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# Place-Based Solutions to Territorial Challenges: How Policy and Research Can Support Successful Ecosystems

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## Key takeaways:

- ‘One-size-fits-all’ solutions cannot effectively grasp the complexity and the diversity of territories, which calls for deeper granularity of interventions at international, national and subnational level.
- Place-based approaches offer a relevant instrument to policymakers and researchers to address the challenges of an increasingly ‘glocal’ world, where globalisation is combined with a growing importance of local issues.
- Four main success factors stand at the core of place-based initiatives, as a way to impact on policymaking:
  - Smooth multiactor and multilevel governance;
  - Design of a strategic vision for the territory, building on its current capacities and forward-looking capabilities;
  - Cocreation, thanks to the mobilisation of all relevant actors from the public and private sector;
  - Use of participatory instruments as a facilitator and cement between the stakeholders involved.
- In the European Union (EU), Smart Specialisation and Territorial Impact Assessments exemplify the valuable role of place-based narratives to inform policies.
- Beyond the EU, localised practices are also gaining prominence, notably in relation to sustainable development.



Since their origin in the 1960s, place-based approaches have developed as a valuable tool for providing scientific evidence to policymaking. In a 21st century marked by a high degree of diversity, ‘one-size-fits-all’ policies cannot function effectively. Place-based logics are able to integrate territorial specificities, in order to formulate tailor-made solutions to challenges and thereby nurture policies. In this respect, initiatives in favour of territorial development in general, and the example of Smart Specialisation in particular, showcase to what extent a place-based logic can successfully inform policymaking, through a strong interaction between the universe of research and that of policy. The inspirational impact of Smart Specialisation, which increasingly fosters decentralised innovation policies in Europe, and even beyond, precisely shows the strong potential of place-based solutions to tackle territorial challenges.

In the endeavour towards providing scientific evidence to policymakers, place-based solutions to territorial challenges feature among promising tools to formulate relevant advice. Similarly to choosing the right lens for a camera, working

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with the proper territorial focus is a vital ingredient for a good understanding of today’s and tomorrow’s challenges,

which is in turn crucial for designing relevant policies. The current context is that of a complex world, increasingly global but at the same time made up of a patchwork of territories where ‘one-size-fits-all’ answers are not optimal to address country-, region- or city-specific matters. The logic of intervention thus needs to respond to the motto of ‘Think global, act local’. In this respect, place-based solutions, particularly subnational ones, have a role to play in reconciling regional and local distinctive features with the importance to make the most of globalisation and to integrate into global value chains.

This chapter will highlight the usefulness of place-based approaches for researchers desiring to influence policymaking. It will also provide a toolkit for scientists, highlighting the challenges and success factors of place-based initiatives. Finally, this chapter will explore opportunities for the way forward, by emphasising the steering potential of place-based approaches beyond the EU. On each of these dimensions, it includes dedicated advice for researchers and knowledge brokers, along with associated added value for policy-making ([Table 1](#), [Table 2](#) and [Table 3](#)).



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### **Place-Based Approaches: A Promising Path Towards Evidence for Policy**

**Diversity is at the core of societies in the 21st century.** While globalisation has shed some light on complementarities between various parts of the world and opened up opportunities for synergies, it has also brought to the fore a multitude of differences. This diversity observed at international level is further accentuated by interregional differences. Demographic, economic, labour market or sector-specific data reveal a diversity of patterns among the regions of a given country. For instance, analysing Employment in Science and Technology across European regions signals



a strong heterogeneity, both across boundaries and inside national borders (see [Chart 1<sup>1</sup>](#)). For example, in Spain, with 57.1% of the active population employed in Science and Technology, the Basque Country distanced Extremadura by more than 24 percentage points in 2017. This gap is as much as the difference between the region of Paris in France and the region of Warminsko-Mazurskie in Poland.

