

What France in 2020? Some directions for planning Europe's future

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'The nation state is too small for the big problems and too big for the small problems'. (Daniel Bell)

1. TO SET THE SCENE

Again, France is engaged in a major spatial planning operation with the usual attributes of scenarios and prospective research.¹ The approach adopted is innovative, suited to inspire, for example, a rethinking of the Dutch approach to spatial planning (Drewe, 2001). In the present paper, however, the emphasis is on the European connotation of what is happening in France.

DATAR², the French spatial planning agency, has adopted the 'Networked Polycentrism' ('Le polycentrisme maillé') as its preferred scenario for France in 2020 (figure 1).

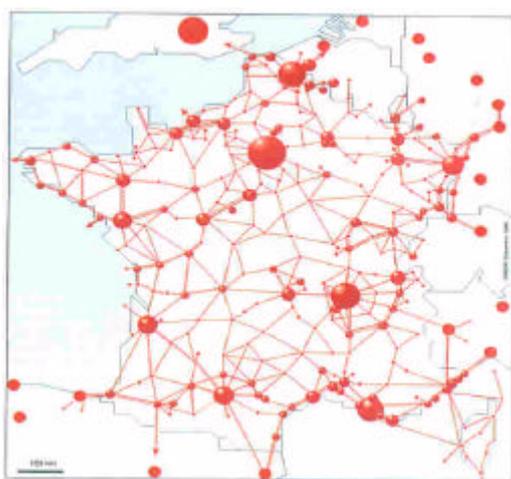


Fig. 1: Scenario 'Le Polycentrisme Maillé' (het 'Netwerk Polycentrisme')

It is thought of as the most sustainable spatial structure in terms of solidarity and cohesion, economic performance, and environmental balance.

In adopting this preferred scenario, DATAR follows the ESDP, the European Spatial Development Perspective of a polycentric and balanced spatial development in the EU (European Commission, 1999). The status of the ESDP, however, is non-binding. European spatial planning is not (yet) a formal EU competence. The ESDP has been agreed only at the **Informal** Council of Ministers responsible for Spatial Planning. Some think, however, that it 'must become a Commission policy if it is to play a significant role in achieving territorial and social cohesion at the EU level (Williams, 2000, 357). For the time being, there is every reason to ask whether tomorrow's Europe will be polycentric (Baudelle, 2001). The same holds for France in 2020. But the potential impact on France of European spatial concepts is just one side of the coin, the other being potential directions for planning Europe's future, to be derived from asking 'What France in 2020?'

2. FIVE GLOBAL SCENARIOS

In the period 2000-2002, ten groups are carrying out prospective research with regard to French territories in 2020 (DATAR, 2000). Group 3 deals with networks, services and uses in the fields of ICT, energy and transport. The group postulates that to govern the territory is to master networks. That is why this group may provide potential directions for tackling the question 'who plans Europe's future'.

To date, five (preliminary) scenarios have been elaborated throwing light on alternative modes of governance in Europe.

The method adopted for the scenario construction starts from the identification of major uncertainties, key questions per uncertainty and extreme answers ('cursors') to these questions. Next, scenarios are formulated per theme: networks and territories; practices, uses and temporalities; services, regulations and systems of actors on the supply side. These thematic scenarios are then combined which results in five global scenarios (figure 2) to be specified per sector (ie ICT, energy and transport). For details of the method see Arcade (2003).³

¹ Ample information can be found among others in 'Territoires 2020. Revue d'études et de prospective' from DATAR; 'La Lettre de la DATAR' and on the following website: <http://www.datar.gouv.fr>

² DATAR stands for Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale.

³ The scenario approach is similar to that of the Shell company. Cf Schwartz, 1991.

Global Scenarios	Themes		
	networks & territories	uses	services
1. Global Mercantile Co-regulated	'Big is beautiful' (globalization & infogistics) ^b	tailor-made	globalization of social conflicts
2. Glocal Coopetitive ^a	glocal	increasing inequalities	a Europe with different speeds
3. Networked Multi subsidiarities	'All in networks'	gregarious	a federal subsidiary Europe
4. The European Issue	crises & local public goods	guided entrepreneurial innovation	resort Europe
5. Redefinition of the national project	regulated scarcity	mutual assistance	national regulation
a between global & local, competition and cooperation	b a combination of ICT and logistics see Irepp (2000)		

Fig. 2: Five Global Scenarios

What do these scenarios imply?

