Citizen participation in neo-endogenous rural development.
The case of LEADER programme into Community-led local development

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ABSTRACT

The next European programming period 2014-2020 is aiming to reach the goals of Europe2020's strategy of sustainable, smart and inclusive growth. Together with these objectives and according to the spirit of European integration, the European Union wants therefore to point to a greater territorial cohesion, as an answer to the fragmentation due to the globalization and also because of a concrete overrun of the economic and social crisis broken out in 2008 at global level. Furthermore, the European Union wants to stimulate a more intense and purposeful participation of citizens in decision-making process and also in the perspective to overtake the detachment of people from democratic life. In this way, the growing requirement of more participation and territorial cohesion, that could be understood as a place-based development, are translated into the dimension of community that, according to the European program 2014-2020, is being realized by the Community-led Local Development whereby the reading key is LEADER method.

LEADER is a local development approach which allows local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential. One specific attempt to tackle the above mentioned challenges are the Local Action Groups (LAGs) that will compose the CLLD. Based on the lessons learnt of LAGs during the current period 2007-2013, we want to assess whether the new approach of Community-led Local Development (CLLD) will improve the challenges of place-based approaches and participative democracy in the coming period with a strong and positive impact to the local community.

For this reason the main goal of my research is to focus on the community-based approach as a system of governance able to face the challenges of the globalized post-modern democracy. In this sense I would like to define the role of the citizen participation to the rebuilding up of the re-embedded community in order to contribute to the local development as a positive answer to the challenges of the globalization.

And so, given the main goals of the next European programming period 2014-2020, regarding the introduction of the CLLD as applied in the rural development program, the research is getting as a specific tool-case the LEADER method. For this reason it is trying to verify how LEADER might be understood as a tool of participative democracy in the system of neo-endogenous rural development.

The research is focusing on two case-studies, Tuscany for Italy and Flanders for Belgium and the comparative tool is the measure 321 "Basic services for economy and rural population" of the Axis 4 LEADER of the Rural Development Program 2007-2013. The case studies will be those ones in order to

have a comparison between Southern and Northern Europe and different systems of government and governance in a regional system anyway. The analysis of the activities concerning the measure 321 will give a right perspective of the role and the impact of the citizen participation regarding services and policies for the local community and its development which is facing the challenges of the globalization.

INTRODUCTION

With my proposal for the research project I would like to focus on the potential connection between citizen participation and the achievement of the local development through the community-based approach. The lens analyzing it is the LEADER method, a bottom-up approach formulated in the European rural development policies which will constitute the core of the Community-led Local Development of the period 2014-2020.

The research is based on twofold methodological level: on one hand a theoretical framework that analyses the general context I'm focusing on and then the reading-keys I'm using for the research; on the other hand the empirical comparison of the case-studies in order to evaluate and demonstrate the starting hypothesis.

The starting point of the general context regards the issues of the European Union in the perspective of the next programming period 2014-2020 and of Europe 2020's strategy. Among this context the view is focalizing on the main problems European perspective would like to solve: the implications of the globalization from a local perspective and the potential solution to face it. For that reason one of the goals the European Union is aspiring is the involvement of citizens into the policy-making decision process together with the territorial cohesion. The tool formulated by Europe towards 2020 to reach them is Community-led Local Development (CLLD) concentrated, first of all, in the rural areas according to the Programming Regulations. And if it is a policy-oriented perspective, might this approach find a scientific confirmation? Might the community-based approach be an exit strategy for the globalized post-modern democracy? To proceed with the analysis I have the intention to focus first of all on the details of the European Union policies for the period 2014-2020 paying attention to the main goals and the CLLD. Afterwords, the analysis will pass from the policy-oriented perspective to the theoretical framework focusing on the post-modern society due to the globalization through the analysis tool of citizen participation into the community-based approach.

Europe towards 2020

With the year 2014 Europe and its boarders will face the next programming period not only as a instrument to reinforce the integration within the Member States by a political point of view but even with a particular expectation: finding an exit strategy for the economic and social crisis that, we know, is not conjunctural but deeply structural.