It is important to move away from strictly national logics and to integrate subnational, regional or local dimensions. Living conditions as well as industrial structures, infrastructure endowment and geographical conditions vary substantially across the EU. The concepts of place and territory are therefore key to understanding the diversity and the specific local development matters of territorial units. These territorial units are mostly composed of subnational areas such as urban, metropolitan, regional or rural jurisdictions, but they can also include islands, coastal or mountainous areas. A better comprehension of territorial features might help policy measures directed at specific territorial areas or expected to have specific consequences concentrated in certain territories and hence increase the overall relevance and effectiveness of policies at all scales. Regions and cities are indeed pivotal actors for jobs, growth, competitiveness and investment. This is reflected in the latest evolution of the European Semester of economic governance, which includes a stronger focus on regional developments as of 2019. Generally, it is also visible in the changing nature of the country-specific recommendations under the European Semester, with 36% of the recommendations directly addressed to local and regional authorities in 2018, against only 24% in 2017 ([Committee of the Regions, 2018](#)). Since their genesis in the 1960s, place-based approaches provide an answer to diversity. Place-based approaches can help to grasp the complexity from bottom up, which more aggregated logics, for instance at national level, cannot capture. Indeed, place-based solutions capitalise on ‘the identification and mobilisation of endogenous potential, that is, the ability of places to grow drawing on their own resources’ ([Tomaney, 2010](#)). Therefore, they are not limited to a mere declination or adaptation of national policies. Place-based solutions have shown their added value to respect territorial specificities, while fostering territorial development. To achieve this, based on a comprehensive analysis of local features, they devise a consolidated

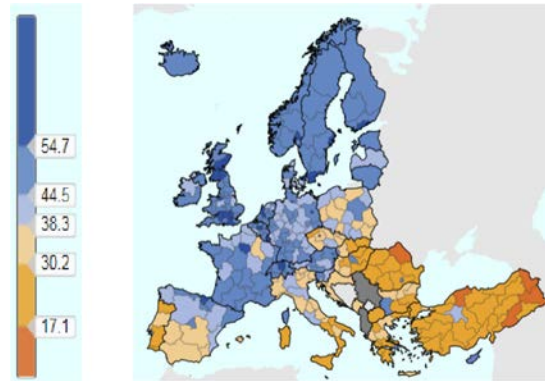


**CHART 1** Human Resources in Science and Technology by NUTS 2 regions (% of active population), 2017 (Source: [Eurostat \(2017\)](#))

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*It is important to move away from strictly national logics and to integrate subnational, regional or local dimensions*

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<sup>1</sup>The current NUTS 2016 classification has been in force since 1 January 2018. Eurostat distinguishes between NUTS 1 (major socioeconomic regions), NUTS 2 (basic regions for the application of regional policies) and NUTS 3 (small regions for specific diagnoses) – Source: Eurostat website, 2018



territorial vision and tailor support to the strengths and capabilities of a given territory. This is further reinforced by the bottom-up and inclusive governance associated to place-based approaches, which involves a rich patchwork of stakeholders – not only public authorities at national, regional or local level but also businesses, research institutions and the civil society, known as the ‘quadruple helix’. This allows linking the world of policymakers and that of researchers and entrepreneurs, building cohesion between actors and making them feel associated from the design to the implementation of place-based solutions, which in turn boosts ownership. In a nutshell, place-based solutions are designed from the territories and for the territories, helping to formulate meaningful advice and solutions (Chart 2, Box 1).

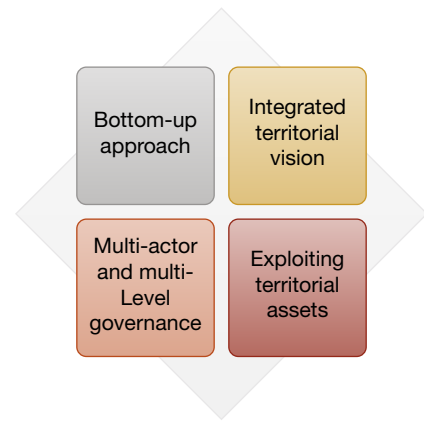


**CHART 2** Place-based solutions, roots in the territories.

### Box 1: Smart Specialisation, an example of successful place-based solution informing regional innovation policies

Smart Specialisation exemplifies how the interaction between science and policy can impact on policymaking in a valuable way. In the light of the importance of policies tailored to the regional and local contexts, we have put place-based logics at the heart of territorial development activities, in particular through the channel of Smart Specialisation. Through its variety of features detailed below and mirroring the attributes of place-based approaches, Smart Specialisation epitomises the powerful role of the interface between science and policy and provides an inspiring example for scientists eager to feed into policymaking.