Scenario (1) is dominated by globalized market forces. Social conflicts, too, tend to globalize and pressure for new ways of regulation at world level. Europe constitutes an intermediary structure between the local and the global levels. Hence its responsibility for spatial planning. The latter is confronted with the universal service principle: to guarantee equal access to ICT, energy and transport services.

What about 'Glocal coopetitive'? Apart from global governance (including the European level) and a sufficient level of universal service, local regulation, too, comes into play and public-private partnership. There is competition alongside cooperation. In a larger Europe, this is going to put cohesion to a test. As a result Europe will develop with different speeds.

The scenarios (4) and (5) represent extremes with respect to the role of Europe (or the EU). The 'European issue' implies a larger EU marked by a strong, political integration. This would enable the EU to implement the ESDP as a European answer to globalization as a challenge to be accepted. Though within a perspective of sustainability emphasizing not only economic performance but also social cohesion and a balanced environment. The 'Redefinition of the national project' on the other hand, in fact, implies a failure of the EU. Struggling with scarcity, the nation states will be searching for national solutions. In France, this would imply another scenario, ie 'Le centralisme renové', a country structured according to the center-periphery model, of course, with Paris as the dominant center (figure 4). This development would be further reinforced by the fear as expressed by the scenario of the 'Archipel éclaté': France as an archipelago, desintegrating under the influence of globalization (figure 5) Scenario (5) is, indeed, an extreme one.



Fig. 4: 'L'archipel éclaté'

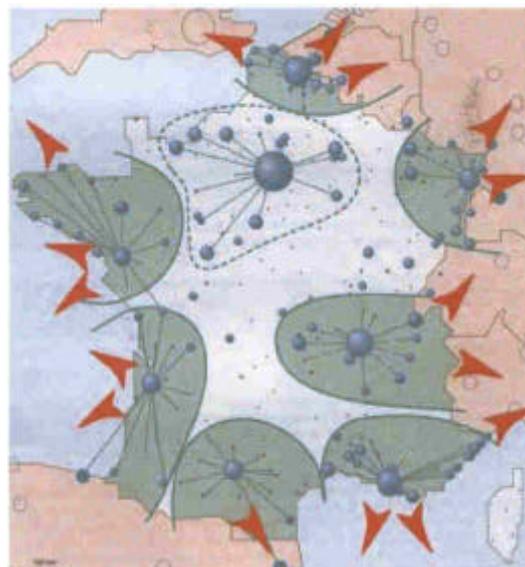


Fig. 5: 'Centralisme renové'

However, virtually, it is much closer to reality with member states acting as if they were still sovereign states despite of the fact that a high degree of (practically irreversible) socio-economic European integration has already been achieved. The fact that the ESPD, for example, in the Netherlands, is by and large ignored (Waterhout and Zonneveld, 2000) in a way also testifies to this sovereign attitude.

3. SUBSIDIARITY AS MAIN THEME

It is the 'Networked Multi-subsidiarities' that deserve special attention. As it implies a paradigm change.

The principle of subsidiarity hitherto has primarily been applied at the European level when it comes to decide whether a EU intervention is preferable to a national or regional one. The official definition of the principle goes something like this: the responsibility for a certain policy should be put closest to practical reality, dependent upon the competence of different political institutions and the required efficacy. Or in other words: a policy decision should be made at the lowest, competent level. This is basically a bottom-up reasoning not to be confused with top-down decentralization.

Scenario (3) adopts this principle, but, at the same time, extends its meaning in three directions (hence the term multi-subsidiarities):

- subsidiarity is not only a European matter as far as institutional levels of political decisionmaking are concerned. Subsidiarity 'starts at home', eg in France at the local or even at a lower level (see figure 3)
- Subsidiarity involves different actors, not only public but also private ones (citizens, entrepreneurs, trade unions, voluntary associations etc.)
- Subsidiarity also has a temporal dimension as a distinction is made between different time horizons of policy decisions from short to long-term decisions. This provides the basis for managing uncertainties, for example through immediate actions, combined with delayed actions and eventuality plans (see also Walker, 2000). The latter is of utmost importance as major uncertainties are the very basis of the scenario approach.

