

# INTRODUCTION TO READING

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Since 2002, ESPON has accompanied the analysis of the issues and guidelines that have informed the European agenda over the last 15 years, representing a significant point of reference for anyone involved in "territory issues", following an interdisciplinary approach. Ranging from geography to economics, from planning to policies, ESPON has developed, to date, a strong base of quantitative and geographic information and appropriate tools representing the state of the Union, which have been accumulated and updated in time, always in search of a closer adhesion between addresses of the "European space" and of the "real territory"<sup>2</sup>.

Initially far from a fully territorial understanding typical of the geographical European approach appeared after the 2007<sup>3</sup>, the contributions produced by the Programme are a strong incentive to renew the political, economic, cultural attitude in the respect to the value that the territory and its identity (meant as the territorial capital) have for the development. It is therefore no coincidence that the keywords of the different Programming periods (sustainability, competitiveness, cohesion) constitute, albeit differently declined, the common reference for all projects.

To cope with all the requests of the last five years (the crisis, spreads, austerity, rigour), the field of ESPON projects, always transnational, opened to revision and sharing of contents and operational paradigms, by addressing and developing topics such as:

- the structural changes and trends in the European territory between 2007 and 2013 (sustainability, polycentricity, the urban-rural relationship, the competitive dimension of both smart and small-medium cities, the social behavior of institutions, governance, etc.), and the resulting scenarios;
- the integration of the principles of research and planning through the creation of multidisciplinary models applicable to different scales - NUTS 2, 3, 4, 5 - for the detection of endogenous cohesive and competitive capacity within the limits of sustainability;
- the procedures and assessment tools common to the choice of policies and European directives (Territorial Impact Assessment-TIA) and of Plans/Programmes (Strategic Environmental Assessment - SEA);
- the massive development of Data Base, GIS and manuals dedicated to geo-referencing, urban benchmarking and management of transparent, subsidiaries, integrated processes;
- the definition and implementation of a shared and credited protocol of statistical, economic and geographic indicators (also in the form of time series) in order to support of analytical and

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<sup>2</sup> The acronym ESPON has already changed its meaning twice : from *European Spatial Planning Observatory Network* in 2002-2006 to the *European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion* in 2007-2013, and is going to change it again for the period 2014-2020.

<sup>3</sup> ESPON was actually born in 1998 as a "Study Programme on European Spatial Perspective" (SPESP) (Camagni 1998) to deepen the *European Spatial Planning and Development Perspective* (ESDP) and make the *Guidelines for the Sustainable Development of the European Continent* viable by CEMAT (*Council of Ministers of the Wider Europe with responsibility for Regional Planning*). They include national research institutes coordinated by NORDREGIO commissioned by DG Regio.

decision-making processes.

In Italy, many changes in applied research and development of regional and local, thematic and strategic plans, have been introduced and tested through the results of the ESPON Priorities confirming the potential value of new trans-national guidelines for planning and Programming also for our country.

## THE MAIN THEMES OF APPLIED RESEARCH IN EUROPE

In a first phase (1998, 2002-2006), the research, broadly of applied type (Priority 1)<sup>4</sup>, deepens the study of themes and morphologies which involve the European space on one hand: polycentrism, urban-rural, cultural landscapes, governance, paying particular attention to the territorial balance especially in urban and regional level; but, on the other hand, also they face with cross-cutting strategies and cooperative trans-regional addresses, as appropriate response (policy recommendation) to the need for a better regional geo-economic (NUTS 2) and sub-regional (NUTS 3) balance in the face of challenges such as the application to the territorial dimension of the Lisbon and Gothenburg strategies, the industrial economy, the global relations.

The Italian national and regional level adjusts slowly to this approach, which saw the vision of polycentric policy "from the bottom" and the decision based on the information provided by shared indicators. In fact, whereas European research pours in ESPON innovative processes and products experimenting its processing capacity into planning, in Italy the practice of the plan is influenced by a national planning regulations, that are obsolete but still binding (Law August 17, 1942, n. 1150 and subsequent amendments) and resists this process and the completion of substantial reforms in this field<sup>5</sup>, visible, to the contrary, in the provincial and regional plans in Europe.

Especially after 2004 due to the UE enlargement, ESPON 2006 studies are a strong incentive to change the planning, directing it to be more of a strategic integrated tool of renewal of the territorial development in the areas of structural crisis by resorting to a multilevel governance. On this context, even the Italian planning - or should I say town planning - is forced to pay more attention to issues such as the formation of GDP per capita, employment, social cohesion, the supply of services especially when it reveals distant and unstable with respect to the parameters set by the Union.

