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.

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Part II  The usage of the concept of territorial cohesion

Introduction

This Part of the discourse analysis of the concept of territorial cohesion is concerned with the second sub-question of this research: how is the concept used in the European Union? Its usage then forms the “earthly matter” of this neologism’s realm of expertise. To understand what the concept thereby means in practice, this “empirical” Part focusses on power practices by analysing how the concept’s usage plays out in concrete administrative, political, juridical, scientific, and theoretical behaviour. As such standpoints take place in government, a tracing of territorial cohesion’s conceptual history turns into a mapping of the topo-/geography/metry of powers of the concept’s “battlefield”.

Yet, this analysis thereby reconstructs the usage side of the concept’s multiplicity of discursive elements just as Picasso’s (1922) Glass of Absinthe structures the surface, contents and environment of a café table top congruent with the rectilinear picture field. Here the form of everyday reality is “shattered” by inserting its concrete signs ‘in the abstract armature of lines and textured planes’ (Kurlander, 1998). The chaotic usage of territorial cohesion is thus ordered as if it were through the lucid interpretation of an absent minded armchair scholar. What does this then imply for the reinterpretation of the territorial cohesion power practices when the following five chapters map out for what and how the concept is used?
The territorial cohesion battlefield comes forward through the power performances of the government that tries to re/organise institutional spaces, by re-mobilising bias for instance (see Chapter 2 and 6). Both the content of territorial cohesion and the basic institutional framework that forms its context are complex though. The concept could namely be ‘derived from the policy sphere’ (Hamez, in Campbell, 2005: 401) ‘to generate consensus’, for which ‘[r]azor-sharp criteria are not always helpful’ (Faludi, in Faludi, 2005a: 5). The debate on territorial cohesion could nonetheless ‘lay important groundwork for future decision-making and thus bring abundant choices, problems and uncertainties with it’ (Husar, 2006: 101-102).

Then again, although this debate ‘does not continuously include nor does it regularly update the stakeholders at the Community level’ (Husar, 2006: 98), different interests and motivations seem to stand behind the broad democratic and political consensus that backs the concept (Tatzberger, 2003). Note that these different interests can (partly) make up territorial cohesion through bricolage, that is, with the concept as a re/organisation of the tools and materials in its context (see Chapter 6). Much then forms the multiple openings for these different territorial cohesion and contextual interests: the multi-level structure where heterogeneous institutions cooperate closely, the constant questioning of who may officially do what, the rampant infranationalism and comitology, the shifting agendas, and the absence of a centre of power and imposed order (see Chapter 1). Of course also some interests run against the concept. Robert (in Faludi, 2007) even says that territorial cohesion became topical while ‘numerous obstacles were accumulating to counteract its implementation’. Material interests thus do matter, ‘but they matter all over the place and in many competing ways’ (Roe, 1994: 27). How does this research then map how a limited usage of territorial cohesion can institutionalise into a limiting usage?

You could employ the garbage-can model to represent this organised chaos of interests (i.e. rational trails of desires) with problematic preferences, unclear technology, fluid participation, and a usage of the concept for proximate goals through various windows of opportunity. However exact this might accord with reality, it will hardly order the interrelated complexities, uncertainties, and polarisations of territorial cohesion and its context in a simple and therefore instructive way. A reinterpretation of them at a higher level of abstraction thus sounds reasonable. With stories as the only indication of territorial cohesion power practices, this research then traces their patterns with an extended usage of Roe’s (1994) Narrative Policy Analysis (again, see Chapter 6).

Stories then point to issues, interests, positions, and the (necessary) conditional events for the concept’s usage. Even actors (e.g. authorities) are thus seen as included in stories that reveal, for instance, positions taken up. The ones often mentioned are three of the European Union’s standard formal institutions (see Chapter 1): two of the core, the European Commission, with the Directorate-General for Regional Policy, and the European Parliament, and one other, the Committee of the Regions. You can therefore compare the stories on the usage of territorial cohesion to a commentary of a game of chess as played in Carroll’s (1871/2010) Through the Looking Glass: no players, but just pieces and a board that together form the deployment. What begs the question on what field the reinterpretation of the texts on the territorial cohesion battle draws its abstract armature of lines and textured planes.