Smart Specialisation was conceived as an innovative, place-based approach to innovation. ‘Smart specialisation describes the capacity of an economic system (a region for example) to generate new specialities through the discovery of new domains of opportunity and the local concentration and agglomeration of resources and competences in these domains’ (Foray, 2015). As such, it aims not only at exploiting the main assets of a territory in terms of competitive advantages but also at developing them in a context of global challenges and rapid diffusion of knowledge. This new approach has been integrated as an essential part of the EU regional and cohesion policy over the programming period 2014–2020.

Smart Specialisation has demonstrated the benefits associated to place-based solutions for a strategic approach to policy. Smart Specialisation relies on the identification of strategic areas, ‘based both on the analysis of the strengths and potential of the economy and on an Entrepreneurial Discovery Process (EDP) with wide stakeholder involvement [...], supported by effective monitoring mechanisms’ (European Commission, 2017a). The Entrepreneurial Discovery Process is at the heart of Smart Specialisation and stems from part of the New Industrial Policy literature, in particular the literature on ‘self-discovery’ and informational externalities (Hausmann and Rodrik, 2003; Rodrik, 2004). All along this process, all relevant public and private stakeholders explore current and new technoeconomic niches with potential for growth and excellence. This results in the choice of fields and technologies where the impact can be the greatest due to specialisation effects,



### Box 1: Smart Specialisation, an example of successful place-based solution informing regional innovation policies—cont'd

returns on investment and critical mass (Henderson and Cockburn, 1996; Agrawal et al., 2011; Trajtenberg, 2002) and the empowerment of those actors most capable of realising the potential (Martínez-López and Palazuelos Martínez, 2019). In other words, if conducted properly, the Entrepreneurial Discovery Process confers stronger decision-making capacity through stakeholders' engagement (Periañez et al., 2015).

In less than a decade, Smart Specialisation has placed its stamp in the innovation ecosystems of the EU. Smart Specialisation has been widely endorsed at European, national, regional and local level. Up to now, European Member States and regions have developed over 120 Smart Specialisation Strategies. At the political level, the current first Vice-President (and former President) of the Committee of the Regions Markku Markkula stressed that 'Introducing a tailored innovation strategy on smart specialisation in each region has started an inclusive and bottom-up revolution pushing innovation-led growth policies all across Europe' (Committee of the Regions, 2017a).

The example of Navarra (Fig. 1) is representative of how Smart Specialisation has influenced policymaking by fostering the integration of policies. Departing from a silo approach, Navarra identified the range of priorities in the upper part of Fig. 1 and grouped them along three main clusters related to healthcare, environment and talent. The lower part of Fig. 1 describes the roots that have an effect on the competitiveness of the Smart Specialisation priorities. This was driven by a willingness to foster synergies and capitalise on the complementarities between several policies.

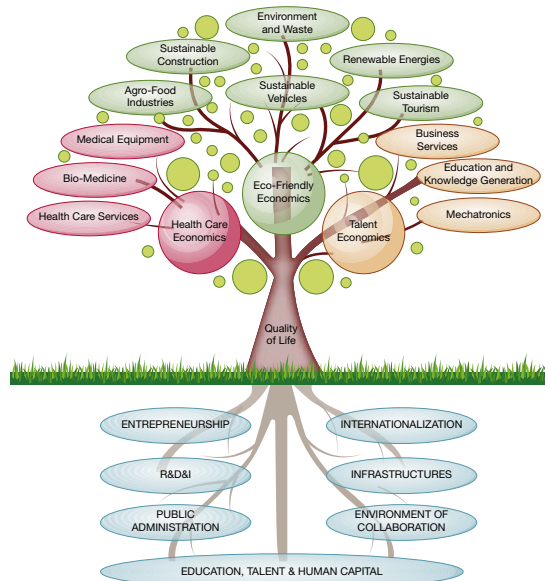


FIGURE 1 Smart Specialisation Strategy of Navarra.

Source: European Commission (2017b).



