Prospects for Regions and Cities in the Lisbon Strategy (OMC)

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Outline of the talk

1. The Lisbon strategy: academic assessments

2. The OMC and why it matters (for Regions and Cities)

3. « Lisbon 3 »: do’s and don’ts
1. The Lisbon strategy: assessments

- Lisbon strategy (2000) seen as a «milestone», two ambitious goals:
  - transform the European knowledge-based economy of the 21st century
  - innovate EU governance: new forms of interaction between national practices and EU objectives
1. The Lisbon strategy: assessments

• Result: impressive literature developed
  – academic researchers, policy-makers, think tanks, experts, practitioners, EU institutions (colored papers EC, CoR)

• Multi-disciplinary debates (controversy)
  – economics, law, political science, sociology

• Different dimensions of the Strategy
  – normative foundations, legitimacy, efficacy (cognitive, procedural)
1. The Lisbon strategy: assessments

• Unsurprisingly, these assessments lead to scattered results, but some consensus:
  – economic and employment performance (-)
  – technocratic process: ‘consultation fatigue’ (-)
  – changed policy thinking: ‘qualified success’ (+)
  – innovate EU governance (+)

• So let us not qualify the LS as a failure too easily
2. A « new » governance tool: OMC

• To be applied to some of the key goals of Lisbon I
  – More and better jobs
  – Modernizing social protection
  – Promoting social inclusion

• ! Lisbon is not to be reduced to OMC
  – LS contains almost 100 proposals for directives
OMC: process cycle

Launching (2000)

Common Objectives

Supported by PROGRESS

Indicators Targets

Joint Report (!)

Peer Review

NAP (NSR)
OMC elicits strong opposite reactions

- ‘revolutionary potential’ & ‘solution to the EU’s democratic deficit’

- ‘rhetoric and cheap talk’ & ’fashionable red herring’ (harmful: distract political attention)

Puzzling!
Again, evaluations differ

MS let “1000 flowers bloom”

Inflation of OMC’s from 2000

– Organ transplantation, influenza, immigration, smoking, EU development policy, disability policy, Latin America (!)
Claim

Against all odds ‘soft’ OMC’s do impact upon MS’ Social (Inclusion) Policies

- Substantively
- Procedurally
1. Procedural changes

- Rationalisation of policies
  - Boosting statistical capacity (previous: contested statistics) – Indicators!
Procedural changes (II)

- Vertical cooperation (!)
  - Exchange of information + operational network of actors across language borders
  - “Internal-B OMC” – “unthinkable without the EU scapegoat”
  - Role federal admin B
    • “European Rescue of the Federal State”?  
    • FR, IT, PT, ESP
Procedural changes (II)

- Participation
  - Institutionalisation of NGO involvement in SI policies
  - B from teacher to ‘pupil’: participation model (‘people experiencing poverty’) looked especially well on paper, less so in practice
2. Substantive changes

• “Child poverty”: new concept in SI policies of many MS: straight from OMC → cognitive shift

• Remarkable
  – Longstanding B/FR resistance against this issue (failed!)
  – Strong EU pressure, now on the agenda (BPEU 2010!)
Ik wou dat ik een koe was.
Substantive changes (II)

- *Initiate* culture of evaluation and monitoring of SI policies in B/FR
- Adoption of ‘targets’ in N SI policies
  - B: *national* targets for *regional* competencies (education, housing etc.) based on *intra-regional* benchmarking
OMC and instrument hybridity

• Another reason why OMC “matters” for Regions and Cities: soft governance mechanisms are increasingly integrated in EU hard law
  – e.g. in the framework-agreement on part-time work

• Soft governance increasingly structures EU funding!
  – the European Employment Strategy and the Social Inclusion OMC are the overall framework for the substance of ESF Regulations
3. Priorities for Lisbon III

• Face (and settle) a number of trade-offs
  – between European integration and national competences (welfare)
  – between economic competitiveness and social cohesion
  – between depoliticizing policy-making and increasing participation and transparency
3. Priorities for Lisbon III

• Bring social OMCs back in the heart of the LS (de facto impact, influence on ESF)

• Strengthen its toolbox
  – indicators, including ‘participatory governance indicators’ (White Paper CoR)
  – targets: to be set ‘at most appropriate level’ (including Regional)
3. Priorities for Lisbon III

- **Not** launch additional OMC
  - CoR White Paper: OMC of regionalized coordination
  - OMC fatigue

- Consider introducing formal (legally binding) requirements for transparency and participation in soft law

- Ensure a mandate for the European Commission so that it can assess the implementation of *regional* policies
Comments/criticism/questions very welcome, now or at:

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