

***“Strategic Observation and Partnership. The case of ACCEM’s
Observatories”***

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Abstract: The present paper analyses the starting out of local partnerships focused on the mutualisation of the information and the territorial diagnosis. It discusses the potentialities and the limits of these partnerships as the basis for the development of shared actions by the entities involved. It’s specifically questioned the role of this type of observatories for the development of the intelligence and the territorial governance. The work rises from the comparative analysis of the processes of starting out and development of three main territorial observatories of ACCEM in the last decade. As these observatories are organizations in permanent evolution it will be stress the analysis of these kind of processes in such a changing diverse institutional and socioeconomic contexts.

1. INTRODUCTION

The final version of this paper will present in the first place the socioeconomic and theoretical background that lead to the development of ACCEM observatories. Secondly it will sketch the theoretical framework where the promotion of these observatories as instruments for the development of the territorial intelligence and territorial governance can be better analyzed. Thirdly, the methodology and tools used by ACCEM on the promotion of the local observatories will be described. In the fourth place it'll be presented the difficulties that have been found on the implementation of this methodology and in the use of the tools as well as its main consequences for the global action. Main potentialities of these tools will be also discussed.

In this summary we are going to address main first, second and fourth topics. Third section about specific tools is widely developed in the Power Point presentation.

2. ACCEM OBSERVATORIES PREVIOUS BACKGROUND

Nowadays ACCEM is present in ten Spanish Autonomous Communities and every year attends more than 9.000 immigrants with very different socio-economic profiles. ACCEM activity has exponentially increased along the last decade.

In the mid 90's, the economy and employment crisis context affecting practically all the countries in the European Union, but especially Spain, hindered in a great extend the socioeconomic insertion processes of the beneficiaries' of our association. Facing this situation the organization thought about a change in its intervention philosophy that coincided with the beginning of its extension process: from being fundamentally centred in the individual necessities of the beneficiaries and in the defence of their interests and rights as a cluster, moved to outline their social action with a wider focus linking the immigrants' socioeconomic insertion with the territorial development processes in the areas where they were settling. This performance logic confronted ACCEM with a great diversity of regional and local socioeconomic contexts, the lack of information on the target intervention population was a common denominator, together with the lack of information of local socioeconomic indicators and information on the group of agents developing actions of similar or complementary nature in the intervention area. The lack of coordination of the plans, programmes, projects and actions carried out in the territory were the predominant tonic. The complexity of the situation was accentuated by the processes of decentralization and delegation of social action started by the public powers which led to a great fragmentation of the actions in the territory.

From the association point of view all these factors impeded the elaboration of an integral diagnosis on the situation of ACCEM beneficiaries in each area and in consequence in all the organization, what hindered the management at a global level, especially the designing, the follow-up and the evaluation of the actions. From the territorial perspective, all these processes of lack of information and lack of coordination among the agents operating in the territory outlined a problem of territorial governance that was very far from being solved.

3. TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE AND TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

In the other hand, another important feature of the social context of the middle of the nineties was the emergence of what was called the “knowledge society”⁶⁹. If territory is defined as a space with actors in which production and appropriation of resources occur, in the knowledge society the first resource that needs to be the object of this production and appropriation is the knowledge that exists throughout the territory, as well as the processes which contribute to its creation. In particular, knowledge “of the territory” and of the “action developed in the territory” is converted into knowledge of paramount importance for directing the action in favour of territorial development.

Therefore, with regard to territorial governance, territorial intelligence can be defined as all knowledge relating to the understanding of territorial structures and dynamics, as well as the tools used by public and private actors to produce, use and share this knowledge in favour of sustainable territorial development. From this perspective, territorial intelligence is a tool for territorial governance; however both concepts have a complex relationship according to E. Morin (1992), since, in their turn the evolution of territorial governance promotes the development of territorial intelligence. The driving force behind this feedback process is the participation of the actors. The intensity and quality of the participation is what determines the way in which both processes feed off each other.

In fact, if good territorial governance basically refers to “sharing what we jointly know and have as a result of our diversity and then undertaking coordinated, coherent action”, territorial intelligence provides feedback for that process by means of analysis and joint evaluation of the action developed through diversity, resulting in new shared knowledge which allows an improvement in the action. In the knowledge society, where learning is shared, both are faces of the same coin.

