Area (MUA) ⁶	Morphological	According to ESPON, MUA correspond to a urban space (NUTS-5) with at least 650hab/km2. MUAs are the densely populated urban centres of FUAs, which in turn are the employment basins defined by TTWAs around MUAs.
Functional Urban Area (FUA) ⁷	Functional	FUAs correspond to a urban area with a centre of at least 15.000 inhabitants and a total population of at least 50.000 inhabitants. FUAs are defined by their influence area in terms of TTWAs, calculated at the LAU2 level. A FUA includes one or more MUA, as well as the surrounding areas in which at least 10% of the population works within the limits of the MUA. There are cross-border FUAs, although existing data is still scarce (e.g. ESPON Metroborde project).
Larger Urban Zone (LUZ) ⁸	Political-administrative	According to Urban Audit, LUZs are based on FUAs and represent an attempt by EUROSTAT to harmonise the definition criteria for a metropolitan area at the EU level. LUZs encompass FUAs with at least 500.000 inhabitants fitted to the respective administrative boundaries.
Poli Functional	Functional	Poli-FUAs are groups of neighbouring FUAs. To identify a Poli-FUA one of the following conditions must be met:

⁵ G.C.A.L. (2010).

⁶ ESPON (2007a).

⁷ ESPON (2011).

⁸ The Larger Urban Zone: <http://www.urbanaudit.org/help.aspx>

Urban Area (Poli-FUA) ⁹		<p>i) metropolis (> 500.000 hab.) with its urban centres located less than 60km apart and adjacent employment basins;</p> <p>ii) two cities of a large dimension (> 250000 hab.) with their urban centres located less than 30km apart and adjacent employment basins;</p> <p>iii) one metropolis and one city of large or medium dimension (> 100.000 hab.) with their urban centres located less than 30km apart and adjacent employment basins;</p> <p>iv) metropolis (> 500.000 hab.) with its urban centres located less than 60km apart, separated only by the employment basin of a FUA, which is adjacent to both.</p>
Metropolitan European Growth Area (MEGA) ¹⁰	Functional	Building on the FUA concept, MEGAs cross the morphological criteria of population density with functional criteria highlighting the location of supra-national functions (i.e. transport, economic activity, control functions, territorial management and governance, etc.) MEGAs are metropolitan FUAs that individually or collectively have the population size, the economic potential and a strategic location (i.e. gateways, logistic hubs, etc.) enough to become economic growth areas at the European scale.
Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) ¹¹	Functional	Although there are methodological concerns about their outline FEMAs are defined by the different economic relationships that exist between the city and the region, such as TTWAs, housing markets, local business networks, geographical patterns of the consumption of goods and services by the population, etc.
City-Region ¹²	Functional	It concerns the city and its <i>hinterland</i> , defined by its labour market, transport networks, TTWAs, and assumes the existence of some form of supra-local government. Mainly existing in the United Kingdom.
Functional Region ¹³	Functional	The OECD defines functional region as a territorial unit that result from the organisation of the social and economic relationships in space and not by the conventional political-administrative or historical-geographical criteria. A functional region is usually defined by labour market related criteria and TTWAs.

Table 1: Conceptual framework for *functional regions* from a urban-rural perspective

3.2. Functional Regions from a Rural-Urban Perspective

Contrastingly, the rural-urban perspective has not matured as much, conceptually speaking. We must nevertheless outline the concept of *rurban*, which has been developed by the OECD, the rural-urban partnerships¹⁴ as a policy tool as well as a concept in recent research (e.g. EDORA, ESPON). From the OECD (2011) standpoint, rural-urban relationships take place at five main levels: i) exchange of services; ii) exchange of goods; iii) exchange of financial resources; iv) infrastructures connections; and v) movement of people (see Figure 1). Curiously, there are no considerations about the ecological structures and ecosystems that intertwine rural and urban areas.

¹⁰ ESPON (2007a).

¹¹ G.C.A.L. (2010).

¹² NLGN (2005).

¹³ OECD (2011).

