

**Multilevel governance dynamics
in the Western Mediterranean:
Lessons learnt
from the Medgovernance project**

Battistina Cugusi and Andrea Stocchiero

Rome, July 2010



Project co-financed by the
European Regional
Development Fund

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 60 years, the process of European integration has generated a significant change in European governance, where competences “have slipped away from the central state to the supranational level”¹. This shift of competences has had a direct impact on the sub-national level for two main reasons. On the one hand, the European level has become the dominant player in policy areas of sub-national competence such as, for example, agriculture, trade and economic development². On the other hand, what happened is not a simple shift of competences but a re-distribution of authority among several tiers of government, including the sub-national one. Thus, the European integration process has opened up areas for regional authorities and other sub-national actors to participate in drawing up and implementing European Union (EU) policies.

These dynamics may be analysed through the lens of the multilevel governance (MLG) approach. The main contribution of this approach relies on having stressed the need to analyse the European decision-making process as a “set of overarching, multilevel policy networks”³, involving not only governmental authorities but also sub-national governments and other sub-national actors. The European decision-making process is then described by MLG theorists as being multilevel and multi-actors, where actors other than the central government deal with the supranational level and enter into the “EU Game” without the ‘permission’ of the State. “In a direct confrontation with intergovernmental state-centrism, even in its liberal version⁴, the proponents of the MLG challenged the contention that non-state interests could aspire to make their impression on EU policy making only by operating through state representatives, that is, that they could not successfully challenge the “gate-keeping” capacity of central state”⁵.

The check-list used to analyse a multilevel governance framework is mainly composed of the following elements: “Different levels of governments are simultaneously involved in policy making [Vertical governance]; non-governmental actors are also involved, at different governance levels [Horizontal governance]; the interrelationships created defy existing hierarchies and rather take the form of non-hierarchical networks [Interactive governance]”. Multilevel governance cannot be understood solely through the lens of the division of powers: the re-distribution of authority does not take place rigidly, but in a dynamic and contested way, characterised by the interaction between the different kinds of policy actors at the different levels.

For a long time the MLG approach was applied almost exclusively to the realm of the cohesion policy, where the policy prescription of the ‘partnership principle’ – requiring the involvement of the most relevant stakeholders in all phases of the programming process – has opened up new areas of actions for sub-national authorities. In particular, the adoption of the partnership principle in programming and managing Structural Funds established the right of regions to participate in the multi-level governance of European regional development, shifting part – with significant differences between Member States - of the authority from the central to the lower level.

Although relevant, the case of the cohesion policy does not give an exhaustive explanation of the real participation of sub-national entities in the European decision-making process.

¹ Marks G. et al. (1996), *Competences, Cracks and Conflicts: Regional Mobilization in the European Union*, *Comparative Political Studies*, 29(2):164-192

² Hopkins J (2007), *The Future of Sub-National Government in a Supra-National World – Lessons From the European Union*, *VUWLawRw* 4; (2007) 38(1) *Victoria University of Wellington Law Review* 19

³ Marks G. et al. (1996), *op. cit.*

⁴ Moravcsik A. (1994), “Preferences and Power in the European Community: A Liberal Inter-governmentalist Approach”, in S. Bulmer e A. Scott eds, *Economic and Political Integration in Europe. Internal Dynamics and Global Contexts*, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers, pp.29-85

⁵ Piattoni S. (2009), *Multilevel Governance in the EU. Does it work?*, Paper presented at the Conference “Globalization and Politics: A Conference in Honor of Susanne Berger”, MIT, May 8 and 9, pp. 5-6

The re-distribution of authority between tiers of government is uneven across policy areas⁶; and can assume different aspects depending on the Member State. Thus, there is not a single but multiple types of multilevel governance systems.

The analysis conducted within the framework of the Medgovernance project⁷ - several case studies have been carried out in the thematic priority fields of the project (environment; migration; transport; culture; innovation)⁸ - can give a valuable contribution in presenting the multiple features of multilevel governance dynamics in the Mediterranean.

To this regard the contribution of the project can be twofold. On the one hand, the analysis conducted can shed light on the multilevel governance dynamics in the Mediterranean and on the role played by the regional level in the EU policy making process. On the other hand, the results of the analysis can also help in identifying those factors that mostly influence regional positioning in these dynamics.

In order to reach these aims, the paper will be divided into two parts. The first part will be concentrated on presenting the results of the case study carried out in the environmental field and which deals with the implementation of the Natura 2000 network. Interest in this case study relies on its being an instance of multilevel governance according to the points identified by Piattoni⁹. Promoted on the European level, the implementation of Natura 2000 network can offer interesting foresight to understanding multilevel dynamics in the Mediterranean, its main features, strengths and constraints. The investigation followed a multilevel and multi-actor approach, aiming to analyse vertical (multilevel linkages), horizontal (participation of different stakeholders) and interactive (interlinks across the levels and between the different kind of actors) governance dynamics that emerged in the implementation of the network. The case study was carried out through desk analysis, interviews (26) and focus groups with relevant stakeholders at the European, National and Regional levels (involving the different regional partners of the project).

