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Urban dimension of territorial cohesion: perspective facing the crisis

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The Territorial Agenda (2007) highlighted the increasing influence of European policies on the territory.

On one hand these policies, adopting an integrated and strategic territorial approach, should take into account as soon as possible the development potentials at local, regional and national level as well as the stakeholders directions.

On the other hand the strategies devoted to specific development of cities and regions have to enter more explicitly both in national and European framework.

It was considered essential that regional, local and national issues were articulated with Community policies, with particular reference to rural development policies, environmental and transport policies but also to cohesion.

In this context, the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European City was fully inserted in the Territorial Agenda since the Chart promoted an integrated policy for urban development as a task of the European dimension.

Integrated urban development policy and territorial cohesion policy were seen then as two complementary contributions to the realization of sustainable development.

The entry into force of the new Treaty of Lisbon (2009), provided a more solid basis for action on territorial domain:

Cohesion policy aims to articulate more and more according to a multidimensional view that aspires to be economic, social and, above all, territorial.

Meanwhile, the global economic and financial crisis occurs. A crisis affecting Europe, too, and that in part undermines the macroeconomic convergence achieved by cohesion policy.

Economic, social and territorial cohesion remains at the centre of the most recent policy document prepared by the Commission: Europe 2020, which should be the reference for the next ten years as at the time was for the Lisbon-Gothenburg Strategy. The vision for Europe is that of a smart, sustainable and inclusive 'growth'.

The development process of European policy is profoundly affected by the ongoing processes of change at the global scale.

On one side are recognized structural characteristics of the economic crisis and, on the other, there is a clear need for choices no longer be postponed in relation to 'energy model' development both in terms of security of supply and the fight against climate change.

The Territorial Agenda renewed in 2011, which not surprisingly is called TA 2020, taking as fundamental the objectives assumed in the Leipzig Charter (and in the other documents on urban development as the Declarations of Marseille and Toledo),

TA 2020 considers the cities as engines for smart, sustainable and inclusive 'development' and promotes them as attractive places to live, to visit and where to invest.

But the TA sees also as the deprived urban areas, the existence of which is often hidden from official statistics, can be a special place of exclusion. .

From the nineties there is a direct reference to city in the European policies

- Green paper on urban environment ((COM(1990) 218): global approach and dedicated actions to implement at European level

- Local Agenda 21 : local action plan for sustainable urban areas, based on four main principles: urban management; policies integration; eco systemic approach ; cooperation and partnership

- 1998 Action plan for sustainable urban development of UE: sustainable development as political address.

This document point out a series of political objectives for improving the urban environment.

This list of priorities will be included in Leipzig Chart and in all the European strategies on sustainable development

Then since the beginning of the 90s, both active urban practices and dynamic theoretical works paved the way for new urban policy thinking, combining social and environmental concerns.

The 'sustainable city' was subsequently promoted

During the 2000 decade the urban issue in development policy is gradually recognized under different UE Presidencies.

For example in the “Report on the urban dimension in the context of enlargement” (2004/2258(INI)) by the Committee on Regional Development of European Parliament

the sustainable urban development is integrated in cohesion policy in relation with the role of the cities in achieving the Lisbon-Gothenburg objectives

The Regional Development Commission explicitly recognized the integration of urban dimension within the other policies in its competencies

Under the coordination of DG Regio, it has been created the Inter-service Group on Urban Development with the specific aims

-to promote an integrated approach to sustainable development in planning and implementing the structural funds and

-to identify and to coordinate, in the different European policies, the actions towards the sustainable development of urban areas

In this context the urban regeneration policies are seen as a potential support for local development where it is necessary to adopt an integrated and multi-level approach.

From the Nineties the dialogue between macroeconomic policies and territorial development policies seems increasingly involve a local development model that refers to different disciplines and different social practices.

The starting point is the idea that the development of different regions follow different paths and that the residual factors not explained by classic or Neo-Keynesian economic theory are of endogenous nature and often intangible.

The grey literature tends to justify local development action as:

-a compensatory, corrective or resilient reaction in order to overcome negative impacts of employment dislocation, firms closing and growing unemployment and social exclusion;

- an adjustment to institutional change such as decentralisations inducing involvement of local government in the economic and employment development of localities;

- a springboard for development strategy fitting with local circumstances, context and a shared vision of the future.

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The most common rationale of these local development schools of thought is based on the assumptions that:

- opportunities for growth exist in all various territories and functional areas and underutilised potential can be tapped
- they can be turned into integrated development projects
- as far as dynamic and committed local actors, cooperating within partnerships can get assistance and encouragement from supra local governments and other institutions such as universities, involved in the provision of various supports.