If we turn the glance at the speech of José Barroso on the preparations of the European Council of June 2013 – the importance meeting finalized to reach a compromise about the Regulation on Common Agriculture Policy – we could easily understand whether the main preoccupation at European level is still the overcoming of the crisis towards the direction of the growth, the sustainability and the cohesion as expressed in the Europe2020 strategy. And this need is completely touchable in the spirit of the Programming period 2014-2020[1] we might find in the deeper meaning of cohesion policy to achieve throughout the Community-led Local Development (CLLD).

"Europe faces a moment of transformation. The crisis has wiped out years of economic and social progress and exposed structural weaknesses in Europe's economy. In the meantime, the world is moving fast and long-term challenges – globalisation, pressure on resources, ageing – intensify. The EU must now take charge of its future." (*EUROPE 2020 A strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth*).

Pursuing the requirement of catching up the empowerment of participation and the improvement of place-

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[1] For the next period 2014-2020 the European Commission adopted a regulations package for the future EU Cohesion Policy - the Common Strategic Framework - together with the Common Agricultural Policy and the Fisheries policies, which are not part of Cohesion Policy but strongly linked to it.

based development meant as a catalyst of territorial cohesion, the European Union has formulated an innovative tool but with known roots: the Community-led Local Development.

Community-led Local Development among the Europe 2020

CLLD is formulated in the CPR's regulation[2] as a specific tool to use at sub-regional level, which is complementary to other development support at local level. As a truly bottom-up approach, one of its main advantages is that it is able to mobilize local resources for the development process better than top-down approaches.

CLLD can mobilize and involve local communities and organisations to contribute to achieving the Europe 2020 Strategy goals of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, fostering territorial cohesion and reaching specific policy objectives.

Alway laid down in the Common Guidance that is the official document for the realisation of CLLD, pointing to the main advantages of the bottom-up approach for the territory they said:

- Local actors have a better knowledge of local challenges that need to be addressed and the resource and opportunities available.

- Therefore they are able to mobilise local resources for the development process in a way that does not happen with top-down approaches.

- This gives local actors a greater sense of ownership and commitment to the projects, which allows them to make the best of the local assets.

- However, the community-led approach can only be effective if it develops trust among stakeholders and is supported by enduring local structures with the necessary experience and expertise.

Said what above, the real nature and the deep sense of CLLD, the cornerstone of this important feature of the next European programming period is the LEADER method, the specific program for Rural Development Fund[3]. LEADER is the heart of CLLD and it's deeply evident if we consider the interconnection between the place-based development and partnership which are the essential elements of the CLLD itself.

Box 1

> **LEADER approach**
> 'Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale', meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions'
>
> (1) Area based local development strategies for sub regional territories;
> (2) Local private-public partnerships (LAGs);
> (3) Bottom-up approach with decision making power to LAGs;
> (4) Multi-sectoral (integrated) design and implementation of strategy;
> (5) Innovation;
> (6) Cooperation;
> (7) Networking of local partnerships.

Then, considering the aims of Europe 2020's strategy within the next programming period we are in front of a challenge that is twofold and I can run the risk to claim that it could be embedded into the spirit and the achievement itself of CLLD. On the one hand, there is the challenge of citizen involvement: participatory democracy tends to advocate more involved forms of citizen participation than traditional representative democracy and strives to create opportunities for all members of a population to make meaningful

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[2] The main principles for CLLD are laid down in Article 28-31 of Reg. 1303/2013 and there are complementary fund-specific rules for EAFRD (LEADER) and EMFF in the respective proposals for regulations

[3] In the European Programming period 2007-2013 the LEADER method is expressed into the Axis 4 of the Rural Development Program

contributions to decision-making and the local development. On the other hand, the territorial cohesion (one of the pillars of the Common Strategic Framework that will lead all the Structural Funds) will be ensured focusing on place-based approaches as a method to elaborate the more efficient local development strategies starting up from the local needs.