¹⁴ ESPON (2007b).

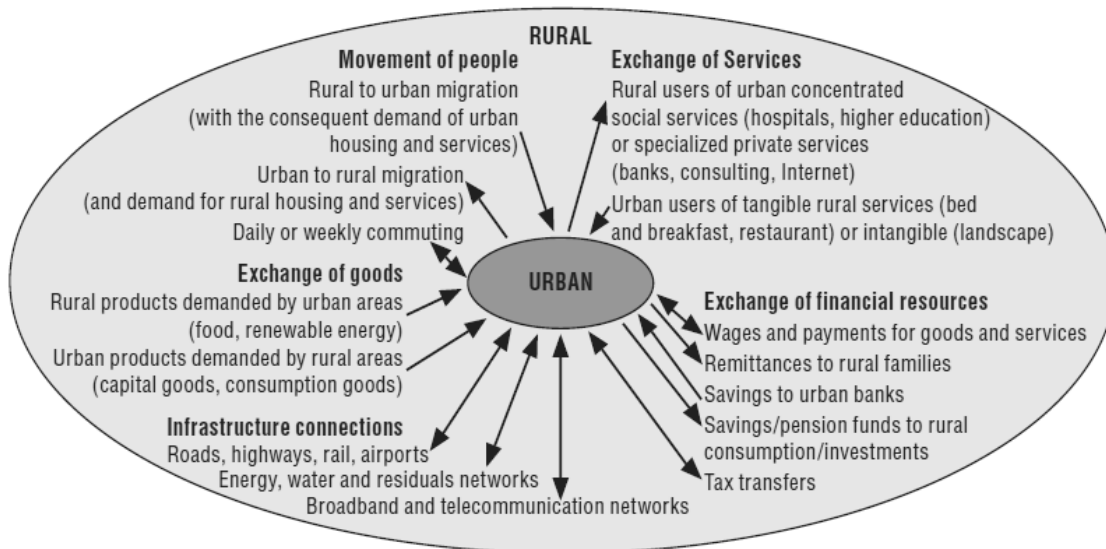


Figure 1: Rural-urban relationships (OECD, 2011)

As far as the European Union is concerned, the rural-urban relationship must be approached mainly through the creation of partnerships. The urban expansion (urban sprawl), periurbanisation, and subsequent decay of ecological systems (ESPON, 2007: 49) were one of the main reasons why urban-rural relationships were included as one of the pillars of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP, 1999).

The ESDP advocated the promotion of partnerships between cities and the surrounding rural areas in view to reinforce *functional regions*. It also called for the integration of the rural areas located near to the large cities in the latter territorial development strategies in order to promote a better functional integrated planning. However, as ESPON (2007: 55) highlights, although there is a significant body of knowledge on the interaction, exchanges and fluxes present in the rural-urban relationships, there is a surprisingly small number of related theoretical and conceptual developments. In fact, both OECD and EU (ESPON, INTERACT, FP7, etc.) have failed to develop a set of operative concepts of *functional region* like the ones that have been produced from a urban-rural perspective (Table 1). Table 2 presents a possible systematisation of the concepts that are nowadays present in the literature.

Concept	Nature	Description
Rurban area	Functional	Functional regions are the geographical spaces where most economical processes take place. Each local economy is made up of different markets – employment, housing, services, etc. –, which dynamics generate fluxes of people, information and goods that usually do not stick to administrative boundaries. To coincide the governance ‘spaces’ with the economic processes ‘spaces’ will allow to internalise the local externalities of regional policies. Functional regions should, therefore, be based on the creation of partnerships and in the coordination of policies between public and private actors.
Rurality ¹⁵	Functional Morphological	Support concept to the creation of typologies of characterisation of the distinction between rural and urban areas, using criteria such as population density, land use and accessibility to transport and communication infrastructure.
Rural Urban Regions (RUR) ¹⁶	Functional	RURs are the territorial units of the PLUREL project. They include a FUA and the surrounding rural area.
Periurban area ¹⁷	Functional Morphological	Periurban areas are defined (PLUREL) as the outcome of the development of non-continuous built areas in rural space that hold urban agglomerates with less than 20.000 inhabitants and an average population density of at least 40hab./km ² .

