

Foreword

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1. Introduction

This is perhaps the most 'political' moment of the Europe life because it is directly related to the addresses, themes, projects and activities that states and regions and territories should dictate in order to harmonize their needs and diversities with the challenges to be again competitive in the global world.

It is no coincidence that several research projects have followed and supported European development for more than a decade, drawing from research and analysis many important insights for the understanding of the local socio-economic effects of the crisis, which proved useful for the actions of decision-makers at the local level.

Studying the effects of the European crisis at the territorial level, starting by empirical evidence, and analyzing the different impacts on regional and local trends are already a breakthrough for countries because they have allowed us to highlight the regional experience and how these realities, although characterized by some critical issues, were able to better react to the crisis by bringing into play their own territorial capital.

Taking inspiration from geographical and economic research results from several European programmes (ESPON 2013, ENPI-Med 2013, URBACT II, and so on) in the field of geographical applied researches, the issue proposes a critical analysis and discussion on the so defined "territorial evidence" in policy planning processes. In this regard, experiences on the planning process of European Territorial Agenda 2020, transnational planning cooperation and also national level documents are included.

The aim of the issue is to highlight a common critical thinking (by concepts, methods, tools, procedures, experiences, etc.) to adopt measures in order to develop and to not invalidate the development efforts implemented by European Union states and regions during the 2007-2013 period. Different and "sustainable" approaches and solutions from several spatial approaches and baseline scenarios could represent the geography contribution to

re-addressing the competitive e cohesive future of territorial development in Europe.

Papers selected to be included in the issue will be also directed to that part of the international Geography that apply tools to asses social, environmental and economic trends in a strongly territorialized key to give place-based evidence to so called regional potential territorial capitals.

Geographical – and not only - contribution to public policies that mainly focused on boosting competitiveness in the global market was welcome, too. Selected papers are organized to investigate preventive measures able to face present European and global structural crisis.

A scientific committee and a group of anonymous reviewers will submit papers for a peer to peer review

The ESPON 2013 Programme (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion) has got an important reference point to this scope, in order to understand by researchers and non-specialists contribution, the geographical opportunity for carrying out some changes that are needed both at the policy level and at the governance level. First of all the issue related to the macro-regional strategies in support of competitiveness and cohesion also in infrastructure.

Being part of the EU and global scenario, the special issues represents a value for the elaboration of the territorial policies of urban, rural, metropolitan, regional and national developments, but also an arena of confrontation to have procedures and innovative instruments relevant to Programming in 2020, by pushing the international scientific community to compare their skills.

From the reading of contribution, some particular aspects emerge as evidence: i) there is an increasing focus among Community bodies on territorial issues, viewed as the basic vectors of European integration; ii) there is a massive scientific literature on the territorial role in Europe and in the world, also if by varied approaches and interpretations, authors consider that these documents contribute to the institutionalisation of action within the European Union in the field of spatial planning and development; iii) the

lexical analysis in Social Science is fundamental for composing elements of the new Europe's discourse in the area of spatial planning and territorial development, over and above changes in political orientations to go over the crisis.

In a 'changing Europe', grappling with economic uncertainty, energy and climate change goals, and a growing and ageing population, policy-makers' need for reliable evidence and data is all the more imperative. Advantageously, we are now at the stage where it is possible for planners and policy-makers to really benefit from the variety of research and findings generated. However, though practitioners need evidence, they are frequently unable to spend the required time sourcing and extracting the most relevant information for their needs. Key findings on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth can help planners and policy-makers in states, as well as new scientific methods and tools are able to do it in their policy-making.

In using concepts of spatial development and planning as a gateway to the different applied research developed in this special issue, the background fields of Authors is evident, also if main concepts used are in common: Territorial Cohesion, Territorial Impact, Territorial Governance, Polycentricism, Sustainability, Regional Competitiveness, sustaining the process of production and dissemination of a geographical knowledge (spatial data, analysis, scenarios, best practices etc.) of the European Union on behalf of European researchers. Territorial evidence is developed, that is more and more at the hearth of European planning processes. Moreover, it often reflects specific visions and discourses of cultural-nationalist resonance, which may also produce a misleading reading of the specificity of EU territories.

However, as a result, consistently with the principles of subsidiary and openness, papers stress the importance of making the process of construction of the European knowledge of Europe more open to the contribution of all potential stakeholders and shareholders, included those from the European scientific community and the civil society as well¹.

National, regional and local, strategic and operational documents, besides being formatted by EU cohesion policy orientations, have also mentioned in papers as well as some fundamental concepts and objectives related to the European Spatial Planning orientations. The influence of ESDP (CE, 1999), namely the concepts of polycentrism and urban-rural relations as well as the parity in access to services and infrastructures, were clear in the elaboration of National Spatial Planning Programs and their subsequent operational

programmes. All these changes show that operational structure of governance is working in Europe, nevertheless, some European objectives and goals were not attended which shows some tensions in EU policy when traduced to countries and regions. The crisis evidences since 2008, put in risk goals for 2007-2013 attendance as well as contributed to a non-convergence process of countries and regions. And several Authors are wondering on which opportunities to 2014-2020.