The second part of the paper will try to identify those factors that mostly influence regional positioning in the multilevel governance dynamics in the Mediterranean. For this purpose, the results of the case study carried out in the environmental field (the Natura 2000 network) will be compared to the outcomes of the analysis carried out in the migration and innovation field.

Finally, the conclusions summarize the main issues and needs to improve multilevel governance in the western Mediterranean.

MULTILEVEL FEATURES OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK

Natura 2000 is a top down-led governance system, having been designed at the European level with the intention of setting up a European ecological network¹⁰. Launched by the Habitats Directive in

⁶ Perkmann M. (2002), Policy Entrepreneurs, Multilevel Governance and Policy Network in the European Polity: The case of EUREGIO.

⁷ Medgovernance is a European territorial cooperation project. Its objective is to carry out common regional policies at the Mediterranean level in the following key sectors of development: Competition, Innovation, Environment, Transport, Migration, Mobility and Culture. Medgovernance comprises six regions of France, Italy and Spain, and high level research institutes charged by regional authorities with providing a scientific and technical foundation to common orientations. The purpose of the project is to become an instrument for policy makers in order to support the institutional building of a macro-region in the Western Mediterranean area (Medoc) with common policies in key sectors as the starting point. For further information: [www.medgov.net].

⁸ Tourret JC, Wallaert V. (2010), *Mediterranean governance report*, April [http://www.cespi.it/Nuovo%20Sito%20CESPI/GOVMED/Medreport_Executive_Summary.pdf].

⁹ Piattoni S. (2009), op.cit.

¹⁰ The establishment of these networks of protected areas also fulfils a Community obligation under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which commits participating parties to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010.

1992¹¹, the Natura 2000 network is composed of *Specially Areas of Conservation* (SACs) and *Specially Protected Areas* (SPAs), already established by the Birds Directive¹².

Governance of the network assumes a vertical dimension, involving different levels of government. Natura 2000 is one of that case in which the EU “has a considerable say over the substantial content of policies”¹³. The priorities, organisational and implementing rules of the network, are established by the Birds and Habitat directives. In this context, the European Commission (EC) maintains a role of guidance. In practice, the EC assures the harmonisation of the documents to be prepared by Member states (such as the Monitoring report) and gives support in evaluating the conservation status and in the monitoring of the Natura 2000 sites. For this purpose, the EC takes part in meetings of the Habitats and Ornis management committees and related working groups, involving representatives of the competent authorities of all the Member States. Moreover, the EC exerts a control over the implementation process by opening infringement procedures against those Member States that do not abide by the requirements of the Directives.

Nonetheless, as stressed by Perkmann¹⁴, “The Commission has no implementation agency and therefore relies on the Member States to implement its measures”. The implementation process of Natura 2000 sees an active participation of regional authorities. However, the multilevel features of Natura 2000 are uneven among the Member States, especially as far as the subdivision of competences between the national and the regional levels is concerned. In the process of national transposition of the Directives, the implementation process may differ considerably from one Member State to another. As underlined by the study on the “Follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for spatial development and territorial cohesion” of the Policy Department of the European Parliament: “[...] there is no doubt that EU environmental policies do have an increasing influence by setting conditions for territorial developments and policies, also in urban areas. This is, for example, the case with the Natura 2000 network where the sites are formally designated at national level and imply the transposition of the Habitats Directive into national law (Article 23 of the Habitats Directive). The spatial implications of EU legislation will depend to a large extent on the implementation at national level, the local situation and the type and scale of the problem”¹⁵.

The results of the analysis conducted within the framework of the Medgovernance project stressed that the decentralisation process represents a critical factor in explaining the involvement of the regional level in this policy field. In the case of a top down-led governance system like Natura 2000, domestic legislation applies in the absence of an explicit policy provision requiring regional authorities to acquire a prominent role in the implementation process. Natura 2000 directives do not contain any requirement in this sense, but simply ask for a participatory approach to be put in place. Thus, in principle, from a community level point of view regional authorities are not very different from any other territorial actors (on the vertical and horizontal levels).

Nonetheless, in those domestic contexts where an advanced decentralisation process is in place, Natura 2000 has shown that top down-led governance systems with a strong territorial dimension can have a direct impact on the role of regional authorities, increasing their responsibilities and competences. In Italy, for example, the deepening of the decentralisation process has brought about

¹¹ Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora.

¹² The Habitats Directive recognises 198 habitat types, 480 species of plants and 226 species of animals as being of Community interest and requiring special conservation areas to safeguard their future. These habitats and species complement the 181 bird species (and other migratory species) defined under the Birds Directive as being in need of special protection measures.

¹³ Perkmann M. (2002), op. cit., pp. 3.