The ESPON 2006 projections and the first phase 2013, based on a set of indicators, which are synthetic and still largely 'spatial', support the objectives of regional competitiveness (Renewed Lisbon Agenda 2009), although it is not uncommon to come across research that again highlight the strong structures of the European territory by comparing them to the enterprise cluster; or research that interpret the evolution of urbanization and metropolitan complex systems on the basis of the boundary and management, which, in the case of Italy, highlight the conflict between the Programming (provincial), the planning action (urban) and the political action (regional and national).

These issues are preliminary to understanding the opening of the ESPON 2013 the so-called "territorial request" that comes from the "Territorial Agenda 2007", resolved through the use of regional and local target analysis on user demand<sup>6</sup> (Priority 2) that allow the integration of research results (Priority 1) and

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<sup>4</sup> Currently the ESPON projects belong to 4 lines: Applied Research, Target Analysis, Scientific Tools, Transnational Networking Activities. These are supplemented by the Priority 5 dedicated to the technical support.

<sup>5</sup> Law 59/1997 - reform of the PA; Legislative Decree 112/1998 - Transfer of national functions from state to regional and local authorities; L. 265/1999 - Local Authorities Law 267/2000 - Consolidated Act on Local Self-Government, provincial, metropolitan, municipal, Legislative Decree 42/2004 - Consolidated Law on cultural heritage (including landscape and environment; ARTS. 117 and 118 of the Italian Constitution and their recent revision 2001 (No. 3) and 2005 SEA and EIA in Consolidated Ministry of Environment, April 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See: Planning Documents, 2004-2006 and 2007-2013, but also the new regional laws on land government.

context assessment<sup>7</sup>. The effort required for this type of project has made it possible to coordinate local, provincial, regional dimension in a cooperative trans-border (in particular trans-provincial) as well as transnational environment, taking full advantage of the instrument of the European territorial organization. The funds referred to the ESPON 2013 are thus also used to strengthen the link between policy and decision making at the local level, involving both public and private institutions and non-governmental bodies, in a form of voluntary cooperation between individuals/actors capable of promoting and manage "ad hoc" policies .

The themes are developed, however, with an "assisted" modality (assessment through questionnaires, involvement of researchers and policy makers, debates in workshops and seminars), and it is not premature to ask whether in Italy 'listening' processes similar to the European ones, can be extended to our regions to innovate the model of national Programming.

Through transnational cooperative exchange ESPON has adopted various regional models and has developed perspectives. This did not necessarily imply referring to a political decision-making body, but also to a technical representation (the Monitoring Committee and the Coordination Unit on the one hand, stakeholders, practitioners, semi-public experts on the other). And if you wanted to try an academic exercise to estimate the transfer process assumed by ESPON, you should still evaluate different plans (including those of the relations with the European institutions or with other types of Programme), which mix the prerogatives of states sovereignty, whose influence is even Euro-regional, with the authority of the regional areas and their relationships with those locally decentralized.

The types and forms of cooperation identified, directly or indirectly, have contributed to forming new intra-and inter-entities capable of dealing with a broader territorial pattern, able to generate links to functional networks or systems, and provide a possible increase in vertical relations as well as horizontal ones.

Examples of national and regional regulations correlate with ESPON in integrating the planning basis as we know it in Italy, making it more flexible and committed to the principles of subsidiarity and sustainability, to the geographical scales of political action, to the amplitude and the peculiarities of the phenomena to manage.

The importance assumed by the reference policy actors (policy and decision makers) in ESPON context is not easy to explain, because the action of continuous "capitalization" of the results (Priority 4) has highlighted a number of 'arenas', including that of the global/local relationship (see the studies on neighborhood), which bring to the attention of strong decision makers/powers the geo-economic relations, the resource exchange, the identity of the sites along with their development potentials and the equilibrium relations (environmental, cultural, social and economic).

The term *place evidence* used in ESPON after the crisis summarizes this concept, which places spatial diversity at the centre of the most recent European policies, opening to the innovative impulses and conflicts that culture and social hardship generate without losing the ability to decide and control.

In the experience carried out in Italy by the ESPON projects that have analyzed the expenditure, the use of the Structural Funds, the behavior of the institutions, one often has the impression of a deterritorialization of economic and social development, as if all the Programming in 2013 did not need contextualization and it did not have origin from this.

