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► **To cite this version:**

André Torre, Frédéric Wallet. Regional and territorial developments at stake: The experience of the French PSDR programs. 50. congress of the European Regional Science Association, European Regional Science Association (ERSA). FRA.; Institut National de Recherche Agronomique (INRA). UMR Innovation et Développement dans l'Agriculture et l'Agro-alimentaire (0951)., Aug 2010, Jonkoping, Sweden. hal-02751280

HAL Id: hal-02751280

<https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02751280>

Submitted on 3 Jun 2020

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Regional and territorial developments at stake

The experience of the French PSDR programs

Type de résumé : Long presentation

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The question of regional development has been put for several decades on the research agenda of both researchers and policymakers. During the 70's and the 80's the focus was on the growth of the regional productive capacity and the ability to launch exportation programs in order to sell local products abroad. During the same time, there has been a growing interest for the setting and the development of local production systems, based on the idea that a virtuous endogenous development process is possible. The notion of territory has slowly raised and is now regarded as relevant from an analytical point of view.

The question of territorial development is now addressed to development policies, and remains a challenge for research programs. Various questions arise: what is a territorial development? What are the differences with regional development? What are the mechanisms at the basis of this development process? Which sectors and which actors are mainly concerned? What is the role played by innovation into this process? What tools are useful for policymakers?

The French programmes « For and About Regional Development » (PSDR) are scientific research programmes of a 3-year duration undertaken in partnership with the actors of regional and territorial development. The objective is to observe and analyse the territorial dynamics, and the role played in rural areas by the different, public and private, actors, the economic and social activities and all resources that are or can be utilized for the purpose of regional development. The results obtained are diffused and exploited for the purpose of research and development.

The first PSDR programmes try to bring answers to these questions, using a participative and multidisciplinary approach. They were launched in 1995 in three regions of France. In the current third round of the programme, 10 French regions are involved in the programme. Beyond the normal tendering system, the PSDR programmes are defined at regional level and in close partnership with public and private sector actors. The researchers are involved in all phases of the research process, from design and decision making to the implementation of public action.

A high level of cross- and pluri-disciplinarity is privileged. Indeed, each programme focuses on research themes whose different dimensions call for the use of several disciplines and for the effective knowledge integration between the biotechnical and social sciences' approaches. Based on new scientific perspectives, the programmes look beyond agriculture in their approach to regional development.

Four main categories of topics are addressed:

- ← - *Technical and structural changes in agriculture, forestry and rural activities.*
- ← - *Evolution in the context and organisation of agro-food activities*
- ← - *Changes in the use of rural and peri-urban lands and reconfiguration of their population*
- ← - *Management of environmental resources and sustainable development.*

An interregional approach to these themes is privileged (comparative analysis, interregional programmes) while the issues specific to each region are examined.

The selection of projects presented in the third generation of programs was based on the scientific quality of proposals but also the relevance of the proposals against the priorities of regional development in each partner region.

Therefore, issues of regional and territorial development are subject to a variety of treatment both in terms of issues addressed at the level of tools and areas concerned. Furthermore, some projects make the issue of regional development and spatial analysis their subject, thus contributing to the entry "about" development, while others focus on scientific process in which the devices and the results can be mobilized "for" regional development, this latest not being directly taken as the object of study.

The proposed paper intends to reflect this diversity of treatment through the examination of the contents of the thirty-six projects at work in the ten regions. The analysis will be conducted from the review of project proposals and documents produced by teams. The data will then be analyzed in terms of the main lessons of the economic literature on regional development in order to highlight how the PSDR program as a whole contributes to the development of territories and questions the notions of regional and territorial development.

Mots-clés :

Regional development, territorial innovation, PSDR

Commentaires

Aucun commentaire pour ce résumé