¹⁴ Ibidem, pp. 3.

¹⁵ European Parliament, Policy Department Structural and Cohesion Policies, (2007), “Follow-up of the Territorial Agenda and the Leipzig Charter: Towards a European Action Programme for spatial development and territorial cohesion”, Directorate General for Internal Policies of the Union Policy. Department B: Structural and Cohesion Policies, REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT, European Parliament, Brussels, December.

a change in the subdivision of competences between the central and regional levels, with the former assuming a role of coordination and harmonisation and leaving to the regions the main responsibilities on the implementation of the network. On the contrary, in more centralised countries such as France, Natura 2000 presents different multilevel features, being the implementation process under the control of the central level or of its local representatives (de-concentrated authorities).

Box 1 – The decision-making process in the Natura 2000 network

Under the Birds Directive, Member States select the most suitable sites and directly designate them as Special Protected Areas (SPAs). Since 1994 all SPAs form an integral part of the NATURA 2000 ecological network.

On the contrary, Special Areas of Conservation are designated in three stages. Each Member State must draw up a list of sites hosting natural habitats and wild fauna and flora previously identified by the Directive and listed in its annexes.

On the basis of the national lists and by agreement with the Member States, the Commission will then adopt a list of Sites of Community Importance (SCI), that means “a site which, in the bio-geographical region or regions to which it belongs, contributes significantly to the maintenance or restoration at a favorable conservation status of a natural habitat type in Annex I or of a species in Annex II” (art. 1 (l)). No later than six years after the list of SCIs was adopted, the Member State concerned must designate it as a Special Area Of Conservation.

Member States must take all necessary conservation measures to guarantee the maintenance or restoration, at a favourable conservation status, of habitats and/or the populations of species in Special Areas Of Conservation. Member States may decide whether to prepare appropriate management plans for the sites or eventually decide to integrate conservation measures into other development plans.

The implementation of Natura 2000 in France, Italy and Spain

In Italy and Spain, implementation takes place above all at the regional level. In both cases, regional authorities (Italy) and autonomous communities (Spain) are the main competent authorities of the Natura 2000 network. In these countries, the Natura 2000 directives were first transposed into national legislation and then into regional laws (see table 1). The regional level is the one mainly responsible for the implementation of the network, and as such its tasks consist of selecting and proposing the SCIs and SPAs, providing technical support, contributing to the monitoring of the Natura 2000 sites, carrying out the environmental incidence evaluation, defining and implementing the necessary conservation measures of habitats and species, and managing the sites.

The Italian and Spanish ministries of environment ensure the relationships with Brussels and play a role of coordination and guidance, as well as of harmonisation of the implementing process among the regions (Italy) and autonomous communities (Spain). For this purpose, for example, the Italian Environment Ministry drew up guidelines for the preparation of the management plans of SCIs and SPAs.

In France, instead, the implementation process is mainly driven by central administration and in particular by the Ministry of Ecology, Sustainable Development, Energy and Sea (MEDEM) and the DREAL (Direction régionale de l’environnement, de l’aménagement et du logement), that is the regional representative of MEDEM placed under the authority of the *préfet*.

Table 1 – Natura 2000 National Legal Framework

Medgovernance partners	National legal framework
Italy	- <i>Presidential Decree no 357 of 8 September 1997</i> (modified by Presidential Decree no. 120 of 12 March 2003). This represents the implementing regulation of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. Furthermore, this regulation specifies the subdivision of competences among the main actors involved on the national and regional levels
Spain	- Royal Decree 1997/1995 of 7 December, on measures to contribute to guaranteeing biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora - Royal Decree 1193/1998 of 12 June, modifying Royal Decree 1997/1995 of 7 December, on measures to contribute to guaranteeing biodiversity through the conservation of natural habitats and wild fauna and flora - Act 42/2007 of 13 December, on Natural and Biodiversity Heritage
France	- The Birds and Habitat Directives have been transposed in French law and notably within the Environment code: 3 decrees and the 2005 law on the Rural Territories.

Table 2 – Natura 2000 Regional Legal Framework

Medgovernance partners	Regional legal framework
Latium region	- Decree of the Regional Council no. 2146 of 19 March 1996, which approved the list of the SICs to become part of the Natura 2000 network; - Decree of the Regional Council no. 1103 of 2 August 2002, which approved the guidelines for the preparation of the Management Plans and the sustainable regulation of the SICs and SPAs
Catalonia	- Act 12-1985 on natural sites in Catalonia - Act on the environmental assessment of programmes and plans A16820-16830
Andalusia	- Law 7/2007 of 9th July, regarding the Integrated Management of Environmental Quality (GICA)
Provence Alpes et Cote d’Azur	None
Piedmont region	Regional Law no. 19 June 2009 “Testo Unico sulla tutela delle aree naturali e della biodiversità” (Consolidated Law on Natural Areas and Biodiversity).