The political culture and science that is inside ESPON has only partially examined the opportunity to explore these issues so far and, at the moment, just as the synthesis of aggregate forms of the type or

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<sup>7</sup> Looking ahead, some of these areas will become the site / link of European integration. To make this opportunity concrete it was necessary to come up with ideas and concepts of endogenous social, economic, territorial planning.

typicality. Learning on a solid ESPON literature is therefore essential in order to overcome the lack of direct measurements of the phenomenon inherent in basic research, loading the weight of responsibility on an additional variable of integration: the researchers.

ESPON researchers 'go through' the Programme, but only a few remain. This is because ESPON requires a 'high specialization' in the treatment of the issues, but also mobility, great ability to move transversely in the many dimensions of applied research, as well as openness to diversity.

ESPON is a great opportunity for young people who look to Europe as a possibility to measure their value. And the relationships that have been created over time between institutes, academies, universities have helped to strengthen the network of European research.

## READING THE BOOK IN RELATION TO THE TERRITORIAL PLANNING

The often empirical, but always pragmatic instruments supporting ESPON projects aimed to interpret the phenomena of the last decade, have been confirmed by a number of results, better specifying the direct link that must exist between territory, sustainability, competitiveness and cohesion. To these the Priority 3 is dedicated, "Scientific Platform and Tools", intended as a place for the development of cross-cutting and particularly innovative themes and not just of "instrumentation". Priority 3 must also be considered a "platform" of correlation of points of view that animate the sectoral themes of Priority 1, from which, with the support of the observation, the transversal vision of the European territory comes, along with also its compliance, that is the set of regulation measures, even voluntary, which the processes of good practice should follow.

For this a few lines emerge stronger than others and can be seen by examining the many publications ESPON Scientific Report, Atlase, Territorial Observation, Evidence Brief, etc..

It ranges from the "Dialogue on Cities, Rural Areas and Rising Energy Prices", the "Territorial Dimensions of the Europe 2020 Strategy", and again: "Population development and migration", "Accessibility", "Economic Performance of European Regions", "Internet Roll-out", "Creative Workforce", "Regions and cities in the global economy", "Natural Hazards and Climate Change in European Regions", "Regions Integrating Land and Sea", "Gateway Functions in Cities".

Not all of these 'observation' directly affect Italy and the strategic priorities of its development.

In an interview in 2010 at the Royal Town Planning Institute regarding the project INTERSTRAT (ESPON Territorial Integrated Strategies), I stated that ESPON allows Italy 'to travel' in space and in the European territory appreciating all the regional, environmental, socio-economic and cultural differences, but also to integrate and use these differences with the aim of a cohesive and sustainable development, while maintaining and enhancing the competitive potential of the country through the updating and dissemination of new methods, tools and practices in order to make territorial policy a common good relationship for the entire European Union. As long as institutional users, policy makers, researchers, stakeholders, operators respond to the questions posed by the Programme in a reliable, flexible and rigorous way, thus helping the Italian society to better appreciate the added value offered by European integration.

A few years later, these considerations seem to me still valid, as evidenced by the contributions to this collection by many Italian participants in the ESPON projects.

In this volume those who have availed of the significant contribution of Italian applied research are represented. And as you will see there are many.

The essays trace the main themes that have characterized, from 2009 to the present, the development of the Programme and the debate taking place in the open and internal seminar organized during the

presidencies of the European Semesters. However, they also want to be a 'tribute' due to the effort to spread a critical thinking that includes some basic concepts of the so-called place evidence aimed at strategic integrated strategy that accompanies the latest territorial planning. First of all, sustainability.

The book should be read taking into account at least three conditions: i) the narrative themes, concepts, theories and methodologies that distinguish the European experience from that of the stakeholders and practitioners in Italy, to offer new visions and opportunities for change, also legislative, integrated and inclusive opportunities of 2014-2020 Programming; ii) the "training" purpose of the reading, addressed to university students in the first place, but also to policy makers, stakeholders and operators in the planning (the practitioner, precisely, but also semi-public experts); iii) the value of the cross concept of territory and place that is to spread from the policy and not just through the topics required by the current law.

All this is backed by theoretical passages and wealth of quotations and references to support the new 'practice' of the plan through examples and images.