European cohesion policy is realised through Structural Funds (SFs). Programming 2007-2013 has a budget of €347 billion, 34% of EU budget. €201bn are for the ERDF, €76bn for the ESF, and €70bn for the Cohesion Fund. When exploited in efficient and effective way, SFs produce a considerable impact on territorial development. When appropriate management, investment on infrastructures and capacity building is in place, the socio-economic scene changes in the medium term. Territorial governance is key to success (ESPON Programme 2013). Technical assistance and highly-qualified staff providing support to stakeholders increase Territorial capital and are key to success in the management of territorial development.

Heterogeneous and contradictory answers come from subperipheral urban area in Europe. These areas cover a part of EU urban territories, and the major part of them is within a municipality territory. Subperipheral urban area is such part of the European city where the most of the population lives in urban rhythm of life and other are remaining in the typical village life. The city lifecycle retrospective analysis revealed the importance of the city subperipheral areas influence to the central part of the European city. Nowadays functional changes in the cities structure are particularly relevant and more and more revealing. This process does not ever appears under the influence of a cohesive territorial development. In the point of macro level view this process is estimating as a controversial spatial flow. This changes the traditional urban structures and affects the successful social and economic development of cities (i.e. largest cities in Lithuania).

Strategic policy European documents devoted to economic and territorial development (i.e. Europe 2020 and Territorial Agenda 2011) highlight energy as pivotal issue, both in a sector vision and a systemic approach more related to urban development and climate change. The relationship between energy and environmental themes and economic development interventions begins a main policy focus in Europe. The major issue is the comparison among action guidelines, development potentials and development priority choices that regions and States should operate on the basis of the local demand. Energy demand and production is considered both as indicator and receptor useful to measure the crisis effects and globalization dynamics impacts.

The focus on territorial impacts of the European policy with regards to the enterprise systems is a dominant topic in the last decade and how the effects of this policy have irreparable modified the enterprise network relationships (socio-functional and interrelated/cohesive) in European

¹ The Europe 2020 Strategy (EU2020s) - launched by the European Commission (EC) in November 2009 - consolidates this scenario toward "a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". That is to say, the EU2020s, first and foremost, seeks *growth* and considers that this prime objective must be achieved through three priorities, motivated by the crisis context.

regions. This suspicion has suggested European choices include the territorial dimension in the development directions by the intra and inter-regional co-operation. The searching new forms of balanced growth for enterprise is the future objective; it could be followed by assuming a territorial polycentric cohesive organization. Important European documents, like Europe 2020 Strategy and Territorial Agenda (2011), stress this orientation.

A critical review of Economic Geography literature with regards to main localisation theories of enterprise appears useful in order to accompany the reader in understanding of new strategic parameters able to measure 'the regional productive capability' of enterprises in the framework of European recent directions. By using innovative methodologies, the performance of enterprise systems and networks looking at these parameters, highlights European specific territorialised typologies of behaviour.

Some policy recommendations are suggested in this direction in order to improve both the regional productivity, and the employment in relation with to specific economic-social-environmental parameters of cohesion and competitiveness in sustainability.

At the same time, looking at the regional productive capability of Small/Medium Firms (SMFs) in Europe with regards to main pillars of the 2014-2020 Strategy, some Authors propose an unconventional cross-border regional analysis in order to implement special projects of territorial growth or renewal. Transition to a greener economy can be considered now the underlying agenda in and out Europe.

The 'lessons' to be learned from the selected and published papers are many, such as those that come from territorial economies that have been able to revitalize their production systems by tying them to a variety of natural resources, or from the so-called 'segregated' spaces that have initiated development projects focusing on: sustainability, regionalization, contrast to climate change, by connecting infrastructure, lifestyle, human capital and entrepreneurship, or from the infrastructures that, meant as a means of integration, have made it feasible, in a holistic perspective, the implementation of international hubs, triggering positive territorial changes, new labor markets, more social contacts, new global strategies.

On the whole, two messages have particularly attracted

my attention: i) the way the applied research and tests developed by Authors and their scientific platform can contribute to the streamlining of regional policies within the Union and global space in accordance with the shared methods and methodologies that take into account the needs of politics; ii) the possibilities offered by the Territorial agenda for the revision and adaptation of tools used today to plan and Programme in Europe and, perhaps, in the global world.

This special issue is an opportunity to reflect on this. On how, for example, also through a targeted increase of the development, to support cohesion among states, regions, cities, particularly in regions, such as Europe, committed to a substantial re-launch of their competitiveness.

The persistence, with which Authors have been able to manage, also through the active participation in Conferences, Workshops and Seminars, the complex amount of information, experiences, and recommendations that come from the research world turning them into suggestions aimed at the harmonious development of our territories, finds its proper recognition in this publication, which has the purpose, among other things, of illustrating, in a concise and understandable way, the main thematic objectives Europe has in order to be able to fully participate in the new "Global Strategic Agenda", so affecting the use of the Structural Funds 2014-2020 supporting growth and employment.

The whis is thus to operate in territorial contexts by an economic and geographical vision, that is very different from each other, by sharing the experience so far gained in Europe, evaluating new opportunities for development by using the tools of innovation and knowledge that promote not only the growth and sustainability, but also the inclusion.

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