

Some considerations about spatial planning and development policies in Italy
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Spatial planning and development have moved up the European agenda over the last 10 years with the publication of the European Spatial Planning and Development Perspective (ESDP), through the European Commission, and the Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of the European Continent, through CEMAT (the Council of Ministers of the wider Europe with responsibility for Regional Planning).

The ESDP sees a *polycentric approach* to urban restructuring *within* metropolitan areas and the development of polycentric relationships *between* metropolitan areas as an appropriate response to the need for a better urban balance.

In Italy, some part of ESDP were realised by thematic special strategic Ministerial planning (e.g., Urban II, Interreg III, Leader +, Cadses, etc.) or programmatic agreements (e.g. Accordo di programma from 1995, or the PRUSST - Urban restructuring programme for the sustainable development of territory from 1998).

Nevertheless, Italian national Level is slowly adapting to ESDP guide-lines and polycentrism, because its general planning law (Law 17 august 1942, n. 1150 – National urban and territorial planning) has-been in order to develop polycentric goals. These were introducing from the 1990's by some public administration reforms (Law 59/1997 – Public administration reform; D. Lgs. 112 /1998 – Deliver of national functions from the State to regions and local bodies; L. 265/1999 - local autonomies; L. 267/2000 – Unique Text about the local autonomies at provincial, metropolitan and municipal level; D. Lgs. 42/2004 - Cultural Heritage (landscape and environment included; ARTT. 117 e 118 of Italian Constitution and their recently revision 2001 (n. 3) and 2005; SEA and EIS Unique Environmental Ministry Text, April 2006).

During the 1990's, in Italy the polycentrism question was posed as metropolitan choice and in entrepreneurial terms with recourse to *governance* as well as with respect to spatial delimiting criteria on territorial management. The conflict between sub-regional or provincial space and that for local and regional business development was opened. The following parameters were considered:

- *political-administrative*: which city is also a local administrative management body?
- *physical*: must the urban form always be a building continuum?
- *functional*: is the urban structure still a system of production, distribution and consumption?
- *systemic*: where do flows and relations as a whole lead to (objective)?

These questions posed some problems that, while awaited a planning reply, delayed the necessity for integration expressed by municipalities and recognised territorial and social entities.

But what institutional legitimacy could have these forms of polycentrism by co-operation in Italy? At the moment, only sub-national, formal or informal co-operation (in the latter case, one must speak of coordination rather than co-operation) whose basis requires that there be a decentralising of the powers that operate through governance. This is a theme that was already open for discussion in the late 1980s, due to the expansion of the demand for “bottom up” negotiations in many Italian regions. It was partially resolved by the new generation of new Regional Laws on planning (called often Law for ‘territory government’).

Italian national laws, such as 142/90; 241/90; the “Bassanini” (Law 59/97 , Law 127/97, L.D. 143/97), the *Delegation Decree* (L.D. no. 112 of 27/1/98 par. 55), L.D. 60/98 (created on the subject of agriculture and fishing), Law 34/98, Law 265/99 and

Law 267/00 have been overlapped and replaced through the integration of the plan regulation, in which a series of tools have been set up in order to put into effect the fundamental, negotiate programming for metropolitan and polycentric governance:

- institutional understandings for programmes, only between the State and regions for long-term, action plans
- agreements for framework programmes, State/regions/provinces for defining an executive programme by means of territorial pacts (local bodies and public and private parties on a specific objective), area contracts (entrepreneurs/unions for developing crisis areas), programme agreements, programme contracts (State/businesses or Marshallian Industrial Districts for enterpreunerial development), articles of intent, services conferences.

Under these conditions, there are several policy positions. They require flexibility and an open system as well as the capacity to co-operate on different levels according to the various principles:

- 1 *of subsidiarity* that entrusts the treatment of governmental problems to a lower, efficient administrative level and relaunches the planning of vast areas and sustainable development;
- 2 *of sustainability* also shared by the Maastricht Treaty in terms of ethic principle. Establishing itself on options of inter-generation ethics on environmental subjects imposes governing the spontaneous forces present on the market, by placing constraints on the consumption of natural resources and adopting long-term, efficient, fair allocation criteria. These criteria should only be translated into coherent plans and projects on an adequate scale: over-municipal and local (e.g. inviolability of periurban spaces, fight against social segregation, economic development promotion);
- 3 *of new territorial scales* pertinent to policies, since obsolescence was decreed, not only technical but also political-institutional, on the binomial combination *structural planning* (of the over-local area)/*planning of the uses of the land* (communal level);
- 4 *of the amplitude and peculiarities* taken on by settlement diffusion processes in the territories surrounding large cities, seeing that polycentric urban structures in small/medium sized networks show the same occurrences as suburbanisation and periurbanisation in large-sized networks (favoured by the bottom up development of economic activities that consumes rural territory and unites settled areas) and interurban mobility grows as relations become complex. This has already caused crises in historical polycentrism in many European regions.