Globalisation and local development

What is evident enough in the next programming 2014-2020 and in the Europe 2020's strategy is the challenge to overtake the economic and social implications of the globalization into the European boundaries. The main challenge for Europe is to stay in step with a globalized and post-modern society whereby the problems are global but the reading key needs to be adherent to the peculiarities of the territory, even on matter of competitiveness. Globalisation is a huge concept, spacing from the economic impact to the communication passing by the social system and the education. But, anyway, we have to define the connection with the citizen participation and the community-based approach. The globalization is understood as the unification process of the world economy in its epistemological nuance of "globalisation of the world economy" with a clear reference to the capitalistic production model. Taking Habermas (1998) the globalisation shapes "the widening and the intensification of the relations of traffic, communication and exchange across national borders".
Giddens speaks about the globalization as the fruit of the spread of the characteristic features of modernity (1994). Robertson (1992) notes that for Giddens globalization becomes an enlargement of modernity, from society to the world. It is modernity on a global science. Therefore if we turn the glance to the relation between globalisation and modernity we have to mention the statement of Anthony Giddens in *The consequences of modernity* (1994) about the idea of post-modern according to whom the globalisation is "the intensification of world social relations which connect faraway places making sure that the local events will be shaped by the events happening in thousands miles and viceversa".

Europe is a perfect model to investigate regarding the relation between globalization and its impact to local dimension. Indeed if globalization forms the primary background driving the ideas set out below, then the European Union becomes the perfect theatre to rehearse those ideas: the 'pulling-upwards' by the forces of globalization is reflected in the increasing influence of the European Union over economic, social and cultural life in the form of common policies and regulation legislation, and interventions funded by the Structural and Cohesion Funds.
Globalisation and local dimension could be linked by the conceptual chain "dis-embedding"-"re-embedding" that overtakes the national borders and the idea of nation itself. In this globalised and fragmented context where people try to find repair in the local identity or better community we may wonder if and how the participation could be the reading key to pass from the status of embedded into a global dimension to that one of re-embedded into a local dimension. Preferring remaining on the issues of social and political perspective, Europe offers us another stimulus because we can't face the problem of the cohesion and the local dimension without stressing how the globalisation has changed the core of the modernity: the popular sovereignty and the representation in the Nation-State. The globalisation and the end of modernity in this sense have placed by time a problem of governance: what is the optimal level to exercise the power in order to reduce the distance to the politics and to give the right answers to the population? And so what is the role of the citizenship into the policy-decision process?
In order to answer to these questions, we might assume that if European Union has introduced the key of the citizen involvement as a tool to steer in the policy-making process it may be because it's started to look at the development as a participatory process. Stiglitz (2002) in this sense states consensus-building, open dialog and the promotion of an active civil society are key ingredients to long-term sustainable development, in an opposite view d the current that links democracy and growth. It does mean that an understanding of the centrality of open, transparent, and participatory processes in sustainable development helps us to design policies - strategies and processes - that are more likely to lead to long-term economic growth and that reinforce the strengths of the processes themselves.
Stiglitz uses the term participation in the broadest sense, to encompass transparency, openness, and voice in both public and corporate settings. And the term "participatory processes" refers not just to those processes by which decisions are made in national governments, but also to processes used at local and provincial levels, at the workplace, and in capital markets. In this sense participation is not a mere synonymous of vote but it must entail open dialog and broadly active civic engagement and it requires that individuals have a

voice in the decisions that affect them (Stiglitz, 2002). Even before Stiglitz, Douthwaite (1996) argues that sustainability requires community to have control over their economies to protect themselves from the forces of globalization.

Taking into account the definitions given above I can find a correspondence with the spirit of European citizen participation among the CLLD. And in the time of globalization the opportunity to get people involved and to give them the power to decide the processes and the policies is a guarantee of development. That's even more correspondent in a local dimension that in my research is hypnotized as the optimal answer to the challenges of the globalization. And we can find the justification in the fact that participation regards citizens and so constituencies are defined by territory, in such a way that individuals are represented insofar as they are inhabitants of a territory (Rehfeld 2005).

European Union, citizen participation and civil society

Considering what said above circumscribing to the European dimension, when has European Union started to stimulate to open up policy-making to make it more inclusive and accountable? For sure a better use of powers should connect the EU more closely to its citizens and lead to more effective policies. But the first concrete answer to the question comes from the White Paper of the European Commission published in 2001, whereby are defined five principles to pursue: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness, and coherence. The big idea is to expand democratic participation: this goal of greater participation goes alongside a broad shift in the nature and role of governing institutions from command and control in hierarchies to facilitation and negotiation in networks.