The fact that the book is accompanied by case studies at various levels, regional comments, transnational comparisons was a specific choice of the curator, to push to consider the term 'territory' not only as an adjective, but as a fundamental subject of the action of development that will characterize the Programming in 2020 more and more attentive to the diversities and identities.

To the Editor and Authors both the space and the place are considered territory, in different geographical scale, as the culture of Anglo-Saxon and French-speaking countries intend; so, rather than a semantic dissertation, the essays are guided by the need to respond, pragmatically, to certain questions: how the concepts of space and place end up affecting most of the other contents of the plan; which conceptions of space and place have more weight on the plan, what mechanisms and institutional structures influence these conceptions; which is the limit of compromise that can be reached in the plan and why.

The answers are to be found in the set of criteria and indicators that ESPON provides and which have served to analyse how much many, new and old, concepts permeate the strategies (policies and the design of the plan) and their implementation (the plan as product), to be shared from the point of view of the method and the application to each individual case-study.

As the cooperative transnational dialogue in the development phase of projects has shown, the process-content ratio of the plan acquires strong political and geographical connotations in different contexts, since, as the authors point out, the implications and the sectoral effects are obvious and tangible (from land use policy to the sustainability of the settled communities, to regional economic development and to infrastructures, etc.).

Thus, after a first part dedicated to the review of the projects of the four main priorities, to the position that emerges for Italy, to the policy implications, the second part is devoted to deepen the point of view of the Italian regions and how these have linked the ESPON reading to the planning in "making the region" and in macro-regional development (in this case, Piedmont, Lombardy, Veneto, Emilia Romagna), and which are the differences separating space and place in different regional contexts or sub-regional and metropolitan planning.

Very useful, also educational, is the critical reasoning carried out by some authors in regard of theories that have influenced the interpretation of the planning process, leaving on one side the debate about the planning practices, actually leading to the failure in Italy of those public policies (e.g. for innovation or institutional adaptation) made without taking into account the actual power structure that operates in the territory; thus highlighting the still structuralist approach (the so-called 'modern rationalism') that permeates the country, with obvious negative implications on the evolution of socio-spatial aspects and the relations among economy - geography - environment - society.

Of course the differences that are found between Europe and the Italian context are impressive, especially from an instrumental point of view. An example of this is represented by the so-called consultation papers, documents of an institutional nature that, throughout the period of transition to devolution, have critically accompanied Great Britain, France, the Baltic States and new EU Member States, the political changes and the public action concerning the choices of territorial planning.

So we should ask whether the result of spatial planning, the territorial asymmetric development - that is diversified in form and content in order to meet the initial target of policy – is, in Italy, the result of never faded positivism or the effect of the post-modernist process derived from structuralism that has pervaded the planning of the last decade without finding a balanced juxtaposition in the plan.

As a form of applied geography (quoting Murdoch, 2006; Davoudi and Strange, 2009), the planning ESPON refers to is more 'political' and plays an important role of institutional tool in formulating ideas of and about space, so that the imaginary offered can 'perform' the reality. But it is the 'making politics', especially under the pressure of the European Union (ESPON, 2013), which made it possible to identify the common principles of territorial rather than spatial development and thus to overcome the rhetoric opposing space and territory, making planning the tool that interprets the identity of the territorial capital.

#### THE ROLE OF ITALY IN EUROPEAN 2020 POLICY

The process of development of European policy is at a crucial turning point for the implementation of the guidelines established for the 2014-2020 Programming period. The five objectives assessed by the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy and that will guide the process must be translated into national and territorial objectives. This means for Italy to look up to employment, research and innovation for the relaunch of the productive and industrial system, climate change and energy, education and fight against poverty starting from their own territory.

The Agenda of the Semester of Italian Presidency starting in July, lends itself to be increasingly "territorialized" and linked to the three priorities related to each other by synergistic relationships: Smart growth: developing an economy based on knowledge and innovation; sustainable growth : promoting a more efficient economy in terms of resources, that is a greener and more competitive economy; inclusive growth: fostering an economy with a high rate of employment aimed to social and territorial cohesion.

It must be clearly said that the pursuit of these goals requires a strong territorial cohesion, which in ESPON takes the form of yardstick of the initial state and of the achieved and achievable goals, certainly not the form of the means, which remains the Programming and planning. This vision has generated many conflicts in Italy making the natural relationship between cohesion policy and territorial planning a critical node of the next programming and triggering a political and academic passionate debate. From the political point of view the current Europe 2020 strategy is part of an evolutionary framework – with gradual emergence of the territorial dimension – which, after about a decade, gives acknowledgement to the fundamental notion of cohesion in its dimension of social political long-term objective, but not as a shared competence with the political responsibility of the planning.