**Table 1** Advice for researchers and knowledge brokers

|                                         | Advice for researchers and knowledge brokers                                                                                                                                                            | Possible impact on policymaking                                                                                                                                           |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rationale behind place-based approaches | Take into consideration territorial diversity in order to get a full understanding of national/international complex pictures                                                                           | Policies designed as more than a mere adaptation of national policies                                                                                                     |
| Stages of the research and policy cycle | This 'territorial awareness' should take place at all stages of research, to anchor it into territorial realities                                                                                       | Territorial specificities to inform all steps of the policy cycle                                                                                                         |
| Method and tools                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Liaise with all relevant actors (policymakers, businesses and the civil society)</li><li>• Develop statistical data and evidence at territorial level</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase in ownership</li><li>• Policies based on solid evidence</li><li>• Better monitoring and evaluation of policies</li></ul> |

## Toolkit for Effective Place-Based Solutions

### Challenges and Opportunities

To successfully inform policymaking, researchers and knowledge brokers need to anticipate four types of questions and challenges – in terms of governance, cultural changes, cocreation by actors and places and tools. In turn, these can become opportunities for scientists to feed into policymaking ([Box 2](#)). Governance, i.e., the architecture that governs the delivery of place-based solutions, is probably the most crucial and challenging aspect to be taken into consideration. It has the potential to foster – if properly designed – or impede – if it is not adapted to the context at stake – the implementation of policies. Finding the right governance framework means mobilising the right people around the right priority areas, through the right set of tools. In particular, a twofold challenge may emerge in the path towards advising policymaking: researchers and knowledge brokers need to find their place in the horizontal governance setting put in place and involving other actors; also, the question of vertical cooperation with other government levels to avoid fragmentation should not be neglected. The city of Bilbao offers a valuable illustration of the elaboration of a territorial Smart Specialisation initiative, coupled with the need to ensure synchronisation with the regional strategy of the Basque Country in Spain ([Gianelle et al., 2016](#)).

Against this background, a key ingredient for success lies in multiactor and multilevel governance. The former depicts the coordination between researchers and knowledge brokers, policymakers and all relevant actors from the business or civil society sphere, while the latter refers to the allocation of responsibilities between different layers of government. Robust multiscale governance practices need to be endowed with a number of features, such as (i) efficient coordination tools leading to integrated approaches, (ii) a clear allocation of roles to the different stakeholders to ensure fertile collaboration, (iii) solid and reliable data for evidence-based policymaking and (iv) the cocreation of policies by the actors involved, which refers to the inclusive dimension of place-based policies ([OECD, 2018](#)).



Obviously, moving from central or national policies to place-based ones entails deep changes linked to the vision of territories. A complete understanding of local assets is essential to customise tailor-made approaches rooted in the territory and leads to the definition of a strategic territorial vision relying on capacities, capabilities and potential. Shaping such an integrated vision often implies a cultural change from previous narrower logics focused on sectoral analyses. As such, place-based approaches may suffer from resistance to change, the difficulty to reach consensus on a common vision for the whole territory or the importance of involving the right actors. The Smart Specialisation process in Lapland, which led to the definition of 'Lapland's Arctic Specialisation Programme 2030', embodies a successful example of engaging the relevant actors towards the elaboration of a joint vision for the territory. In the case of Lapland, this took place by including all municipalities, as well as other organisations from industry, education and research ([Gianelle et al., 2016](#)).

In this context, the development of a comprehensive vision for the territory needs to be supported by thorough territorial analysis. The starting point needs to be a 360 degrees study of local characteristics. Such diagnosis would encompass the areas where the territory is stronger and weaker, and it would also have a forward-looking approach, by envisaging potential for further development and possible risks to take into account. In other words, this is about the internal and external factors that are likely to have an impact on the territory. The Strengths–Weaknesses–Opportunities–Threats tool, known as SWOT, provides a systematic way to present this analysis, which in turn paves the ground for defining an integrated and fully place-based vision ([European Commission, 2012](#)).

Researchers willing to provide input into the policymaking process should not see their contribution in an isolated way, but rather as part of a community of actors and places. In such a complex and connected world, shaping individual place-based approaches is not enough. The fruit of a collaborative work has higher chances of success for several reasons: it integrates the various dimensions at stake, it is enriched by the dialogue of stakeholders with different cultures and it benefits from greater support from a wide range of actors. However, the route towards it is not without obstacles. When it is about working and being engaged with numerous actors representing different interests, a difficulty may arise from preventing or solving possible conflicts and finding a way to collaborate smoothly. To this may be added a commonly flagged threat of capture of the place-based process by some actors to the detriment of the others, which necessitates careful management. Otherwise, the input from science to policy runs the risk of being underexploited, misunderstood or not taken into consideration.