Table 2: Conceptual framework for *functional regions* from a rural-urban perspective

3.3. Functional Regions from a Transversal Perspective

This is by far the less developed perspective both from an analytical and conceptual standpoint. Despite the intrinsic transversal nature of the several networks and systems that crisscross and interconnect urban and rural areas, there have not been produced any specific concepts usable in the context of *functional regions*. Concepts such as *bioregion* or *ecoregion*, despite their obvious potential, have been developed in other thematic contexts that have no direct connection with the debate about *functional regions* as areas of interaction and interdependency between the urban and rural worlds.

4. Functional Challenges

The official acknowledgment by the EU and the OECD of *functional regions* as territorial frameworks of reference for the design, implementation and financing of territorial development policies does not enable by itself its use. There are significant obstacles at both the information and the policy-institutional levels.

4.1. The Information Challenge

There are substantial limitations concerning the collection and analysis of statistical data and subsequent indicators development that allow to make full use of the concept of *functional region* as a

¹⁵ ESPON (2007b).

¹⁶ Piorr, A. *et al.* (2010).

policy tool. The evolution of the indicators currently linked to functional urban regions reflects the dichotomy between the morphological and functional perspectives outlined in table 1.

Therefore, on the one hand, there are indicators that aim to identify and characterise the urban centre and its area of influence and, on the other hand, there are indicators that aim to quantify the connections, interactions and existing fluxes between the centre and its surrounding area. Overcoming this dichotomy banks on the construction of a multi-scalar, transectoral set of indicators adaptable to different territorial realities.

There is no consensual set of indicators on *functional regions*. Recent research (CES, 2012) forwards an attempt at a systematisation based on the theme, source of information, scale and objective of *functional region* related existing indicators. On top of the difficulty of finding a reliable set of indicators, there are an additional number of challenges:

- i) management of different data sources: the statistical and cartographical operationalisation of *functional regions* from the available data set requires the use of multiple sources. These interconnections are easily perceived in the FUA database, developed by ESPON. In this case, the databases of EUROSTAT and Urban Audit are associated with the georeferenced information of EUROGEOGRAPHICS (GISCO) and CODCOM (SIRE), linking both functional and morphological information.
- ii) unstable data timelines: in between data collection periods, there are occasional changes in administrative boundaries that frustrate any attempt to create a stable data timeline for a given indicator (e.g. TTWA).
- iii) information gaps: when conducting transnational comparative analysis the differences in terms of statistical data production in different countries often become a hard obstacle to overcome. For example: the minimal spatial unit for data collection is not always comparable; the date and interval of data collection are not necessarily overlapping; the geographical scale in which a specific statistical data is collected is not always the same; the comparison between different variables and indicators may identify problems in the original definitions.

The information challenge is central to the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policy. It comes as no surprise the emphasis given by the OECD through the creation of the Working Party on Territorial Indicators in the pursuit of a methodological framework that is appropriate for the monitoring and evaluation of urban-rural relationships in *functional regions* (OECD, 2011). Moreover, both ESPON with its ongoing construction of the ESPON Database 2013, as well as other research projects such as INTERCO, Territorial Indicators and Indices and SIESTA – Spatial Indicators for a Europe 2020 Strategy Territorial Analysis.

All in all, nowadays there is a strong dynamics when it comes to the production of new territorial indicators. A growing articulation of statistical information and georeferenced data allows for growingly sophisticated analyses of territorial dynamics, both morphological and functional.

Nevertheless, there are persistent fragilities in the collection and analysis of information, in particular when transnational comparative analyses are performed.