As rightly pointed out (D'Orazio, 2011), the evolution of the European 'speech' on Cohesion the construction of a specific level of planning with European policy instruments but not necessarily with territorial jurisdiction has been replaced by a concept of territorial cohesion as integrated approach to policy definition; an approach that requires you to frame the set of the multidimensional and potentially conflicting objectives of national and European sectoral policies in a common framework that takes into account the territorial dimension. The concept of territorial cohesion is a bridge between the need for economic efficiency and ecological balance, putting sustainable development at the centre of politics.

Although the conceptual substrate that informs the Europe 2020 strategy continues to use a framework strictly limited to indicators of growth, considering as efficient sustainability objective the 'simply' decoupling between growth and resource use. It remains therefore problematic the interpretation of what is meant by territorial dimension in the development policies and, consequently, which European operational tools such as processing and implementation of policies can be considered apt to achieve the objectives stated in Italy.

This means that for the Italian regions Strategy 2020 is nonetheless prevalent than the cohesion which, in theory, should respond to the lack of resilience and to the increased vulnerability due to the effects produced by the big "issues": Climate Change, Energy, Demography Change, Globalisation.

The renewed Territorial Agenda 2011 relaunched by ESPON, had highlighted the need to develop comparable territorial indicators of real resources and potentials on a regional scale within a shared methodology to make it immediately effective and efficient the development actions. The research activities carried out as part of the network of ESPON Contact Points at the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, on the issue of territorial cohesion since 2006 have enabled the scientific assessment of the documents of the European planning for the Italian regions (Prezioso, 2011), highlighting the issues to be explored for the needs of the users/beneficiaries that act locally in territories support through EU funds (structural, cohesion, etc.), in view of the harmonious development of the national territory, monitoring the performance of regions, cities, large areas, in order to improve the competitiveness of Italy as a whole.

At this stage, ESPON has developed and anticipated issues such as the Horizon 2020 themes in the view of the innovation that the new Programming requires. In particular, the closing activities of the Programme have been closely related to the flagship initiative in the field of Social Sciences aimed at establishing new growth and jobs in Europe for the period 2014-2020, taking into account the territorial diversity of the countries.

These activities are part of the policy priorities linking the Horizon 2020 to Europe 2020 Strategy according to a "bottom-up" vision of the challenge-based approach through a multi-disciplinary interpretation of resources and knowledge. Including among those the geography as well as the economic and social sciences, many pilot and demonstration activities have been conveyed through ECP networks, ranging in the different fields of new Programming: green economy, clean and efficient energy supply, smart, green and integrated planning, inclusive, innovative and secure societies; climate action, resource efficiency.

The real opportunity offered to ESPON applied research has not neglected the territorial context of the crisis, also analysed through networks and Target Groups set up for this purpose, through activities of peer to peer review and blunder check of projects, monitoring the activities of "reaction" also in individual countries, rereading the crisis as a lack of territorial cohesion but especially of:

- integrated strategical planning (INTERSTRAT - ESPON in Integrated Territorial Development Strategy);
- commonality of concepts and conceptualizations (CaDEC - Capitalisation and dissemination of Espon concepts);
- education training for policy makers and Phd students (ESPONTrain: Establishment of a transnational ESPON training programme to stimulate interest to ESPON2013 knowledge)
- substantial knowledge of the prevailing development addresses (ESPON on the Road, still in progress),
- supporting the start-up of a big number of permanent working groups for the period (2010-2014) with the participation of institutions, stakeholders, academics, policy makers, practitioners with the task to speak steadily on the issue of territorial development.

The sub-themes included in the Territorial Vision 2020 has been further tested and in-depth analysed requiring the involvement of the Ministry of Environment in relation to Climate Change and Carbon Footprint, new sustainable achievements, high energy efficient, the ENPI CBC Med Programme, the EU Programme FP7-ENERGY SMART CITIES 2012; UERA Programme of Joint Alliance for Research; issues discussed during numerous seminars and workshops from 2011 to the present, to anticipate and direct Italian development (sub-, inter-, supra-regional) toward those more general themes with strong political-economic impact, also beyond the new Strategy 2020: Territorial Agenda (2011), Leipzig Charter (2007), Climate Change agreements, and towards the more instrumental themes, such as the conceptual revision of the European territorial vocabulary, the use of methodologies and innovative shared techniques of policy and strategic assessment.