Cocreation can make the difference to contribute to policymaking. Not only is it important to identify relevant stakeholders at an early stage but it is also vital to put in place a number of cooperation mechanisms between them (see [Chapter 7](#) or the Sevilla process example in [Chapter 10](#) for some insights). In particular, the collaboration between researchers, policymakers and other actors can benefit from the presence of 'boundary spanners', namely 'people or organisations with interdisciplinary knowledge or proven experience in interaction with different actors and who can hence help moderate the process' ([European Commission, 2012](#)). These people would have a key role in facilitating dialogue and acting as bridge-makers. Setting up spaces for exchanges, information sharing and networking between the different actors and places engaged, may also foster the building of links and eventually the cocreation of policies from the territories and for the territories. This contributes to empowering actors and places and thus increasing the feeling of ownership, which is crucial for the success of place-based solutions. In the Polish region of Wielkopolska, wide participation of actors was ensured through the setting up of a dedicated Smart Specialisation Forum, comprising 92 participants, including researchers and companies, in



charge of steering dialogue. The Forum includes six Working Groups gathering 182 stakeholders, notably from the scientific and business sphere (Gianelle et al., 2016).

The questions of governance, territorial identity and mobilisation of actors do not exhaust the range of issues related to place-based approaches. Although the panorama of available statistical, quantitative, technical or qualitative tools is extremely vast, researchers and scientists need to cross the bridge between research and policy also in terms of tools. The objective is to make the outcome of their research accessible to policymakers and all relevant actors, to successfully influence policymaking. Bottlenecks inherent in the availability of tools for place-based solutions are at least twofold: first, in their analysis of territorial specificities and their attempts to formulate local diagnoses, researchers may face issues for obtaining data at the desired level of disaggregation. Second, the merits of place-based approaches are double-edged: on the one hand, their 'charm' is that they propose customised solutions to specific issues; on the other hand, their fundamental place-based nature limits their replicability to other territories.

By using participatory instruments, researchers have a key role to play in informing policymaking through place-based approaches. Instruments for place-based logics may not be accessible off the shelf among traditional ones and may require some ad hoc, innovative spirit. This can be achieved through a range of participatory instruments which, importantly, should not be deployed only in the first stages of the process, but throughout it to maintain the engagement of all actors and efficiently monitor and assess its impact. Channels such as consultations of actors, focus groups for generating ideas, peer reviews oriented towards mutual learning, benchmarking for getting inspiration from good practices or comparative studies to gain knowledge about others actors or places are worth exploring when putting in motion place-based solutions. As an illustration, in the Austrian region of Salzburg, the S3-4AlpClusters project relies on two innovative tools, namely Stress-Tests and Synergy-Diamonds, to identify opportunities for structural transformation within and across regions (Smart Specialisation Platform, 2018).

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*By using participatory instruments, researchers have a key role to play in informing policymaking through place-based approaches.*

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#### **Box 2: The partnership between science and policymaking in Smart Specialisation: the Smart Specialisation Platform**

**In less than a decade, Smart Specialisation managed to inform national and regional policymaking in the areas of research and innovation** (see Box 1). In this endeavour, the Smart Specialisation Platform, which is the outcome of the collaboration between scientists and policymakers of the European Commission, has played a key role.

The Smart Specialisation Platform was established in 2011 to provide assistance and support to countries and regions in the design, implementation and monitoring of their Smart Specialisation Strategies. It is hosted by the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, as the scientific arm of the European Commission, and runs in collaboration with the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. The work of the Smart Specialisation Platform has



## Box 2: The partnership between science and policymaking in Smart Specialisation: the Smart Specialisation Platform—cont'd

been further enriched by the establishment of three Thematic Smart Specialisation Platforms on energy, industrial modernisation and agri-food, which offer hands-on support to regions to promote interregional cooperation. They offer a forum where regions and relevant actors join forces and pool resources on the basis of matching Smart Specialisation priorities in high-added value sectors. Presently, more than 195 European regions and Member States are members of the Platform, while over 160 regions and countries are working together across the EU around areas of common interest.