The involvement of horizontal actors

In all Medgovernance partners, the implementation process of Natura 2000 has formally sought the creation of significant interlinks between the competent authorities (both at the central and regional level) and horizontal actors. However, this has not led to the establishment of a real participatory process, either in centralised or decentralised contexts, where the responsibility of the involvement of these actors relies on regional authorities. So, in the case of Italy for example, horizontal actors (mainly academics, NGOs and experts) have been involved mainly when external expertise was required to integrate the competences of regional/central authorities.

The Piedmont region has been supported by experts and academics and by the IPLA (Istituto per le piante da legno e l'ambiente), an in-house institute of the Region Piedmont. Also the Latium region

has made extensive use of external expertise. In particular, identification of the areas saw the involvement of different kind of actors, such as consultants and environmental NGOs, universities and of those organisms (*Enti Parco*) responsible for the management of national or regional protected areas.

Also when structured participatory processes had been foreseen, the involvement of horizontal actors was not systematically organised but rather sporadic. In the Piedmont region, for example, drafts of the management plans should be finalised through a participatory approach involving municipalities and other local stakeholders. In the opinion of some of the stakeholders interviewed, implementing this participatory approach would not be an easy task. In recent years, the Region already attempted to communicate the draft SCIs to local authorities without receiving any response from them. Moreover, given the political sensitivity of the implementation of the Natura 2000 network, the Piedmont Regional has postponed organisation of the meeting until after regional elections.

Also in France participation of relevant territorial actors (local and regional authorities, environmental NGOs as well as fishermen, hunters, farmers) was specifically sought by the French strategy on the implementation of the Habitats Directive both in the identification and in the planning of the DOCOB, the strategic document defining the objectives and identifying the projects to be implemented for all the Natura 2000 areas. Thus, the DOCOB should have been drafted within a dialogue process involving local actors, gathered, since 2005, within a Steering committee named COPIL, managed and coordinated by a local authority (chosen by the *préfet*). Nonetheless, the central level would have maintained a control over the process since the DOCOB should be finalised by the local *Préfet*.

Actually, due to delays in the launching of the process and to the need to avoid that an infringement procedure be opened against France, Natura 2000 areas were identified by the central government and more precisely by the Regional Directorate for Environment (former DIREN). Stakeholders from the PACA region confirmed that this first step involved very little dialogue with local actors.

THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK: LESSONS OF MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE

The case of Natura 2000 has shown that the supranational level can open up areas of action to the regional level. Since the launch of the network, the responsibilities concerning implementation has shifted progressively from the central to the regional authorities; redefining the sharing of powers and competences between the national and the sub-national (mainly regional) tier. Nonetheless, this is not an automatic result, but rather linked to the domestic constitutional framework and more precisely to the degree of the decentralisation process in place. The involvement of the sub-national entities have not been promoted by the supranational level, as in the case of European cohesion policy. The Natura 2000 legal basis does not foresee any explicit requirements in the sense of strengthening the role of the regions in the implementation process of the network. The central level then represents an important gatekeeper for the involvement of the region in the implementation process of Natura 2000, challenging the theorists of the MLG and supporting the claims of intergovernmentalism.

Similarly, in the drawing up of the policy (ascending process of EU policy making), central governments remain the sole legitimate representatives of the domestic interests. Notwithstanding the role played by regional authorities in the implementation of the network, the interactions between these actors and the supranational levels are weak. At the Community level, the Habitats and Ornis committees and related expert groups organised within the framework of the respective Directives are the main venues for competent authorities to meet and discuss. The subnational level does not take direct part in these committees, which are reserved to representatives of Member States at the Ministerial level. Moreover, structures putting together regional authorities and/or

other territorial actors actively involved in the implementation of the Natura 2000 network do not exist. This does not mean that the instances of the regions are ignored, but that they are mediated by the national government representative. The ascending process finds a first moment of negotiation through national coordination mechanisms among regions and central government (such as the Conferenza Stato-Regioni in Italy) and then between the central government and the supranational level.

Notwithstanding this, regional authorities can establish direct contacts with the supranational level. Actually, other complementary – and sometimes conflicting - points of entry in the EU decision-making policy are possible. Participation of the subnational level in the European decision-making process is also due to their ability (policy entrepreneurship) “to take advantage of windows of opportunity opened by other policy actors, for instance specific policy programmes”¹⁶. For example, “Regional players are increasingly making themselves heard and pushing for their interests to be taken into account through a wide range of direct contacts with the European Institutions. The large number of regional representations in Brussels bear witness to this, as do the numerous European regional and local associations and networks”¹⁷. Moreover, “the networked structure [such as for example, Euroregions or Interreg management committees] of EU policy making enables and encourages ‘grass root’ policy entrepreneurs to position themselves as policy addresses and implementation units”¹⁸.

But interviews with representatives of the European Commission revealed that very little policy entrepreneurship from the part of regional authority in this field exists. Moreover, there are very few examples of trans-national or trans-regional cooperation in this area, although some of the territorial cooperation programmes did and still recognise the possibility to implement transnational or interregional cooperation projects in this field.