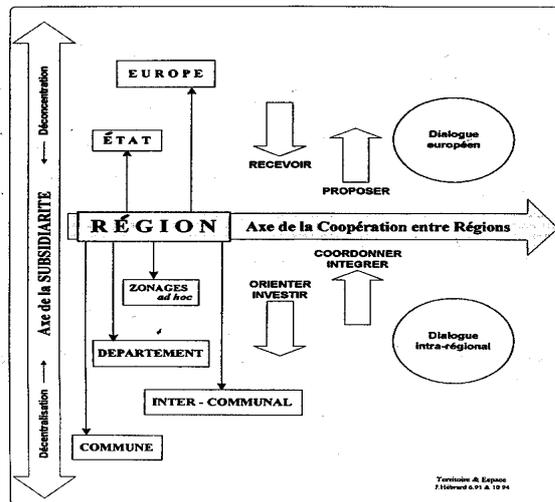


Fig. 3: The axis of subsidiarity

Concrete policy instruments or policy intentions can be scanned for their subsidiarity potential. What about the French approach to spatial planning? One has decided to abandon the National Spatial Planning Scheme to be replaced by 22 Regional Schemes. This can bring more subsidiarity. The same holds for the preferred scenario. Intra-regional cooperation within conurbations and parts of the country referred to as 'pays' is an important part of the 'Networked Polycentrism'. Furthermore, new instruments have been created to achieve that goal.⁴

Of course there still are decisions for which higher levels are most competent. Dealing with ICT, energy and transport one meets with the challenge of universal service, especially in a liberalized and privatized EU. To safeguard universal access to basic infrastructure services should be a task for the EU. The present discussion about the so-called services of general interest points in that direction (DATAR, 2001). However this does not preclude national governments from taking the lead. Such as the French government which has just announced its intention to provide access to broadband networks for all (CIADT, 2001). And what about spatial planning in general and the ESPD in particular? With the EU being engaged in sectoral planning and committed to territorial and social cohesion, it makes sense to draw up and implement a European Spatial Development Perspective. Provided it leaves room for bottom-up initiatives such as the French road to polycentrism or the stunning IM-Plan for Berlin, Budapest, Prague, Sofia and Vienna (Senatsverwaltung, 2001).

⁴ In particular the 'contrat d'agglomération' and 'contrat de pays'. These are contracts with the central government to support inter-municipality cooperation within conurbations and the so-called pays. See DATAR (2001a)

4. OUTLOOK

It is not entirely by accident that dealing with ICT, energy and transport has led to the scenario of networked multi-subsidiarities. Group 3 may have postulated that to govern the territory is to master networks, but it also has realized that networks are vulnerable. The development potential of ICT, even in the 'post-bubble era' remains uncertain. And what do we know integrating energy networks in spatial planning (see Geldof, 2001). Finally, transport or mobility remains largely an unresolved issue in Europe. There is also looming the major uncertainty whether energy prices will continue to fall.

As far as France is concerned, for each of the three sectors so-called Schémas de services collectifs or development perspectives have been prepared. All this adds up to an increasing complexity. The question is whether scenario (4) 'the European Issue', is the best way of governing this complexity or whether a paradigm change is called for along the lines of 'Networked Multi-subsidiarities'. If everything fails we are back to Candide: 'Cela est bien dit, mais il faut cultiver notre jardin'. This is another way of saying that we have to 'redefine the national project'.

The five global scenarios only spell out the possible development of a set of uncertainties. It is not the idea to choose a particular scenario. But at the end of the day, the scenarios can provide a source of inspiration for rethinking governance. Federal member states may be closer to scenario (3) as they are already more familiar with the institutional dimension of subsidiarity. And the European Commission, in intending to deepen democracy in the EU, talks about promoting the coherence and cooperation within a 'networked Europe' (Commission des Communautés Européennes, 2000). To be continued....

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