Not only does the Smart Specialisation Platform represent an example of how scientists can usefully engage into policymaking, but it has also developed guidance for all actors, including researchers and knowledge brokers willing to interact with policymakers on innovation. For this purpose, two practical guides – ‘Guide to Research and Innovation Strategies for Smart Specialisation (RIS3)’ (European Commission, 2012) and ‘Implementing Smart Specialisation Strategies – A Handbook’ (Gianelle et al., 2016) – were prepared by the Smart Specialisation Platform. In addition, a number of tools – including guidance material, good practice examples, peer reviews or trainings to policymakers – were developed to reinforce the impact of Smart Specialisation. This helps to advise policymakers in an inclusive way, by involving them throughout the process instead of only placing them at the receiving end. A number of innovative policymaking instruments were also set in motion, building on participatory approaches. This is, in particular, the case of the innovation camps, driven by discussions around challenges, and Peer eXchange and Learning workshops, with regions and experts using peer reviews to debate around issues of mutual interest.

Overall, actors express their appreciation vis-à-vis this collaborative approach. According to a Fraunhofer study, national and regional policymakers expressed a 4.5 out of 5 satisfaction ranking about the Smart Specialisation Platform, thus strongly endorsing it (Fraunhofer, 2013).

Flanders provides a helpful example of how strong stakeholders’ engagement can be decisive in policymaking. The Flanders Innovation Hub for Sustainable Chemistry (FISCH) was conceived under the umbrella of Smart Specialisation as an innovation hub aimed at influencing policymaking in the area of green chemistry. Its creation mobilised more than 300 stakeholders, with several research organisations represented. It showcases a model of cluster approach in industrial policy, based on Smart Specialisation. In 2017, FISCH transformed into the new spearhead cluster for Chemistry and Plastics, Catalisti (Department of Economy, Science and Innovation of Flanders, 2014).

## Territorial Impact Assessments for Better Place-Based Solutions

The territorial dimension of policies is increasingly recognised in policymaking processes. It is, for example, fully embedded in the European Commission ‘Better Regulation Guidelines’ in assessing the impact of newly proposed initiatives and evaluating existing ones: ‘[the potential impacts of the options on] [...] different territories and regions (less developed or prosperous regions, cities, rural areas, border regions, overseas territories etc.)’ (European Commission, 2015).

Territorial Impact Assessments strengthen the territorial dimension of European initiatives. A correct assessment of the territorial dimension of a problem will help to shape



properly targeted policy options (Box 3). It can also avoid conducting policies in those areas and regions where no policy response is needed. Territorial Impact Assessments help to evaluate legal, compliance or administrative costs. The approach relies on addressing the following questions:

1. What is the issue at stake? Why is it important at European scale? Can it be quantified? Is there a territorial dimension?
2. Have EU policies the capacity to respond to the issue? What policy options can be considered? What is the impact/effectiveness of these options?
3. What are stakeholders' views? How would they react to policy proposals?

To tackle the abovementioned questions, the Territorial Impact Assessment process requires that a baseline be constructed to show how the problem is likely to evolve in the absence of policy intervention. A projection with a subnational component including demographic and economic projections can help to show the likely evolution of the issue at stake. Analytical and modelling tools can support an impact assessment, while visual and interactive instruments enhance the transparency of the process.

### **Box 3: The Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies, a vehicle towards territorial development**

The Knowledge Centre for Territorial Policies was launched by the Joint Research Centre and the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy in October 2016, in the frame of the Strategy on Data, Information and Knowledge Management of the European Commission. This Knowledge Centre was set up to strengthen overall support to territorial development and aims to be the point of reference on territorial and regional issues. In this capacity, the Knowledge Centre does not only provide a repository of relevant research and new initiatives but also serve as a place for analytical and networking activities.

The Knowledge Centre brings together a number of services in the form of data tools, platforms, models and dashboards such as LUISA, RHOMOLO, STRAT-Board, T-Board and the Urban Data Platform. Together, these services offer a vast amount of data and knowledge suitable for analysis, theoretical explorations, policy backing/development and scenario building, with one common denominator, i.e., a territorial outlook. This allows analysing the status and trends of European regions and cities, looking, for example, at their demographic or economic profile or at the provision of services for education and health.

The key element of the Knowledge Centre, in support to Territorial Impact Assessments, is the Territorial Reference Scenario. The scenario makes use of a solid knowledge base including past and future time series of socioeconomic variables and spatial information on housing, transport, energy and service infrastructures. It also includes existing European policies and legislation (such as the Common Agricultural Policy, the Renewable Energy Directive or the TEN-T) and serves as benchmark for policy options.