On the contrary, the case study on Natura 2000 puts an emphasis on the entrepreneurial ability of environmental organisations, more prone than regions to move across levels and collaborate with the different tiers of government involved in the implementation process. In Italy, Environmental NGOs, such as for example WWF –Italy and the LIPU (Lega Italiana Protezione Uccelli) have collaborated both with the regions and the central government in the implementation of the network while at the same time maintaining a direct channel with the supranational level and exploiting it to exert an influence on the Italian central government. It is worth stressing that in certain cases, the denunciations of these organisations were also at the origin of some of the infringement procedures opened against Italy by the European Commission.

MAIN ISSUES AT STAKE IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NATURA 2000 NETWORK

There are several open questions on the implementation of the Natura 2000 network, directly linked with its multilevel features.

As seen in the previous paragraphs, in decentralised contexts such as Italy and Spain, the regional level represents the competent authority in the management of the Natura 2000 areas, although they have not participated in the negotiations process that led to the definition of the policy. In the decision-making process, their interests are mediated by the national government.

Implementation of the network suffers from the weak involvement of the subnational level in the drawing up of the policy. For example, regional authorities and subnational stakeholders, in general, lamented that at the early stage of the implementation process of the network, the lists of the sites

¹⁶ Perkmann M., (2002), *op.cit.*, pp. 6.

¹⁷ Schneider M. (2009), “The increasing Importance of Territorial Governance to European Integration”, in *Towards Multi-Level Governance in Europe?*, The Cahier of the CoR, Volume I, pp. 37-40, pp. 38.

¹⁸ Perkmann M. (2002), *op.cit.*, pp. 6.

identified by the Natura 2000 directives reflected more the peculiarities of the species and habitats of the Northern member states than those of the Mediterranean area. In this case, one may assume that the central governments of the Northern Member States had been more successful in negotiating the lists of the species and habitats of community importance than the Mediterranean ones. And it was only at the later stage, with the enlargement to comprise new Mediterranean countries (Greece and Spain), that the original lists could finally be modified. This issue caused many problems, especially in the first steps of the implementation process where the identification of the sites had to follow the requirements of the directives.

The coordination role of the central government seems to be weak also at the domestic level. In the case of Italy, for example, the guidelines prepared by the Ministry of the Environment have not ensured a sufficient degree of harmonisation of the management plans of the sites. As their requirements are quite broad and in the absence of supervision by the national authority, the process of transposition of the national guidelines into regional ones was quite discretionary. This has created a great diversity in the way existing management plans were defined by the different Italian regions.

When it comes to the management of the sites, regional authorities would have, in principle, the ultimate responsibility. But they do not have the financial and human resources to manage the areas in an efficient and effective manner.

Actually, financing is one of the main issues at stake in the implementation of Natura 2000 Network. The provisions of the Habitat Directive establish that the responsibility for the management of the Natura 2000 areas lies with Member States. At the same time, the Habitat Directive recognises that due to the unequal distribution of species and habitats among Member States, some of them could be exposed to a bigger financial burden than others. For this reason the possibility of a community co-financing has been foreseen by the Directive. In the absence of a specifically dedicated fund and considering the link between Natura 2000 and the other policies (in particular with the Regional and Rural Development policies), Member States have used the funds available in different Community financial instruments (see Box 2). This situation was also reiterated in the 2007-2013 programming period. A communication of the European Commission, and a related working document, has better specified the way the different European Financial Instruments could contribute to Natura 2000, giving particular emphasis to the management-related issues¹⁹.

In a context where resources are scarce, many of the interviewees consider the European funding as the main financial mechanism for implementing Natura 2000. Interviews have not led to making an exact estimate of these resources. However, it is worth noting that many of this funding (see Box 2) comes from the resources dedicated to regional and rural development, which are, at least in Spain and Italy, directly managed by the regional level.

Finally, the weak involvement of local authorities as well as local population and stakeholders is another issue at stake. The analysis has shown that local authorities and populations are scarcely aware of the Natura 2000 network. Actually, the weak involvement of the local population and, in many cases, of local authorities represents one of the major problems in the implementation of the Natura 2000 network either in decentralised (e.g. Italy) or centralised (e.g. France) countries. Most of the time the local population ignores the existence of Natura 2000 or does not understand the peculiarities of this kind of network. At other times, the implementation of Natura 2000 has caused problems with local populations (e.g. Latium²⁰, Piedmont and PACA regions), which consider the SPAs and SCIs an imposition coming from external actors (the national government and European Union).

¹⁹ Communication From the Commission, to the Council and the European Parliament, Financing Natura 2000 Brussels, 15.07.2004, COM(2004)431 final
[<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2004:0431:FIN:EN:DOC>].

²⁰ See for example: [<http://www.lavocedellago.it/n45/pag2.htm>].