The relevance of political parties is explained in the setting up of so many political “arenas” with a precise perspective on geographic scale, though in different contexts (Prezioso, 2000, 2003, 2006):

- a) sub-national
- b) international/continental
- c) intergovernmental in vertical relations
- d) intra-State in horizontal relations
- e) interlocal
- f) intersectoral
- g) of relations between executive and legislative powers
- h) of ideological/party-political competition
- i) of public/private relations

into which occurrences are inserted that have been treated in a sectional manner to date:

- a) *interurban mobility*
- b) *extensive suburbanisation* caused by planning deregulation, new location preferences of businesses and families, growing territorial specialisation and the intensification of real estate competition and spatial segregation. This outlines a scenario that opposes EU principles of sustainability
- c) *the integration of relations “from the top” and “from the bottom”* for governing the complexity on a national scale. This concerns an interactive model (diagonal model) for integrating policies of the centre with those of local systems in order to safeguard specificities by creating large options (as in France, Holland, Great Britain) (Gibelli, 1998). For example, plans for transport can be integrated with those for the land (*the right business in the right place*)
- d) *the structure and management to be handed over to metropolitanisation*

The **polycentric issue** takes its place in the global-local debate as well as the constitutional debate on federalism, being the place of an evolution of scattered settlements (both urban and others) whose systems are reorganised, but still maintain features and an individuality capable of connoting vital self-production.

Consequently, the relative Italian planning regime is the scheme of regulations that brings the identity of the places and their resource potentials to the attention of decision-makers/strong powers; it is the “bottom up” plan that makes balanced relations (environmental and economic) **sustainable** with other identities.

There are no limits on threshold or economic and pre-established quantitative capacities that are capable in themselves of making a plan sustainable and in a predictable way imposing geographic borders to support administrative borders. But limits do exist other than those already established by the settled population over time. Only preliminary knowledge of the initial, total environmental values (natural and anthropic) can supply such limits.

It was inevitable that the necessity arise to re-propose the location as a central place in more recent metropolitan policies in terms of value (cultural, political, social). Hereto is added a historical sign over and above those of the project, in order that not one but several cities be visible once again as agoras (recentralisation of the decision-making space, valid for both large-sized businesses and capital cities) that are open to innovative impulses and conflicts that culture and social hardship generate without losing the possibilities to decide and control.

Thus, in federalism, a political region cannot exist without location and political reason cannot surpass the location.

Therefore, the search for a location as a sector of the plan was unsatisfactory. On the contrary, federalist experiences made them a unifying element linking the various beliefs that concur and will continue to concur in defining an operative formula for wide-spectrum governance.

In Italy, the experience of structural funds, social cohesive funds, PRUSST (urban restructuring plan for a sustainable development of the territory) and programme agreements has often referred to ‘deterritorialisation’ of economic and social development due to “lack of environment” as if all programming in progress did not need contextualisation and did not originate from this.

The absence of these and other, even minimal, references in the plans produced in recent years for vast areas has limited the possibility of reaching the objective of integration. This objective can only be reached through direct survey of the data and/or occurrence, by placing the weight of responsibilities on another integration variable against which the plan has always indirectly been measured: the economy.

Thus, the economy has “gone through” the plan counting on a dimension – the homogenous space – that has no territory, by dictating general laws that the market transforms into particular behaviour; at the same time, it organises the market by operating on production supply and demand and therefore, directs production by dictating market laws. If this is true, then the economy also directs territorial behaviour of production, which is almost always in visible forms of economic landscape, i.e. in places.

In the past, the economy tended to ignore this syllogism because it did not seize short-term temporal simultaneity, seeing that the type of landscape or its typicality answers to laws of long-term change. Such laws hinder the morphology of locations from being remodelled in the immediate future when market conditions change.