"The [European] Union must renew the Community method by following a less top-down approach". That is to say, "the linear model of dispensing policies from above must be replaced by a virtuous circle, based on feedback, networks and involvement from policy creation to implementation at all levels" (White Paper of the European Commission, 2001)

Hereby was born the idea of an EU polity that is based on participation and consultation by civil society ensuring better governance, improving legitimacy and citizen's involvement (Liebert, 2009).

The literature is used to speak about the civil society traditionally conceptualized as the realm of voluntary action and participation activating the citizens and challenging their voice into the system of political representation (Trenz, 2009). Tenderly civil society is understood as a set of transparent and legally protected organised groups and associations whose members deliberate or act collectively to accomplish common goals. But in a wider perspective civil society incorporates also free citizens willing at participate. In order to fulfill this function, civil society needs to be discursively (re-)embedded: in other words, it needs to generate mass, or at least sector-specific, public debates and discourses that include the whole of the political community.

In the words of James Bohman, the core of democracy can be depicted theoretically as consisting of reflexive procedures which make its norms and practices subject to the citizens: ''Democracy is that set of institutions by which individuals are empowered as free and equal citizens to form and change the terms of their common life together, including democracy itself.'' (Bohman, 2007).

Citizen participation and the transnational democracy

The words of Boham gives me the opportunity to jump beyond all the scientific discussion about the participative and deliberative democracy that see a cardinal role in the citizen participation, to focus on the discussion about the post-modern democracy formulated in the concept of "transnational democracy". Although the rich and ongoing debate on it, in this paper I'm highlighting the position of Dryzek that starts from the state according to which the globalization eludes the control of nation-state (1999). For him in a democracy over boundaries an essential role is played by the relationship between democracy and deliberation: he argues, indeed, whether the realization of transnational democracy depends upon a recognition that 'the essence of democratic legitimacy is to be found not in voting or representation....but rather in deliberation' (Dryzek 1999). For me it's worth also for European context.

To speak about the relationship between democracy and deliberation, Dryzek (1999) formulated the concept of "discoursive democracy" defining a discourse as a shared set of assumptions and capabilities embedded in language that enables its adherents to assemble bits of sensory information that come their way into coherent whole. So any discourse involves a shares set of basic, often unspoken, understandings. Still according to Dryzek, discourses are intertwined with institutions, operating like an institutional software. As Dryzek argues (2001) deliberation might facilitate solutions to public problems where the state is no longer a sovereign actor. That's deeply true in the context of the European policies' application. That's why I've decided to adopt this concept to carry on with the analysis: because I think it's the most efficient way to study the impact of the citizen participation - through the discourse analysis - to the local development.

Considering the implication of discourse Hajer (2003) adopts the term of deliberative policy analysis to indicate a varied search for understandings of society to facilitate meaningful and legitimate political actions, a greed upon in mutual interaction, to improve our collective quality of life. If we read this definition in the perspective of the European policy we can find the same spirit. The power that people - organized in institutionalized or not groups - exercise is linked to the argumentative force of the discourse.

Discourses are bound up with political power. Sometimes it is a sign of power that actors can get the discourse to which they subscribe accepted by others. Discourses can themselves embody power in the way they condition the perceptions and values of those subject to them, such that some interests are advanced, others suppressed (Foucault, 1980). Still Bohman (2010) to express this influence uses the concept of communicative power. To understand the power of the discourse Hajer since the 1993 elaborated an analysis discourse of the actual argumentative discourse - that is the examination of argumentative structure in documents and other written or spoken statements. I use it among the citizen participation.

Hajer in his discourse analysis identifies (2005) a methodological way to combine the analysis of the discursive production of meaning with the analysis of the socio-political practices from which social constructs emerge and in which the actors that make these statements engage.

Focusing on the discourse analysis Hajer in his studies has taken steps towards a more highly detailed definition of it arriving at the statement of discourse as an ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categories through which meaning is given to phenomena and which is produced and reproduced through an identifiable set of practices. And it becomes very interesting thanks to the relations to the social interaction. In this way discourse is something different from the mere discussion given that a discourse refers to a set of concepts that structure the contributions of participants to a discussion.

After having specified what discourse means, Hajer uses several kinds of statements: metaphor, story line, discourse-coalition, discourse-structuration, discourse-institutionalization, and discursive affinity.