The positive contamination of the individual disciplines with different cognitive domains (geography, regional science, planning, economics and statistics, management, spatial information, law) offered visions and scenarios, rules within the framework of reforms and new economic policy choices and governance of territories, centred on the results of the 2013 territorial planning and on the opportunities and the strategic issues that are developing for Europe2020.

More significant tests were conducted on the territorial evidence interacting with other research institutions<sup>8</sup>, by relating, for example, the territorial cohesion to the economic crisis (Paris 2011) or by comparing the search for a new political model for the European capitals - also through questionnaires aimed at clarification of relational concepts<sup>9</sup> of European culture (CaDEC Project, Paris 2013). Statistical surveys have provided controversial results for Italy, even if they have confirmed the correlation between the issues of equity of distribution of resources among the populations of the different territories to the principle of sustainability, or the regional competitiveness to the innovation or to the problem of cultural adjustment, which seems to persist in the country in front of the European integration.

In 2011 the Italian regions and provinces have had a positive response to the stimuli and the targets set by the ESPON Programme, as demonstrated by the high participation in the calls. This 'response' is on the basis of the increased awareness of the many recent changes taking place and of the value that the potential territorial and economic capital has taken in Europe in the various subsidiary bodies, which would have, according to the well-established transnational ESPON vision, the task of the territorial planning and management.

With regard to the competences, the true question to be resolved in Italy in the debate - now decades-long - on the territorial scopes of the government of the territory, it is still required a careful and mature reflection, that does not exclude the possibility of reorganizing the limits, boundaries and functions of Programming, placing them in a broader and more modern vision aimed at achieving the objectives of effectiveness and efficiency in Europe.

East Europe countries, such as Romania, or West Europe, such as Britain, started this process in 2010, driven by the need to adapt their administrative and constitutional model to the European trend, or by rebalancing of public accounts (Government's Spending Review, October 2010), with substantial cuts but targeted at departmental budgets.

These choices, defined "integrated strategic planning," they had a big territorial and organizative impact: the creation of Large Urban Zone (LUZ) in lieu of the provinces or the abolition of the Regional Development Agency and, consequently, of the Regional Spatial Strategy, but also the enactment of

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<sup>8</sup> SciencesPo., Datar and Ecole Française between 2010-2014 to name just a few.

<sup>9</sup> 6 key concepts recurring has been selected: Sustainability, Territorial Cohesion, Territorial Governance, Regional Competitiveness, Territorial Impact, Polycentrism, and 2 in the national interest for Italy: Territorial diversity related to regional disparities, regional convergence and opportunities of the territory.



legislation, such as the "Localism Bill", to give a much stronger role for local authorities and units of proximity or "neighborhood."

In any case, the cohesion and the development of the territory, already instrumental main objectives of the European regional planning in 2013 (Cohesion Policy Programme of Polish Presidency of the Council of European Union 2011), were also chosen by ESPON as a thread of reasoning that cannot stop at national cases, but it must necessarily look to the ongoing reforms and the implementation of the Strategy Europe 2020 (Barca Report, 2009; Barca e McCann 2010; V Cohesion Report, 2010; Territorial Agenda, 2011; Prezioso, 2008 e 2013), considering the means and the tool by which to generate different and original models which will have political-administrative, geographic economic competitive, polycentric, sustainable features and will re-launch or replace the current arrangements for regional planning.

The lack of a shared instrumental and quantitative methodological basis from which to draw concrete measures to support the development of territorial potentials of regions and large areas, coordinating and making public and private operations more efficient, highlights in fact the main requirement of EU to face the choices 2014-2020.

However, it may seem difficult to define a unique geographical regional typology of territorial development through ESPON, to replace the existing administrative areas, since their size and performance (economic, social, environmental, cultural) change over time. So in many European regions and provinces (e.g. Northern-Italy, Southern-Spain, Germany and Central and Eastern Wallonia, Rastand-Holland), where also the stability or the increase of territorial cohesion had transformed the original localisms in models of innovation and smart growth process, product, organization, where environmental values seemed higher and long-lasting, attractiveness and investment opportunities grew, today lack resilience and increased vulnerability are found in the respect of the effects produced by the big "issues" that the 2020 Strategy must face, just cause of the lack of clear local subsidiaries responsibilities.