4.2. Policy and Institutional Challenges

Some of the policy and institutional challenges are immediately perceptible, such as those that result from policy integration processes. In other words, how can we articulate, in a specific territory, a *functional region*-based strategy with existing planning and development instruments? Other challenges, however, are far more deeply rooted in national institutional set-ups and political cultures. These spring from the fact that the use of *functional regions* requires an enhanced level of territorial coordination, cooperation and partnership as well as flexible and multilevel forms of territorial governance. Consequently, institutions are brought to the centre stage as a key factor in the successful use of *functional regions* as a policy concept. They are central to the effective use of partnerships, the reduction of coordination and capacity gaps behind policy fragmentation, and the ensuring of greater transparency in decision-making processes.

Institutions represent the socially and culturally legitimated behavioural expectations that can be rewarded if followed, or sanctioned if violated. In this sense, rules and their related processes are the organising tools of governance. Hence, effective institutions are those that are capable of regulating and channelling both individual and collective behaviour towards a predefined objective. Here lies the institutional capital. Ergo, *functional regions* represent a clear test to the limits of the institutional capital of the territories where they will be implemented.

5. The Limits to Institutional Capital

By taking stock of recent research (CES, 2012), we will end this paper by systematising the key challenges institutions and decision-makers face when considering the use of *functional regions* as a policy tool. We will forward a brief set of recommendations in order to mitigate existing institutional constraints and capacity gaps and to promote an institutional environment that will better accommodate partnership-based *functional* policies.

Based on a comparative transnational review (CES, 2012), at the policy/institutional level, there are seven core challenges:

- i) efficiency vs. legitimacy;
- ii) strong structural context-dependency (e.g. institutional and political culture, financial capacity, etc.);
- iii) stand alone syndrome: policy fragmentation and institutional conflict;
- iv) political accountability and ownership issues;
- v) scale-based conflicts (i.e. national, vs. regional, etc.);
- vi) uneven partners' capacity;

vii) evidence-based policy: the data challenge.

In order to mitigate the impact of the issues listed above, there are some recommendations (CES, 2012) that can be outlined:

- i) clear set of terms of reference: in order to secure that each partner knows exactly what to expect from the partnership and what he has to deliver;
- ii) clear partnership code of conduct: this a crucial to resolve from the outset; an accountability strategy has to be put in place in order to validate the decision-making process that will support the functioning of the partnership; furthermore a clear set of guidelines concerning the leadership of the partnership, how it will be executed and what are its limits, has to be clearly defined;
- iii) set of effective eligibility criteria for partners' selection: many partnerships fail due to a poor partners selection; there are different rationales brought to the table when the partnership formation is underway; facts of a political nature sometimes overtake factors of a technical and financial nature; the wrong rationale, in such a crucial stage such as the partners selection, will have a determinant impact in the outcome of the partnership;
- iv) pre-emptive partnership's cost-benefit analysis: it is important to develop such an analysis in order to make clear to the partners not only what they have to gain from being part of the partnership, but also they have to invest;
- v) evolving partnership agreements: partnerships are complex systems; they need, before anything else, to be adaptive in their nature, adaptive to unexpected contextual changes, or a specific partner's availability to engage the partnership as initially agreed; furthermore, the interaction between partners is an evolving dynamics; there is an underlying learning process between partners on how to better work together; in order to maximise the potential of this learning process, a tailor-fit monitoring and evaluation framework should be present from the very start of the partnership;
- vi) time, i.e. mid/long-term strategy: time is of the essence; the very nature of partnership creation, tuning and improvement requires time; hence, unless we are face-to-face with a group of partners that has worked in a partnership system often before, we should avoid short-term strategies.

In sum, *functional regions* have earned a growing relevance in EU documents and proposed regulations for the EU Financial Framework 2014-2020. Its implementation builds on a strong emphasis on partnership-based governance solutions. In this paper, we have briefly and by exploring the concept of *functional region*, outlined some of the principle challenges that will emerge from a partnership-based implementation of *functional* strategies. We have outlined how the latter tests the limits to the institutional capital of the different territories. Discussing and finding solutions to these obstacles is unavoidable if the referred *functional* approach to territorial development strategies is to succeed.

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