The place where streams seek ground. Towards a new territorial governmentality: the meaning and usage of the concept of territorial cohesion in the European Union

Hissink Muller, B.M.

Chapter 8 Concluding what this research aims for

Introduction

Four steps have been devoted to answering the questions posed in Part III's Introduction; five steps when you include Appendix A on methods. They explained the methodological stand of the research and how it uses discourse analysis to study the concept of territorial cohesion. This concluding chapter then does not summarise the previous chapters, but as final step consecutively describes what this research aims to achieve through such a methodological framework (§8.1), how it uses discourse analysis to be effective (§8.2), and what the upshots of the research results could be (§8.3). That is, how answering the three sub-questions leads to this research's answer to the main question 'What is the meaning and usage of the concept of territorial cohesion in the European Union?'. It, therefore, has a double goal: spotlighting the research objective to illuminate what – not this chapter, but – the previous chapters clarified.

8.1 Aiming through the methodological framework

As this phronetic research does not battle on behalf of the truth but about the status of truth (Foucault, 1980a: 132; Flyvbjerg, 2001: 125), its investigation of the (non-)existing ground for territorial cohesion primarily aims at social and spatial science – and *politique* merely indirectly (e.g. no scientific evidence, no evidence-based policy). With its Foucaultian fieldwork in philosophy it namely aims to contribute to the capacity for value-rational deliberation and action: it combines concrete analyses of and practical philosophical considerations about how a changing social and spatial reality makes sense and conflict (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 167).

This research answers the question 'Where are we going?' by delivering a critical understanding which looks to the European Union with an historical eye instead of explaining this present (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 60-61; Diez, 2001: 30). From what experts say when they talk as (contradicting) experts about official competencies, policy, funding, and shaping the debate, the distribution of the multiplicity of discursive elements in territorial cohesion's knowledges, powers, practices, and rationalities is reconstructed in an interpretative search for meaning. In so doing the research deals with social science's double hermeneutic and essential instability by analysing and interpreting the values and interests in society in an artisan manner: the discourse analysis is conducted in a framework of a constructionist epistemology and an ontological understanding of the world as meaningful. Consequentially, this research provides an answer to the question 'Is this desirable?' by expanding on the answer to the previous question, as various desirabilities are displayed. Focussing on what makes the territorial cohesion problem intractable in order to understand how it arises and roots in an organisation of social life for instance suggests how some benefit from the problem being resolved or not (Fairclough, 2003: 209-210).

This research is neither everyday nor deep hermeneutics though, but a pragmatically governed interpretation of the dubious territorial cohesion practices and their semiotic aspect (Flyvbjerg, 2001: 140; Fairclough, 2003: 209-210). From an *extra*-scientific perspective the question 'What should be done?' is dealt with in an attempt to – not to add to, but – creatively destruct the current form of science to use it differently (e.g. *fröhlicher*). This analytical project is not a search for universal theory or method, rather it is an attempt to problematise secure or totalising foundations so that practitioners (of science) no longer know what to do (Foucault, 1981, in Miller, 1993: 235; Diez, 2001: 23; Flyvbjerg, 2001: 140; 2002: 371). This discourse analysis therefore traces the whole of the territorial cohesion discourse by exploring the rules demarcating it, and maps the system of territorial cohesion knowledge and its associated practices as its parts. This individualisable group of pro/positions is scrutinised and challenged by identifying what and how knowledge is promoted through

intertextual (policy) text (Hastings, 1996: 209). Arguably, such an exposure of the contingency of underlying world-views and organisations of socio-political life (Diez, 2001: 23) calls for reflection.

8.2 The discourse analysis to hit the target with

The methodology explained makes it possible, in this research's interpretive search for meaning in political and scientific debates, to analytically separate what passes through the concept: knowledge, power, and the rationalities that link them. Because of this, the uncertainty, complexity, and conflict of the meanings and usages of territorial cohesion can be mapped by the process of discourse analytical operationalisation to trace the discourse they form. The definitions of the (proto-)concept from are mapped form linguistic and meaning-making practices through the triangle of signification as kinds of meanings and thereby taxonomises these intellectual propositions on the signifier 'territorial cohesion' in *Sinn* above *Bedeutung*. The garbage-can of power practices which holds the concept's own history stands interested besides this common ground of meaning for territorial cohesion knowledge. From stories as the only index of strategic positions in these rational trails of grouped desires the discourse analysis then extends the use of *Narrative Policy Analysis* by basally mapping the concept's bricolage usage as territorial cohesion metanarratives in four stages. Discursive articulations then indicate how discursive practices establish the discursive interdependencies which network these rhetorical organisations of territorial cohesion pro/positions together. The discourse analysis therefore uses the *Discursive Nodal Point*-perspective to structure how through thought the problematic knowledge of social and tangible reality (e.g. spatial policy analysis) reassess the concept's re-/mobilisation of bias in forms.