**Table 2** Advice for researchers and knowledge brokers

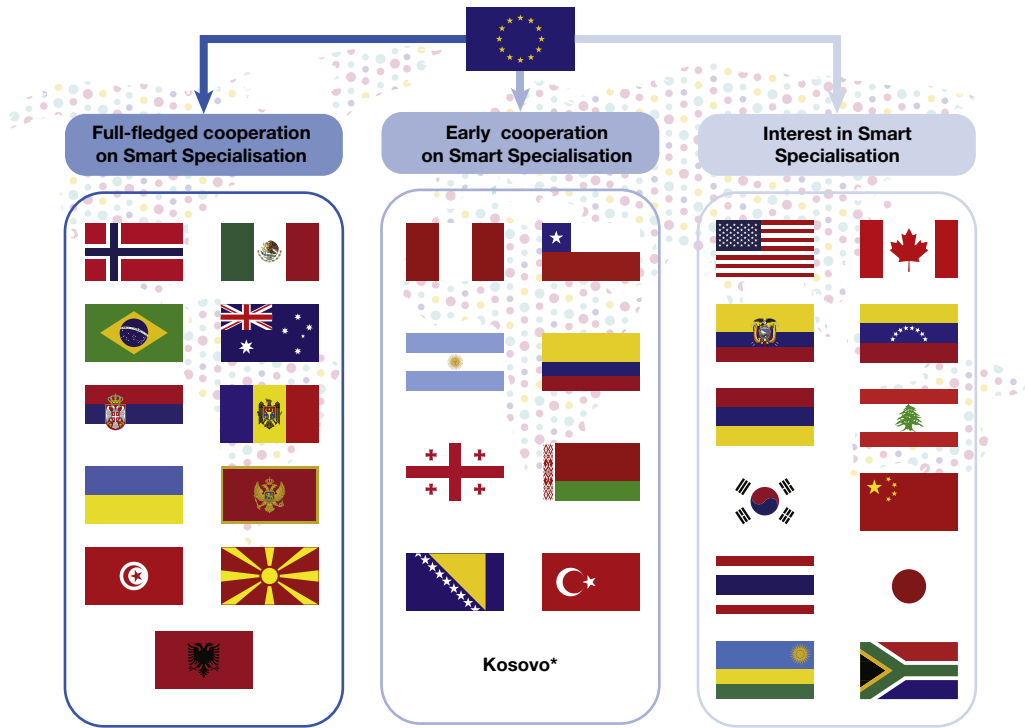
|                                                                                                                                                                                           | Advice for researchers and knowledge brokers                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Possible impact on policymaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Rationale behind the toolkit on place-based approaches</b>                                                                                                                             | Anticipate recurrent challenges to ensure that scientific contribution adequately reaches policymaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Create the conditions for well-informed, evidence-based policymaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Stages of involvement</b>                                                                                                                                                              | Ensure continuous researchers' engagement, not limited to the design phase                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Efficient monitoring, assessment and follow-up                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Method and tools:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Building governance</li><li>• Defining a vision</li><li>• Linking actors and places</li><li>• Setting up tools</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mobilise the right ingredients for good multiactor and multilevel governance</li><li>• Carry out a comprehensive diagnosis of territorial strengths to achieve an integrated vision of the territory</li><li>• Optimise participation in communities of experts involving different actors</li><li>• Innovative instruments can enrich traditional research tools to design place-based solutions</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Move from top-down to bottom-up policymaking</li><li>• Depart from sectoral approaches and shape a strategic vision anchored in the territory</li><li>• Policymaking does not emerge from an isolated reflection at political level, but from the inclusive interaction with all relevant actors</li><li>• Think out of the box to use innovative tools inspired by a participatory spirit</li></ul> |

### The Way Forward:

#### Place-Based Innovation Policies, an Approach 'Made in EU' Gaining Worldwide Interest

Place-based policies have a strong conceptual impact since they have been at the core of a new thinking on regional and territorial development. Although their starting point is the territories, the impact of place-based approaches goes far beyond the regional, national and European borders and has an international resonance. In particular, place-based approaches have been the source of what the OECD qualifies as a 'new paradigm' (OECD, 2009) in regional and local development. Previously 'negatively oriented' approaches focused on challenges and disparities are being replaced by 'positively axed' logics thinking in terms of strengths, capabilities and how to maximise them. The new reflection is more about tapping into possible pockets of growth, excellence and attractiveness than about managing weaknesses. Moreover, previously top-down, sectoral policies designed centrally are being replaced by bottom-up policies anchored in a global vision of the territories. Through this novel approach to territorial development, locally designed and owned strategies are conceived. This leads to the creation of true local ecosystems.