“In line with the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (Art. 174 and 175), all policies and actions of the Union should contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion. Therefore those responsible for design and implementation of sectoral policies should take the principles and objectives of the Territorial Agenda into consideration.

The coherence of EU and national policies is of utmost importance for territorial cohesion. Most policies have significant territorial impacts, influencing the development opportunities of territories in different ways.

The coordination of different sectoral policies, to optimise territorial impact and maximise coherence can significantly increase their success, and help avoid, at all territorial levels, negative effects from conflicting policies.

The optimal balance of sustainability, competitiveness, and social cohesion can be realised through [integrated territorial development](#)” (Territorial Agenda, 2011, comma 7)

Regarding the contribution of local development to cohesion policy, the Barca report on a place-based policy emphasizes that local development is likely to increase the efficiency of Community funding through increased concentration of structural funds at the local level and by virtue better management of local projects, selected on the basis of eligibility criteria and subject to monitoring and evaluation.

“We consider that the place-based approach to policy making contributes to territorial cohesion. Based on the principles of horizontal coordination, evidence-informed policy making and integrated functional area development, it implements the subsidiarity principle through a multilevel governance approach. It aims to unleash territorial potential through development strategies based on local and regional knowledge of needs, and building on the specific assets and factors which contribute to the competitiveness of places.

Places can utilize their territorial capital to realise optimal solutions for long term development, and contribute in this way to the achievement of the Europe 2020 Strategy objectives. (Territorial Agenda Territorial Agenda 2020 (Gödöllő, 2011) , comma 11)

Since the adoption of the Lisbon Treaty, territorial cohesion has to be taken seriously.

The entry into force of the new Treaty of Lisbon (2009), provided a more solid basis for action on territorial domain.

Local development represents one of the major operational tools in the hands of the EU cohesion policy to offer new opportunities for the most remote areas and groups.

The economic and financial crisis, the recovery plan and Europe 2020 create a strong pressure for reinvesting local development approach.

Pursuing cohesion is a political commitment for EU, as confirmed by the *Territorial Agenda*.

Cohesion policy aims to articulate more and more according to a multidimensional view that aspires to be economic, social and, above all, territorial.

According to many scholars and European documents, we define Territorial cohesion, as “the territorial dimension of sustainability” .

in relation to the territorial cohesion concept three “summative” macro-criteria are involved , all adding up to the concept of territorial cohesion (ESPON 2010)

- territorial efficiency,
- territorial quality,
- territorial identity

-Territorial efficiency refers to resource-efficiency with respect to energy, land and natural resources; competitiveness and attractiveness; internal and external accessibility of each territory.

-Territorial quality refers to the quality of the living and working environment; comparable living standards across territories; similar access to services of general interest and to knowledge.

- Territorial identity refers to enhancing “social capital”; developing a shared vision of the future; safeguarding specificities, strengthening productive “vocations” and competitive advantage of each territory.

Cohesion is always located and therefore it is possible to measure its territorial regional dimension and identity, which is strictly linked to the territorial socio-economic system's behaviour in Europe.

This connection had already been pointed out starting from J. Brunhes e C. Vallaux (1921), G. Jaia (1938), J. Schumpeter (1954), W. Sombart (1967), P. George (1967) with regard to contents and categories that became a set of variables in the field of geo-economics background.

Adding further parameters – from EU focus on the notion of “economic system” as expression of national and regional cohesive values (political structure and organization, history, identity) – cohesion can be assessed in relation to the territorial dimension that puts on at regional level.

New methods (Prezioso, 2008) are able to allow the cohesion by the ex ante impact assessment of policies, through evaluating inter-dependence relations among traditional (and not) economic variables, without focusing on regional wealth indicators only (e.g. GDP, employment, productivity).

According to this new approach, cohesion is evaluated as a quali-quantitative effect of the policy choice of State or Regions; it affects both effectiveness and mass (population, natural resources, etc.) of a territory, without being affected in return (Lo Monaco, 1983; Prezioso, 2008).

Economics and Geography of the last century defined cohesion's principal features:

Cohesion as a system (basis for the interpretation of cohesion's territorial dimension) that contribute to manage, discipline and integrate individual and collective activities, towards an economic regime, where regional geographical units should identify political and economic territorial units.

Indicators, derived from these definitions, have been recently (2007) enjoyed in the geographic and geo-economic space, which is the territorial dimension hosting everyday cohesion experiences.

Being less abstract about the so-called "space", the territory could be studied in multidimensional ways and be directly perceived by citizens and citizenships.

Once applied to regional economies, all these elements appear as driven by a unique process in the same "dominion": the territory.

In each territorial context cohesion becomes "geographically" relevant only when it is assumed as "organizing principle" of landscape, where it organises itself by turning positional and functional relations among its biotic and a-biotic elements into "technical rationality".