Studies on the subject (ESPON Typologies) had already shown, for Italy, the vast systemic and functional area as a potential scope fitting the measurement of regional and urban cohesion, geographically representing it as an area where the economic, social and cultural life is directly influenced by sufficient intra-and cross-border integration and interdependence (cooperation), and analysing it, in the last decade (Prezioso 2006, 2007, 2011), as NUTS in order to compare its macro-economic and infrastructural aspects and its actual as well as its potential capacity in the European framework.

However, the NUTS, statistical and spatial homogeneous territorial units characterized by strong functional links that originate from economic and social hierarchies, represent a limit and are considered one of the main causes of difficulty to adopt a common methodology. A second critical aspect concerns the geographic interpretation - in this case understood as a positive basis on which to build the global competitiveness among internationalized territories and their multi-level governance - of new phenomena of transformation of the urban territorialization (e.g. the shrinking regions. Riviere, 2010) visible within the provinces, where, more than at other levels, the original hierarchies city/region of the last century switch to connections and cooperation networks among institutions and corporate citizenships (local and "bottom-up" cohesion measured, for example, by the number of agreements and projects or wide area developed).

The debate is open even in Europe, where, following the revision of the Structural Funds in 2007, the continuous exchange of experiences and the intensification of the dialogue between regional and national policy makers, on the one hand the need for an intermediate subsidiary institution has been reaffirmed, and, on the other, many complain about the absence of a comparable scale to the optimal extent (wide area), in order to re-orient 2020 Programming on topics such as: Territorial development and cooperation, Balanced growth, Polycentrism, Urban drives, Rural areas, Ultra Peripheries, etc.. (See the URBACT II projects, and those of the Priority 2, ESPON Programme 2013).

The question of the role to be assigned to the subsidiary intermediate body (wide, metropolitan area) was also evident in 2007 (research projects of the 7th Framework and the Leipzig Territorial Agenda), where the territorial policy had already been listed as a potential carrier of substantial changes, if competences had been given to an optimal area through which to develop the study of the major themes of Energy, Climate change, Demography, of Global Economic Competition, Transport, of EU geographical Structure. The latter is still crucial to the debate on the future transformation of the Italian provinces.

Thus the concept of territory emerges as a relative concept, clearly visible even in Italy to supra-municipal (provincial and regional) level.

The analyses carried out in ESPON allowed to infer the meaning from the concept of spatial/territorial interaction (Territorial Agenda, 2007, and 2011) and polycentricity, observed within large metropolitan areas in the past decade (MEGAs, world or capital cities, urban regions). From this point of view, the "wide areas" have emerged as the "optimal scope" for the implementation of cohesion policies and their innovative changes because globally competitive and, at the same time, co-operative in setting quality of life as an objective through a different conception of the services and the welfare state, one of the key factor to re-start the competitiveness (European Commission, 2011).

After 2011 different guidelines, approaches, proposals and initiatives have emerged and sometimes they are in conflict with the former ones, because they conceive a new generation of governance related to cohesion (Farinos Dasi, 2006; Prezioso, 2006, 2008), and even more to the issue of the optimal territorial dimension. In the previous period few indeed were the theoretical and empirical reflections on the "territorial dimensions", necessary to accept new rules for a competitive and sustainable development.

However, some of the arguments and/or paradigms investigated by ESPON research represent a good speculative common starting point:

- knowledge of territorial potentials and of compared advantages/disadvantages for the economic development and arising, for example, from the excessive geographical concentration of values or of non-environmental and social values in order to improve territorial and economic cohesion overcoming the information asymmetry;
- the role played by the common services (ESPON SeGI), now concentrated in urban areas and in metropolitan agglomerations, their full utilization in front of the different degree of accessibility shown by the urbanized regions (especially in the countries of the enlargement), the source of abilities to attract foreign direct investment to be used to improve the performance of human and physical capital;
- the permanence of ethical-relational values in inland areas or of the so-called "ultra-periphery."

In the context of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ET 2050), for example, it is the Governance (ESPON TANGO) that is asked to outline how, in a concrete and operational way, the European regions and wide areas can achieve these objectives, coordinating and managing the urban / rural systems and the infrastructure that support the development.

The large area is a distinctive feature of the territorial measure in relation to the different types of regions and transnational areas involved in the European policy, thereby raising the efficiency at a subsidiary level much higher than the municipal or regional level, in front of, for example, the geographic concentration of innovative activities in the area of the Pentagon and of the diversities of European territories that can present many typologies (urban, urban-rural, rural, etc.) and significant regional disparities.