Place-based solutions have also triggered practical actions by researchers and policymakers at the international level in the area of innovation. Over the last years, based on European experiences and successes, place-based innovation policies inspired by Smart Specialisation have



‡ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

**CHART 3** Worldwide cooperation on place-based innovation policies. (Source: all images © Wikimedia Commons under Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 3.0, except: the European flag, © European Commission, 2018 and background image mimacz, © Adobe Stock, 2018.)

gained prominence beyond the EU. By attracting the attention and interest of researchers and policymakers on the five continents, they have become a possible gate to the world. Since they are by nature fitted to territorial specificities, place-based solutions can be applied to any part of the world, at all stages of development. So far, Smart Specialisation pockets, or elements of it, are present at different levels of implementation on the five continents. At this stage, the cooperation between the Smart Specialisation Platform and these countries has been genuinely place-based (see [Chart 3](#)), varying from early stage discussions (the United States, Canada, Ecuador, Venezuela, Armenia, Lebanon, South Korea, China, Thailand, Japan, Rwanda and South Africa), to first cooperation steps (Peru, Chile, Argentina, Colombia, Georgia, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo<sup>2</sup> and Turkey) and full-fledged cooperation (at different levels, Norway, Mexico, Brazil, Australia, Serbia, Moldova, Ukraine, Montenegro, Tunisia, North Macedonia and Albania).

<sup>2</sup>This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.



Place-based approaches can serve as an enabler for the international agenda on sustainable development. The United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encompasses 17 Sustainable Development Goals encompassing challenges of today and tomorrow. Although these goals have been agreed at international level, their delivery crucially depends on the mobilisation of national, regional and local levels. By helping to 'localise' the Sustainable Development Goals, the subnational levels embody a crucial nexus between the national and global levels (United Nations, 2018). The pertinence of the regional and local dimension of sustainable development has been corroborated by the Reflection Paper on a Sustainable Europe by 2030 (European Commission, 2019) and the Committee of the Regions, which portrayed regions and cities as vital partners able to find 'right answers to the big development issues' (Committee of the Regions, 2017b). Through their strong proximity to territorial concerns and their flexibility to local realities, place-based logics therefore appear as a fertile enabling methodology to nurture the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In this respect, Smart Specialisation and its potential to foster place-based economic transformation have been identified by international organisations and countries as a promising vehicle for the fulfilment of the Sustainable Development Goals, notably as Science and Technology Roadmaps for these Goals.

**Table 3** Advice for researchers and knowledge brokers

|                                                  | Advice for researchers and knowledge brokers                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Possible impact on policymaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Theory and practice of place-based logics</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• New paradigm on regional and territorial development, linked to the impulse from place-based solutions</li><li>• Inspiring power at the global level, which can enrich academic work and knowledge</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The resonance of place-based solutions transcends territorial boundaries and has changed regional development policy</li><li>• Inspire and steer policymaking in other territories, as well as foster possible partnerships and collaborations</li></ul> |
| <b>Increasing trend</b>                          | Place-based solutions related to innovation are gaining traction all around the world, which creates a momentum for research                                                                                                                         | Increasing influence of place-based solutions to challenges on policymaking                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Method</b>                                    | Enrich the literature on place-based approaches worldwide                                                                                                                                                                                            | Policymaking could gain from international experiences in other territories                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |



In conclusion, place-based approaches, which have developed as a game changer in the landscape of regional and territorial development policies, are endowed with valuable features to relevantly inform policy ecosystems through scientific evidence. Developing an overall strategic vision for the territory, which draws on a bottom-up, inclusive process involving all stakeholders and a thorough diagnosis of territorial strengths and challenges, is firmly anchored in the DNA of place-based logics. In turn, this makes them fully malleable to hugely diverse territorial realities. The potential of place-based approaches is not limited to policymaking at local, regional or national level, but can also impact on the international agenda. Looking forward, increasing attention ought to be paid to two important levels: at a lower territorial level, cities and, at a higher territorial level, the international dimension are both emerging as important to complete the picture of place-based approaches and further reinforce their contribution to policymaking. In a nutshell, this is about coming back to the idea that ‘places matter’ (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018) and reflecting it in the way policies are conceived and implemented.