Since 2000, cohesion has been considered a new intervention instrument for the national spread of economic, monetary and social solidarity.

Therefore financial resources connected to cohesion, pursued different objectives instead of other European “funds”.

Thus, to benefit from Cohesion Fund means claim to be a not cohesive territory; it means show its own regional disparities (Greece, Ireland, Spain and Portugal) and its will to reduce them by acting/planning through operating sectors of environment and transportation infrastructures.

Between 2005-2006 cohesion contents have been redefined by bringing modalities foreseeing the new development cycle (2007-2013), by gaining positive and active meaning of *attractive force, able to hold out against impact, breakdown and separation from an economy or a society*.

The same positive meaning has been accepted by European economy and society, which today consider cohesion as the capability of different (anthropic, natural and institutional) territorial components, to search and to achieve unity and unifying proposals, even in presence of centrifugal pushes (Prezioso, 2006).

To analyse a regional territory and its internal and external cohesion degree, means to detect and to assess its resources and to relate inter-dependence connections. With regard to cohesion's evaluation, available indicators (EUROSTAT, ESPON, OCSE, JRC, etc.) allow to detect *natural, financial, human and cultural resources*, in quali-quantitative, distributive, temporal terms, highlighting endogenous modalities through which these territorialized indicators interact.

“Europe System” has pointed out cohesion as a regulated element to push towards collective actions (multilevel governance), in order to fight effects of competitiveness deficit in 2007-2013.

This new cohesion approach asked for a long stage of transformation and development of European and national policies between 2005 and 2007. Indications on *social inclusion potential, balanced development and life quality* were involved too.

The empirical measurement of cohesion at local level often conflicts with the regional territorial level estimation.

More the phenomenon is studied and broken up more the distance increases from the subsidiarity relationship that also cohesion have to maintain in the administrative field.

Cohesion both takes shape from an integrated geographical region and forms an integrated geographical region: that is an area with settlements, business, services, natural, rural, urban spaces.

At the urban scale the cohesion appears as polycentric system (Prezioso, 2011) by which it take a territorial and organizational settled pattern.

For this reason it is impossible to define a unique typology of territorial cohesion, because the regional and sub-regional dimension acts on it changing its form in the time.

For many scholars it is possible to identify the regional cohesion by means of typologies according the degree of functional interaction, fixing reciprocity rules among areas which are economic interdependent (cross-border zones).

In fact the urban cohesion depends from the existence of a sub-regional cohesion (NUTS 3).

Some European regions show a transformation of original settlements in local systems.

For many authors this ability is related to : the increase of global competition; the increase of production complexes transfer (de localization); the effect of ICT introduction on products, processes and organizations.

In this respect the territorial dimension of cohesion is always related with a collective action for local interest.

In the cohesion policy context the role of the cities is well established from the years 2000 (two thousand).

During the last decade, researches and grey reports were devoted to the role of cities in a global economy, on the dynamics of agglomeration, on their role as springboard of regional competitiveness and on the sustainability of their environments.

“The Communication from the Commission on Cohesion Policy and cities (2006) contributed to making the Member States more aware of the importance of improving the attractiveness of cities as part of the dynamics of growth”.

It offered concrete recommendations to cities and the actors involved in urban development so that they may contribute to growth and employment with the support of the Structural Funds and the other Community financial instruments.

The Communication from the Commission on Cohesion Policy and cities (2006)

- ▣ To strengthen the attractiveness of cities in terms of transport, services, environment and culture;
- ▣ To promote balanced development between cities and to strengthen their relations with rural and peri-urban areas;
- ▣ To strengthen the role of cities as growth centres, to promote entrepreneurship, innovation and the knowledge economy and to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs);
- ▣ To improve employability and to reduce the disparities between districts, on the one hand, and social groups, on the other;
- ▣ To combat delinquency and the feeling of insecurity;
- ▣ To improve governance of urban interventions through the commitment of all parties concerned and effective planning;
- ▣ To promote exchange of experience networks;
- ▣ To develop financial engineering mechanisms to achieve the maximum leverage effect with the Structural Funds.

From nineties, by means of the urban pilot projects, the urban scale interventions are experienced through the two generation of URBAN initiative.

This type of action is now a central element of many operational programmes in the current period (2007-2013)

The success factors of URBAN model are:

- inter sector coordination of actions;**
- horizontal partnership; more local responsibility;**
- financial concentration on target areas.**

The main innovation for period 2007-2013 has been then the integration of URBAN model in structural funds system.

All the cities can be involved in the different thematic axes, for better integrating different sector policies acting on the city and improving the governance.

In the ERDF is explicitly envisaged the preparation of integrated urban programmes.