As also in this battle heterogeneous forms of rule (i.e. programmes) transform regimes of power practices, multiple mechanisms of influence are assessed. From European spatial planning as the departure-point of this research’s analytical stance four programmes of power come forward for the analysis of the actual “power games” around them (see Chapter 3). The field of territorial cohesion then seems to consist out of four different “chessboards” for dispositions as well. We therefore are not attentive to one game (i.e. chess), but four different ones with their own rules, patterns, and playing field – e.g. football, American football, Australian football, and

* Geschichten in both the sense of story and history. Historical stories (e.g. about sovereignty) for example intertwine both perspectives for political usage (e.g. Foucault, 2003). Tolstoj (1868) for instance countered the stories of historical causal explanations of the war between Russia and Napoleon and argued “it was not Napoleon or the Russian state but the sum of all the individual decisions on the ground level that determined the outcome.”
Florentine football, to stay with four different games which have the same label for what is used in it. The caveat though is that these four games do not perfectly overlap with these four programmes of power.

The four different spheres of action that the power programmes point to are concerned with: i) auctoritas (i.e. juridical programmes of competencies), ii) potestas (i.e. administrative programmes of policies), iii) pecunia (i.e. financial programmes of funding), and iv) politique spirituelle (i.e. mental programmes of thought). The four different areas in which territorial cohesion is used, however, are: i) Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs), ii) the process that lead to the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and continued thereafter, iii) Regional/Cohesion policy, and iv) the European funds. Still, each of these four usage areas does show a different "game of government" with its own conflicts, actions upon actions, strategies, and goals.

Because the IGCs are clearly an official area, as their debates lead to Treaties that – might not really define competencies, but – ‘set out tasks’ or ‘purposes’ for European cooperation (Hooghe&Marks, 2001: 26; Faludi, 2003b: 129), this usage area matches auctoritas and how it forms politics proper. Also the European Funds usage area matches with an area of action, the pecunia one that is, because the European funds are clearly a financial area concerned with money-flows. Both the (post-)ESDP process and Regional/Cohesion policy usage areas, however, match with potestas. Yet, while Regional/Cohesion policy is formal (i.e. supranational, backed by a Treaty), the ESDP process, and thereafter the Rotterdam process towards the 'Territorial Agenda' and the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network (ESPON), is informal (i.e. largely intergovernmental, not backed by a Treaty). These two administrative areas of action can therefore be separated according to in/formality. The four usage areas can then be arranged in the analytical quadrangle shown below.

The analytical quadrangle points to the connections between the usage areas. The IGCs usage area can then be placed on top because it plays a large role in what is a formal policy and what not. The European Funds usage area can be placed on the bottom because it plays a large and, arguably, the most concrete role in the implementation of European policies, at least when it concerns formal ones as Regional/Cohesion policy. Besides the Region/Cohesion policy usage area in-between, the (post-)ESDP process usage area can be placed more to the side, because it is informal and plays a much smaller role in directing where European funds go. The research thus maps out the usage of territorial cohesion according to this analytical quadrangle.

Still, this leaves us with politique spirituelle. However, since the label of 'territorial cohesion' is relatively new in European policy making, the focus on the concept's usage often shows the ways in which conceptual innovation plays a role in (institutional) changes in politics, policy, funding, and knowledge production. This area of action is thereby concerned with representations and frames, and thus with the territorial cohesion

\* Hereafter also 'Agenda 2007', as this Territorial Agenda was to be adopted in 2007.
meaning/knowledge and discourse respectively (see Part I and III). Although politique spirituelle might thus glue the other three spheres of action, and therefore the four usage areas, together, here its concern with concepts is more important. That is to say, for now it is enough to understand that every usage of territorial cohesion in each usage area suggests a politique spirituelle.

The next five chapters then interpretatively describe the usage of the concept. This was only possible after reconstructing the practices, what this research did with an extended usage of Roe’s (1994) Narrative Policy Analysis (see Appendix C until F). The description in each of the first four chapters below is thus based on how this research ordered the many stories told. As this was done systematically, each time the focus was on opposing expert viewpoints to identify the concept’s systematic uncertainty. Also the same four kind of stories each time return in the same kind of order (see Appendix C): the stories were per usage area differentiated in i) general stories that frame it, ii) stories that structure territorial cohesion metanarratives (by being on the concept itself) or the narratives with an own dynamic without the mention of territorial cohesion, and iii) these metanarratives and iv) narratives themselves of course.

In these overviews you can see the aggregations of the concept’s strategic positions in the bundles of metanarratives. Because the four usage areas then reveal for what and how the concept is used, Chapter 15 can outline the whole territorial cohesion usage field according to all the metanarratives. This conclusion on the concept’s common ground for decision-making thereby further structures and/or partly readjusts the order of the analytical quadrangle shown above. We might thereby start to understand the arena and the rules of the ‘territorial cohesion game’.