Nowadays, thanks to the development of new information and communication technologies, there is an enormous amount of information available and a great many very

⁶⁹ “The idea of the “knowledge society” was first used in 1969 by university professor, Peter Drucker, and in the 1990s it was entered into more deeply in a series of detailed studies published by researchers such as Robin Mansell or Nico Stehr. [This idea arose] at almost the same time as the concepts of “learning societies” and “lifelong learning for all”, which is not exactly a coincidence” (UNESCO, 2005:61). The knowledge society goes well beyond the concept of the information society. The latter is an instrument of knowledge, but not knowledge itself. The latter would be the result of the interpretation and critical analysis of the former and of the ability to draw useful conclusions, both for its practical application, and for living lives, which in A. Sen’s familiar expression “are worth living” (SEN, 1992). It is at this point that the concept of the knowledge society establishes a link with that of human development, with the twin facets of this understood: creation of life opportunities and development of the freedom of choice. Knowledge proves to be of paramount importance as much for one component as for the other. The information society refers to the technological; the knowledge society affects much wider social, ethical and political dimensions. Perhaps the most significant expression to summarise the role of knowledge since then is that attributed to M. Serres: *knowledge is now the infrastructure*. As Pierre Lévy (1994) explains, the point is that the principal characteristic of knowledge societies is that we have recognised that knowledge is everywhere and intelligence is distributed universally (no one has all the knowledge and everyone has some): the knowledge society is conceived as a society which is nourished by diversity and ability.

sophisticated tools for collecting, processing and analysing it. The development of territorial intelligence means putting all this potential at the service of territorial action, contributing to the actors involved, not only institutional decision-makers, but the actors most directly involved in the action in the field, incorporating mechanisms in the course of their ordinary activities to facilitate interaction, promoting their individual and joint ability to manage information, to mutualise it and convert it into knowledge which allows them to assess, redirect or design new action. In this sense the design of tools and participatory work methodologies which allow the actors' abilities to be developed is of vital importance.

4. ACCEM Observatories as tools for the development of territorial intelligence and territorial governance in a knowledge based society

The confluence of several circumstances, such as the extension of the use of the so-called new information and communication technologies, also the link with the investigation team of the University of Franche Comté directed by Jean-Jacques Girardot specialized in these new technologies applied to the strategic observation and the participative evaluation within the framework of social action and finally the possibility of getting financing from the UE within the framework of the Community Initiative for Employment and Human resources, Integra, facilitated the development of the first ACCEM Observatories in 1999 (ODINA, in Asturias, and also the Sigüenza Permanent Observatory of Immigration).

The main objective of these observatories was to associate different entities and institutions developing actions with immigrants in a direct and cross way. The idea consisted on jointly designing and starting devices of strategic observation and participative evaluation that enable to have a better knowledge of the situation of the groups attended in connection with the territory.

The final purpose was to propitiate a transparency and trust atmosphere that facilitated the coordination of the actions of the partners involved in the observatories to generate joined actions.

In fact, the final target was to mobilize, through the combined development of tools supported in the potential of the information and the communication technologies (programmes of collection and treatment of information, programmes of cartographic representation, etc.), the existent group of knowledge and agents' skills to generate new knowledge on a base of common information that could also generate shared diagnoses that serves as base for common actions. According to the terminology of the previous section, territorial intelligence development was been considered, with the purpose of improving the territorial governance. But the terminology is subsequent, and even more, a great part of this speech on Territorial Intelligence to serve Territorial Governance has been developed later and to an important extend inspired by the experience of ACCEM Observatories (Girardot, 2005).

5. ACCEM Observatories: limits and potentialities

Obviously the creation of a device of this nature is not a mere technological operation. Although it is useful to have some tools already experienced, the creation of an observatory is a much more complex process which involves agents' groups with variable configurations depending not only in the territory, but also in the socio-economic and political context. Not all moment and place is appropriate to begin the process.

Sometimes the agents' will fail, either because they have the perception that their particular interests are threatened by the common action, or because there are histories of conflict among the participants. But the willingness of the agents is not enough if it not accompanied by a networking culture which can prevent that the daily activity may leads to unjustified mistrust in some of them, to exclusive appropriation of common results in some others, to justified distrusts in consequence, or to interferences.

Overcome these barriers the problem of the adaptation to the different rhythms and agents' resources involved in the process remains, which hinders to a great extend the burden sharing among the partners.

On the other hand, many times the blockades appear at the end, when it is time to take decisions that really imply a reorganization of the human, technical and equipment resources of each of the partners.

On the other hand, as the contexts change, it is very important, for the durability of the observatory, to bear in mind which is the priority of the objectives is in each moment. In some cases the initial objective, starting point of the observatory, to "sharing the information", can be harmed because obtaining this information could be very expensive in time and effort or it turns out to be particularly strategic for the interests of one participant or more. In that case, the trade-off between intelligence and governance is especially important, in the sense that it can be necessary to do without part of the information to continue propitiating processes that favour the joined decisions making (governance) that could propitiate more transparent informative frameworks in the long term.

Anyway, what is certain is that the experience of ACCEM Observatories has clearly contributed for the association and their partnerships have information that allows them a better adaptation of the interventions to the territorial necessities. On the other hand, they have contributed to the development of decision making participative processes in the territory, at a greater or lower importance. This process has also brought itself the development of the territorial agents skills for the observation and the participative evaluation applied in the field of immigration.

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