The current phase is crucial for the determination of the guidelines for the next programming period post-2013.

The proposal for a New Regulation 2014-2020 precisely in relation to the 'new objective' territorial cohesion refers to the need to address the role of cities, functional geographical areas and sub-regional territories which have specific geographic or demographic problems.

To this end, in order to better enhance the potential at the local level, the local development initiatives should be strengthened and facilitated, making sure they are participatory, establishing common standards and providing close coordination for all the funds of the Community Support Framework.

Territorial cohesion implies here explicitly sustainable urban development to which the ERDF allocates at least 5% of the resources devoted to integrated actions in this field for each Member State (with investments from different channels).

In addition, the Commission will launch calls for innovative actions in urban areas and make ESF human capital investments in cities easier.

The framework laid down in the new Partnership Agreement implies a structured participatory process and the definition of strategies and priorities at the national and regional level for the construction of local development strategies at the urban scale.

To do this requires elements of 'knowledge of the land' and the construction of a knowledge base for the development and monitoring of the actions that require a new focus on the ability of local authorities in driving initiatives.

For many scholars the focus remains the city instead of the territory.

The city is the place of a double speed cohesion: city of winners and city of losers

In the fordist city the spatial segregation is perfectly identifiable, but in the contemporary scattered city the social segregation is almost random distributed

To pursue and recompose cohesion the model of twenty century suggested to organize a connective fabric based on 3 elements:

- internal accessibility (mobility average time within 1 hour; diversification and specialization of activities; full supply of goods; complementary assets organized in networks);
- existence of interconnected nodes of different networks to access the global system;
- auto-organization that makes up an interwoven landscape where the mobility basins expand and synchronize.

Following this organization was possible to set up different cohesive polycentric models of working-residential equilibrium for individuals.

This model is called of metropolization-regionalization and the implied idea of cohesion is consistent with the reform of local authority developed in some European countries (France, Italy, Spain).

The role of territory increases and push to inquire which type of integration model must to be adopt in the plan, which are collective costs, which are irreversible choices, which are government and governance systems.

And which are the critical elements in relation to the intervention scale: micro-territorial to obtain compact and co-operative cohesion; macro territorial to obtain consistent cohesion.

Then cohesion begins to be understood and measured analyzing a type of region where the social and economic life is directly influenced by internal and external integration and interdependence..

Following the ESDP the cohesive development model is balanced and sustainable, based on respect of vulnerable and high value natural areas and based on settlement organization paying attention to land consumption and right relationship with the territory.

Two concepts become important:

- during the globalization age, city and the whole urban frame are only tools in the competition among territorial systems and instead the cohesion is the basic element of the competitive capacity;
- the networks of cities could be a territorial cohesive organization model at intermediate level but not necessary polycentric : this organization could allow to obtain high level of competitiveness if the set of the cities consists in a functioning system with synergic and complementary relationships.

Both in the case of regional networks of cities and major metropolis, the planning answer was the strengthening of connection with the main trans-European transport and communication networks: this answer is considered to ensure the equi-potential and polycentric choice.

But this answer doesn't ensure the other UE conditions to achieve the balanced and equitable territorial development.

Many programmes developed in urban areas was focussed on the analysis of distressed neighbourhoods and on policy responses based on regeneration and revitalisation.

Urban policy programmes, based on enterprise development, local strategic revitalisation plans development, subject to evaluation, were not very successful.

They highlight the difficulties faced by the large mainstream organisations in reaching into disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to particular target groups - especially women, youth, elderly, disabled and ethnic minority groups.

“The Proposal on Integrated Sustainable Urban Development for the next period from the European Commission for cohesion policy 2014-2020 aim to foster integrated urban policies to enhance sustainable urban development in order to strengthen the role of cities within the context of cohesion policy”

In the words of the Commission

“Measures concerning physical urban renewal must be combined with measures promoting education, economic development, social inclusion and environmental protection. In addition, the development of strong partnerships between local citizens, civil society, the local economy and the various levels of government is a pre-requisite”

In the present transition towards a different economic model and in rebuilding the development capacity the next period priorities must to adopt, in particular at urban scale, an approach more related to territorial cohesion.

The challenges range from specific demographic changes to the consequences of economic stagnation in terms of job creation and social progress, and to the impact of climate change.

The response to these challenges will be critical for achieving the smart, sustainable, inclusive society envisaged in the Europe 2020 Strategy.

The references taking shape to territorial cohesion and sustainable development concepts must to be the basis in building the integrated development paths requested by the new structural funds regulations.

Then the challenge of the next period is to fully include Territorial Agenda criteria in the planning action at urban level.

Urban dimension of territorial cohesion: perspective facing the crisis

Grazie

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