Furthermore, it is worth stressing that regional authorities are more sensitive to local constituencies than to national and European obligations. In this sense the governance between local authorities and regional bodies is highly interlinked with horizontal governance as well as with local power coalitions and corporations. Consequently, a stronger horizontal governance is needed. Top down policies need democratic legitimisation and solid roots in local territories.

Box 2 : Community Funds and Initiatives available for supporting Natura 2000²¹

EAGGF: Through Rural Development, the fund offers support for environmental farming (Articles 22-24 of Council Regulation (EC) 1257/99), for farming in areas under environmental restrictions (Article 16 of Council Regulation (EC) 1257/99, as amended by (EC) No 1783/2003 and forestry practices in rural areas all over the EU territory. These measures apply in Natura 2000 areas as well. Moreover, following the 2003 CAP reform, Article 16 applies only in Natura 2000 areas. All Member States provide some support for farmers within Natura 2000 sites, to a greater or lesser extent.

ERDF: The Fund offers the possibility for co-financing investments within the framework of environment programmes, measures and schemes for nature conservation as long as they contribute to overall economic development of the region

ESF: The Fund offers the possibility for co-financing types of actions like training, promotion of employment opportunities, etc.

LEADER+: This Structural Fund's Initiative allows for the implementation of integrated rural development programmes for selected areas. These programmes can include management planning and actions as well as promotion and information measures for the Natura 2000 sites.

INTERREG: This Structural Fund's Initiative allows for trans-boundary co-operation between Member States, as well as between Member States and non-EU countries, and has been used for the promotion of enhanced management of trans-boundary sites between Member States as well as with non-EU countries. It has proven to be an important source of funds for trans-boundary projects.

Cohesion Fund: This fund is currently available only to three countries, Spain, Portugal and Greece, and aims at assisting these countries to make progress in environment and trans-European transport networks. The Fund provides support to projects rather than programmes. Environmental support from the fund has been used so far to a lesser extent for facilitating some restoration and management projects for Natura 2000 in Ireland (which was eligible up to 2003) and could be an appropriate possible source of funding.

LIFE: The LIFE instrument comprises three components: LIFE-Environment, LIFE-Nature and LIFE-Third countries. Although the resources available for LIFE are rather limited compared to ERDF and EAGGF, the instrument has been used by all Member States and facilitates projects for a great number of stakeholders. LIFE-Nature provided pump-priming investment activities related to site set-up and experiments in restoration and new management techniques. About 10% of all Natura 2000 sites have been supported. LIFE-Environment has been used by relatively few Member States for habitats management, particularly in cases where other environmental functions are also relevant (e.g. wetlands, coastal ecosystems), mainly for time-limited investment, but not for ongoing management.

FACTORS OF REGIONAL POSITIONING IN THE MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE DYNAMICS

The analysis carried out in the framework of the Medgovernance project offer some interesting foresights for identifying the factors that may influence the role of the regional authorities in the multilevel governance dynamics in the Mediterranean. For this purpose, the results on the case

²¹ Communication From the Commission, to the Council and the European Parliament, Financing Natura 2000 Brussels, 15.07.2004, COM(2004)431 final, op. cit.

study on Natura 2000 are compared with those analyses carried out in other thematic priorities of the project: migration and innovation.

As seen in the case of the Natura 2000 network, authority is shared by different tiers (European, National, Regional) of government with regional authorities playing a crucial role in the implementation process. When other policy areas are concerned, multilevel governance dynamics could be considerably different.

Regarding innovation policies, regions are well positioned in the decision-making process, both in the drawing up and in the implementation of such policies. They implement policies to create and support Regional Innovation System and Innovation Poles, in partnership with central governments and the European Commission.

In the field of immigration policies, instead, there is an exclusive competence of the central level. States maintain sovereignty on national and territorial security, controlling the borders and the inward and outward flows of persons. In this field, regional authorities have no power in the decision-making process and in the implementation of measures dealing with the management of migration flows; although they play a strong role in the process of integrating foreigners in their territories.

The role of regional authorities in the governance dynamics of the Mediterranean largely depends on the degree of sensitivity of a particular policy area. So the high political sensitivity of security issues, such as immigration, slow down the process of power sharing among the diverse levels of governance. On the contrary, in the case of environment and innovation policy areas, central governments are more prone to concede and share powers with the European Commission and the sub-national level. Central governments are aware of the micro-macro interdependencies in environmental phenomena and of the increasing relevance of globalisation²² in social, economic and innovation processes, and they open the doors and ask for the multi-level governance systems to be put in place.

These interdependencies have scale dimensions that require appropriate levels of governance. Regions have a clearly decisive role to play in local and inter-local interdependencies such as micro-environmental systems. But they are acquiring a more important positioning also at national and trans-national levels due to the connections with meso and macro environmental systems. This is the case of the Natura 2000 site's network, where in many cases regions are the competent authorities in the process of creating a coherent European network of protected areas.