Box 2

Concept	Definition
Metaphor	the way to understand and experience one kind of things in terms of another
Story line	the condensed statement summarizing complex narratives used by people as "short hand" in discussions
Discourse-coalition	a group of actors that, *in the context of an identifiable set of practices*, shares the usage of a particular set of story lines over a particular period of time
Discourse structuration	when a discourse starts to dominate the way a given social unit conceptualizes the world
discourse institutionalization	when a discourse is successful - for instance many people use it to conceptualize the world - it will solidify into an institution, sometimes as organizational practices, sometimes as traditional ways of reasoning
discursive affinity	when discourses are interconnected and share similar way of conceptualizing the word.

What therefore I consider deeply crucial for my research are the concepts of discourse-coalition, discourse-structuration, discourse-institutionalization, and discursive affinity given that his conceptual distinction is addressed to overcome static divisions between individuals and institutions and so aim at understanding how interrelationships are constantly produced, reproduced, challenged and transformed (Hajer, 2002). Focusing on these three concepts addresses me also to understand which role the communicative power plays in the context of the LEADER approach where the democracy is applied from below.

Community and neo-endogenous development

Arriving at this point I have to move the theoretical lens to the other concept I'm taking into account for the research: the community-based approach. As stressed by Woods (2011) the hallmarks of globalization are evident across the rural landscape. He argues that globalization is reshaping rural Europe and it becomes a challenge as well as an opportunity for rural development. The processes of globalization mean that rural regions in Europe are more intensely integrated into global networks than they have been at any point in history, exposing them to the influences and effects of events and developments around the world. Considering the territorial cohesion like a challenge and a goal of the next programming period to realize throughout the CLLD, the research is focusing on the rural dimension given that in such field several are the place-based policies achieved.

Rural development is a dynamic process of change which aims at improving the well-being and self realization of people living outside the urbanized areas through collective process: the main goal is to improve the quality of life of rural people in reference to their economic, social and cultural conditions of communities. Endogenous approaches to rural development stress making the most of the local resources, including human capital, and favor encouraging local people as agents in the development process. Participation, therefore, becomes both a means and an end of rural development. (Lowe, Ray et al., 1999).

It could be Ray (1999) that for the first time connects the concepts of endogenous development and the role of citizens speaking about the era of reflexive modernity: he says that the aim of territorial identity construction is to devise strategies and put in place structures that enable the locality to mediate more effectively exogenous forces that, historically and contemporaneously, have undermined the socio-economic well-being of the locality. The approach tries to attach people — and their innovation, entrepreneurship and capital (financial and intellectual) — to place. And in fact, accordingly, the emphasis within European rural development has shifted since the early 1990s to a 'new rural development paradigm'[4] focused on 'neo-endogenous development' (Ray, 2006; van der Ploeg et al., 2000; Woods, 2011).

The most emblematic case of endogenous rural development that is steering to the community-based approach is the LEADER method that constitutes the basis for the future CLLD about which I spoke before.

LEADER is a local development method which allows local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential. Leader ('Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Économie Rurale', meaning 'Links between the rural economy and development actions') is a local development method which allows local actors to develop an area by using its endogenous development potential. Europe has launched LEADER since 1991 and since its first launch, LEADER has provided rural communities in the EU with the tools to play an active role in shaping their own future.

In this way, as highlighted by Ray (1999), throughout the European Union, policy makers at the state and supra-state levels are increasingly incorporating the terms 'bottom-up,' 'participative' and 'local' in order to signal new styles of intervention in their search for answers to the problems of rural society. Central to both approaches to endogenous development is the 'bottom-up' as a different approach respect from 'top-down' strong of the idea that development will be more successful and sustainable if it starts from a base of local resources and involves popular participation in the design and implementation of development action.

The LEADER approach is based on three interrelated elements – sometimes referred to as "the holy trinity of local development": the strategy, the area and the partnership. The specific features of the LEADER model come from applying 7 principles:

(1) Area based local development strategies for sub regional territories;
(2) Local private-public partnerships (LAGs);
(3) Bottom-up approach with decision making power to LAGs;
(4) Multi-sectoral (integrated) design and implementation of strategy;
(5) Innovation;
(6) Cooperation;

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[4] This kind of approach to the rural development policy has been faced even at political level: the Organisation for economic co-operation and development–OECD (2006) calls this innovative approach a "New Paradigm" of the regional development and it emphasizes bottom-up, locally designed and owned strategies aimed at promoting growth potential in all local economies in a perspective of multi-level governance with a stronger role of local and regional actors.