How can the patterns of competition in *Realrationalität* then be interpreted through the hermeneutic circle? Appenx A answers that this research methodically deals with this question by following guidelines for dis- and reaggregation of data and iteration in its crisscrossing of discourse analytical steps and by having practices as leading interpretation and gatekeepers in copy-like documentation and falsification through analytic retroduction. The reciprocally interdependent timings of, on the one hand, when to stop gathering data from documents in (digital) archives and in-depth semi-structured interviews and, on the other hand, when to close the analysis with the concept's hermeneutic horizon thereby rest on pragmatic judgement as the discourse analysis spirals through the intertextual territorial cohesion text to demarcate the discourse. That is why the rules which govern the concept's interweaving political rationalities have been set up hypothetically. The regularity of their (inter)mediating traces might then point to three ways in which the individualisation of the territorial cohesion discourse plays with multiple discourses. For its i) criteria of formation indefinite trans/formations of appropriable structures of rules define a discursive formation surface, for its ii) criteria of threshold contesting territorial cohesion policy discourses define a tightly knit discursive aggregation surface, and for its iii) criteria of correlation the way it structures through other discourses define a discursive thoroughfare surface. The research's re/construction of these discursive interdependencies that form the territorial cohesion discourse exemplifies how a realm of expertise helps to justify that and how power is exercised while its discursive structures marginalise alternative possibilities of articulation.

8.3 The upshots

Although this research involves much interpretation, it still claims that the quality of its results is higher than other similar research studies. This is due to the deep methodological module and insofar its analytical interpretations account for the detail in material, potential alternatives can be discounted, the overall account seems plausible, and it meshes with other studies (Potter&Wetherell, 1994: 63; Hoggart&Lees&Davies, 2002: 165). The proof of this pudding is of course in the eating. Note though, that this research does not represent a single objective picture of reality, but observes the concept of territorial cohesion from a decentred viewpoint

(Diez, 2001: 23-24; Foucault, 2003: 52). Without funding from the European Union and at home in spatial planning as a philosophical and critical thorn in its side, it actively distinguishes and names what happens from a relative outside (Luhmann, 1990: 73-75; Diez, 2001: 23-24).

The aim to contribute to value-rational deliberation and action through the problematisation of territorial cohesion truth influences the discourse analytical practice of classification: it does not give another interpretation of the concept but a meta-interpretation of territorial cohesion interpretations. Because the mapping of the taxonomy of territorial cohesion definitions and especially the interpretative schemes of coded problem statements constitute the largest part of the discourse analysis, the making of significant distinctions among groups of pro/positions hereby becomes the key factor. This significance follows from the critique of how these groupings link with the uneven incidence of forces (Hoggart&Lees&Davies, 2002: 8): an attempt is made to look for the arbitrariness or inherent inconsistency of the common ground of territorial cohesion meaning and how the concept's systematic uncertainty also entails an indecision about the power practices producing territorial cohesion knowledge (e.g. does the concept have own power practices and/or does it rule the games of its area of action?). The detailed maps might then present how the concept's rich problematic pictures an epistemic and strategic solidification of interconnections between expert language, thought of ideas, facts, and power relations. The usage of an explicit positive ground to question this interpretation of territorial cohesion would thus miss the point, as this research criticises all versions of the true interpretation.

For this research it neither matters that a multitude of classifications of the concept nor that multiple visions of the territorial cohesion discourse are feasible (Hoggart&Lees&Davies, 2002: 8). Besides that this individualisation would only define hypothetical rules for the current (inter)mediating rationalities, the research tries to evoke reflections upon the status of its own discourse analytical outcomes. This research namely calls for comparisons of the territorial cohesion discourse to other theories and a placing of its tactical reciprocity of knowledge and power in wider structures. Such a reflection would strategically value the concept insofar it hinges on the integration of territorial cohesion expertise in how our regime of truth functions in our understanding and exercise of power. In so doing, this research cannot but problematise its own discourse analytical interpretations, as it promotes that these lead to a general questioning of why some interpretations are right or wrong, or if everything is mere interpretation and no interpretation may promise to be anything more than just that. Hence, this research's ultimate upshot attempts to stir up your own thinking about the role of science in the governing of our society with the question of what social science refers to if not studying stories with scientific methods.