The same applies also in terms of the increasing interactions between micro, meso and macro social and economic systems that are constituting the globalisation processes. In the case of innovation policies, for example, there is a growing awareness on the need to connect the Regional Innovation Systems with not only trans-national, but even global pipelines. Literature analyses the internationalisation of the innovation systems²³: “[...] innovative firms often consider the world for new knowledge, depend on global markets, technology and skilled workers elsewhere, and innovation processes increasingly surpass national borders as a result of enhanced cross-border technology transfers via technology-intensive trade, an increasing number of international strategic technology alliances, multinational companies pushing on the trans-national organisation of R&D, and the involvement of marketing, manufacturing and R&D units of firms in innovation process”²⁴.

²² Swyngedouw E. (1992), “The Mammon Quest, Glocalisation, Interspatial Competition and the Monetary Order: the Construction of new Scales”, in Mick Dunfor and Grigory Kafkalas (eds.), *Cities and Regions in the New Europe: the Global-Local Interplay and Spatial Development Strategies*, London, Belhaven Press.

²³ Carlsson B. (2006), “Internationalisation of innovation systems: A survey of the literature”, *Research Policy* Vol 35 (1).

²⁴ Kuhlman S. and J. Edler (2003), “Scenarios of technology and innovation policies in Europe: Investigating future governance”, *Technological Forecasting & Social Change*, 70.

It comes out the opportunity to promote the building of Trans-Regional Innovation Systems²⁵. Regions may define and implement policies to promote trans-national linkages among innovation drivers operating in their territories, comprising multinational companies as well as SME clusters. Transnational linkages should sustain the creation and strengthening of value chains that insert local actors and territories in the global scenario through the participation in trans-national networks.

Nonetheless, the results of the analysis have stressed that regional positioning in the multilevel governance dynamics of the Mediterranean may change over time.

In the case of immigration policies, the evident connection and complementarity between the control on migrant flows and their integration in specific place-based social and economic fabrics has required a stronger coordination between central governments and regions. In Italy, for example, regional authorities are more and more involved by the central government in negotiating quotas of migration flows according to the local demand of labour (but with scarce consideration on social absorption capacities).

The European integration process²⁶ represents another of the factors having pushed towards a more important regional positioning. The analysis of Natura 2000 demonstrates how over a 20-year period of time, the responsibilities between the central and the regional level have changed considerably, with the latter having acquired most of the competences related to the implementation of the network. Moreover, the relevance of the innovation issues in the current (2007-2013) programming period of structural funds has put an emphasis on the concept of the Regional Innovation System and consequently has strengthened the role of regional authorities as important drivers of innovation.

The strengthening of the regional positioning in the governance dynamics also depends on the availability of resources. In the case of Natura 2000, for instance, regional authorities responsible for the implementation of the network are confronted with several constraints. The efficient and effective management of the Natura 2000 sites is at stake, due the lack of the necessary financial and human resources. Concerning the immigration and asylum policy area, the regions the most affected by migration flows ask for more resources to implement facilities dedicated to migrant reception as well as the possibility to share the burden of receiving asylum seekers with other regions. Similarly, in innovation policies peripheral regions ask for more resources and opportunities to connect their territories with knowledge centres located at national and supranational levels.

Thus, the regional positioning in multilevel governance dynamics requires being coupled with the strengthening of the solidarity principle, that is a balanced and fair burden sharing among the levels of authorities involved in the process of policy making.

At the same time, the process of regional positioning requires the horizontal dimension of the governance to be reinforced. Multi-level governance dynamics could be considerably influenced by stakeholder coalitions. The so-called 'Not-In-My-Backyard' (Nimby) syndrome can be taken as an example of these dynamics. In the case of the Nimby, local population refuses the implementation of policies in their territories that may cause environmental problems and reduce their perceived well-being, even if some compensation measures could be foreseen. Various social and

²⁵ It refers to the "... strategy of firms seeking and combining external, trans-local and international knowledge with their own. In these cases, firms construct global pipelines, making use of internet sources, seminars, research magazines, academic contacts, resource persons in research institutes, global inter-firm alliances, and discussions with suppliers, clients and competitors elsewhere. Global pipeline strategies thus comprise learning-by interacting with trading partners located elsewhere in the world ..., and learning-by cooperation in networks, with firms involved in the same branch, chain or a related industry, and with academics, consultants and other "strange ducks". (Visser E.J. and O. Atzema (2007), *Beyond clusters: Fostering innovation through a differentiated and combined network approach*, Utrecht University). Andrea Stocchiero (2007), *Towards a Convergence of Innovation and Internationalisation Regional Policies and Actions in the Mediterranean Basin*, CeSPI, [<http://www.cespi.it/RIM/Rim-Convergence.pdf>].