(7) Networking of local partnerships.

The bottom-up approach means that local actors participate in decision-making about the strategy and in the selection of the priorities to be pursued in their local area. Experience has shown that the bottom-up approach should not be considered as alternative or opposed to top-down approaches from national and/or regional authorities, but rather as combining and interacting with them, in order to achieve better overall results.

The involvement of local actors includes the population at large, economic and social interest groups and representative public and private institutions. Participation should not be limited to the initial phase but should extend throughout the implementation process, contributing to the strategy, the accomplishment of the selected projects and in stocktaking and learning for the future.

RESEARCH QUESTION

Taking into account this theoretical framework, I've reformulated in a more specific and scientific way the previous research questions and now they are divided into main research questions and sub-research questions:

How is the citizen participation involved in the achievement of the neo-endogenous development?

How might citizen participation play a role to the rebuilding up of re-embedded community in order to contribute to the local development?

How might the community-based approach be considered a system of governance able to face the challenges of globalization with a particular reference to the social fragmentation and localisation?

And so, given the main goals of the next European programming period 2014-2020, regarding the introduction of the CLLD and considering that the cornerstone of CLLD is LEADER approach as applied in the rural development program, the research is taking as a specific tool-case these two concepts, trying to get the answers to the following sub-questions:

How is LEADER method understood as a tool of citizen participation in the system of neo-endogenous development?

How might CLLD be considered as a system of post-modern democracy for the local dimension and development thanks to the citizen participation?

In order to evaluate how the citizen participation is involved and how it might be improved I've decided to focus on the impact of the discourse. For this reason I added a new research question:

H*ow is the discourse about the citizen participation playing a role in the post-modern society in order to boost the local development through the community-based approach?*

METHODS

The methodology I'm using for my research is a qualitative research considering the importance to evaluate the circumscribed phenomena. Citizen participation and its involvement in local development strategies is working within a social contexts where the role and the power of the discourse and the actors are essential.

The research is developed through two levels: the theoretical knowledge about the scientific and political context I would like to focus on and the fieldwork based on documents - formal and informal -, reports of meetings, data, projects, interviews collected among the LAGs' activity during the European programming period 2007-2013.

Empirically, the research is based on a comparative case studies represented by LAGs, in two distinct areas: Tuscany for Italy and Flanders for Belgium. The choice of these two regions has got the aim to compare

Northern and Southern Europe but taking into account regional government systems which have experimented the LEADER program.

The starting point is the main goal of the next programming period to be realized through the Community-led Local Development - the improvement of the citizen participation - evaluating how the participation has been adopted and developed during the achievement of the Axis 4 LEADER of the Rural Development Program (RDP) in the European programming period 2007-2013. Considering the complexity of the RDP, I've decided to choose a specific measure to use as comparative tool: the choice has fallen on the measure 321 "Services for rural economy and population" that aims at improving and maintaining the living conditions and welfare of those living in rural areas and at increasing the attractiveness of such areas through the provision of more and better basic services. Exactly for this reason I've decided to adopt such measure because I guess it's the more significant for the building up of the local community through the analysis of the local needs.

Collecting these documents and data and elaborating interviews, for my research and the nature of the citizen participation becomes interesting the argumentative discourse analysis because it suggests to find more communicative power focusing on the way in which the social interaction evolves via the exchange of linguistic and symbolic utterances (Hajer 2005). A specific attention will be paid therefore to the relationship between LAGs and Managing Authorities[5], not only inside the LAG's members. That's because assessing the role of governments in shaping civic engagement has become even more important now that governments, for a variety of reasons, are actively seeking to involve citizens in the process of policy-making (Putnam 2000).

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[5] The detailed management of programmes which receive support from the Structural Funds is the responsibility of the Member States. For every programme, they designate a managing authority (at national, regional or another level) which will inform potential beneficiaries, select the projects and generally monitor implementation.

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