²⁶ Featherstone, Kevin and Radaelli, Claudio M. (eds.) (2003), *The Politics of Europeanization*, Oxford Scholarship Online: November.

environmental movements have protested against what they considered highly invasive transportation infrastructures (see for example the case of high-speed rail in Val di Susa²⁷), the establishment of nuclear plants or of highly pollutant industries and toxic-waste dumps. But, as seen in the previous paragraphs, local stakeholders have also contested the implementation of conservation measures foreseen in the framework of the Natura 2000 network.

Also in the case of innovation policies resistance by local constituencies may be detected. Innovation means changes in the regional and local social and economic fabrics and determines a re-structuring process²⁸. The resistance of diverse social and economic coalitions against innovation processes require governance mechanisms to be put in place in order to find a consensus through measures to accompany transformations reducing the negative social impact.

Multilevel governance does not imply political coherence, but it has to manage conflicts and balance different political directions with potential contradictory effects. In the field of immigration, some regions and local social coalitions support a more open stance towards migration requiring less restrictions on flows and more resources for the implementation of integration measures, while others ask for more circulation (in the sense of promoting returning flows) and limitation of migrant inflows with poor and circumscribed integration measures. Moreover, the literature has stressed the incoherence of a rigid, restrictive and security affected immigration policy that increases irregular migration²⁹ and makes social integration in local contexts more difficult and ineffective³⁰.

In conclusion, ineffective or non-existent participative and communication policies may undermine regional positioning in the multilevel governance dynamics and lead to conflicts of interest with local stakeholders. The actual involvement of local populations becomes an unavoidable element in multi-level governance. Regions and local authorities have a fundamental role to play in nurturing public discussion on top-down and bottom-up policy building. Descending processes should go hand in hand with ascending governance processes, as well as vertical with horizontal governance.

CONCLUSIONS

In the Mediterranean, regional authorities have acquired a significant role in many policy areas. In the case of Natura 2000, regional authorities actively participate in the implementation of the network, concentrating – in decentralising contexts such as Italy and Spain – the main competences in this policy area. The setting up of the network on the EU level has thus contributed to the strengthening of the regional role, by leading to a redefinition of the linkages between those actors and the central level. Actually, since the entering into force of the Birds Directive and even more with the Habitat Directive, the central level has transferred many of the responsibilities related to the identification and managing of the Natura 2000 sites to the regional level, maintaining a role of coordination of the network.

The European integration process should be considered an important factor when analysing the regional positioning in Mediterranean multilevel dynamics. Furthermore, the growing interdependences in environment phenomena and the increasing relevance of globalisation in social,

²⁷ Higgins J. (2010), *Important "No Tav" Campaign Opposes Environmental Destruction By Eu Funded Plan*. Val di Susa, Italy. 27 February, [<http://socialistworld.net/eng/2010/02/2701.html>].

²⁸ Mokyr J. (1997), *The Political Economy of Technological Change: Resistance and Innovation in Economic History*, Department of Economics, Northwestern University, March.

²⁹ De Haas H (2007) , *Turning the Tide? Why Development Will Not Stop Migration*, *Development and Change*, Volume 38 Issue 5, November.

³⁰ Irving Jackson P. and Parkes R. (2006), *Globalization and the Secularization of Immigration Policy. Competing Influences on Immigrant Integration Policy in Germany, France, Britain and the United States*, Rhode Island College, Center for European Integration (ZEI), Germany, *Human Architecture: Journal Of The Sociology Of Self-Knowledge*, Iv, Special Issue, Summer.

economic innovation processes has also favoured the strengthening of the role of the regions in these dynamics.

Nonetheless, these are not automatic results. The case of Natura 2000 shows that in centralised contexts such as France, multilevel dynamics are quite different with the central level maintaining a control over the implementation of the network and the regional one playing a marginal role. Moreover, these dynamics are not easy to develop in highly politically sensitive policy areas, such as immigration.

The analysis has also shown that the strengthening of regional positioning in the multilevel governance dynamics is in many cases still incomplete. As the case of Natura 2000 has stressed, the lack of financial resources is one of the main issues at stake. The interaction between central governments and regions at the domestic level should be improved, with more supervision and less discretions coming from regional and local inabilities or different political sensitivities. Also trans-national cooperation should be strengthened for better territorial cohesion and environment protection.

In addition, some Mediterranean regions have increased their awareness on the need to be involved in the drawing up of policy, considering the top-down inability to elaborate a strategy appropriate for the different environmental, social and economical characteristics of their territories. The descending process of the top-down policies from the EC to central governments and then to the regions and local authorities should be coupled by a stronger ascending process.

Finally, regions should substantially improve their capacity to promote horizontal governance, nurturing public discussion and managing social and economic conflicts in a stronger local democracy. They have to mix top-down policies with bottom-up processes in order to increase the local ownership and policy's legitimacy. Public debate should increasingly cover the framing of regulations on the solidarity principle application. Consensus building at local and regional levels with a deeper awareness on interdependencies and trans-national cooperation is needed for sustaining the process of European integration.

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