By changing the conceptual approach to the study of the territory, it becomes a fundamental reference of European policy at regional and sub-regional scale for a polycentric and cooperative development of the

territory, thus accepting that its planning and management models are designed to consistently meet - in terms of rules - several principles, including sustainability.

Different ESPON definitions were functional for this purpose: ESPON has borrowed them from time to time in the literature, politics, economy, town planning, geography, prompting the European Commission, for example, to pay particular attention to the one which binds the territory to the productivity. This relationship, however, is particularly delicate to be discussed at a geographical and economic or political level (and therefore at the level of the research of the territorial dimension of competitiveness); the aim is to prevent spreading, on the regional and sub-regional level, the same management mechanisms of production designed at policy level.

The territory makes it quite possible the practical implementation of the endogenous capacity to competitiveness, that is the ability, that the individual places and their identities have, to support their development prospect in terms of environmental sustainability and integration, tending to the achievement of progressive virtuous positions.

The large area, reinterpreted in systemic rather than functional terms, acts as a regulative reference also on regional disparities in the location of production and welfare, according to the so-called "footloose capital model", introducing indicators such as: the nominal income and the Internal Product Quality (IPQ), on which to act - in intra-and inter-regional (territorial) terms - in order to achieve a sustainable integrated economic planning.

This means to take for the Italian territory at least three dimensions in the European context: 1) technical (e.g. the environment), 2) organizational (in relations with institutions and businesses), and 3) social and relational, which correspond to as many geographical scales of territorial planning.

Among the rules the new territorial vision must comply with in Italy, some have become almost a categorical imperative because of its assimilation to Europe and are among those that allow a faster implementation of the principles of sustainable development and of a competition focusing on the use of human and natural resources.

The transnational groups (TG) represent one of the many forms in which ESPON European governance is performed by territorializing public policies. In these areas it has taken on a transverse dimension: a tool to establish the different competences and responsibilities, to assist in joint decision-making; to support the collective choice in the development of shared projects. The rules of governance that allow TG to express themselves become the place/means to develop the so-called "territorial game" (another type/form of animation), where a plurality of actors with different status have full freedom of expression, playing from time to time the role that is most appropriate to them. The ESPON Café also served this purpose.

In order to make these forms of integrated participation operational, the question arises about giving an official capacity to documents produced by the TG and to the formal and informal means of communication (press, forums, blogs, wikis, short message, etc.). These have proved to be an enrichment for the ESPON projects, allowing numerous categories of institutions, both formal and informal ones operating at the local level, to be included in the experiment and to put into practice the policy guidelines related to planning (Priority 2).

The recurring characters of this type of project can be considered:

- the insertion of the economy in the urban or territorial reorganization of the infrastructure systems;
- the significant growth of the participation of (public and private) 'actors' that contribute to the choices of intervention and of individuation of urban and large area policies;
- the definition of new and more modern mechanisms of concerted discussion tools, appraisal and implementation of projects, in order to obtain high levels of efficiency/effectiveness and return on

investments.

The fundamental qualities (strengths) that have transformed them into cooperative experiences were:

- the recourse to actions of highly oriented innovation (in the design and deployment), which depend on the local milieu (e.g. presence of motivated entrepreneurial forces, capable of international perspectives, research and development of new technologies, etc.);
- adherence to the principles established by European policies.

These experiences validate ESPON as a framework for sharing differences, where the project plays the role of competition engine and at the same time the role of socio-economic organizer of the cooperation network for the territories that support it.

This means that the milieu of reference must still be prepared to accept shared actions capable of manifesting a willingness to co-planning and co-operation. This requires an "upstream" act able to create or to consolidate (economic, social, cultural, environmental) values around the idea of ESPON project and to identify the recipients of the action plan. The combination of these values formed the basis for measuring the validity of the project.

In Italy, unlike other European countries (Germany, France, Great Britain, Spain, Ireland, the Netherlands, the Baltic countries in particular), these inputs are still the subject of discussion and experimentation as regards the new role that has been attributed to local institutions for the government in the territory (USESPON, ESPON territorial Scales, NORBA), because the experience accumulated by the public bodies in the cooperation for the management of assets of collective interest is not mature enough to provide shared visions.

These goals can be achieved at present through the partnership, formal organizational structure or a multi-agency, having as purpose the strategic policy-making declared in the form of local political agenda (e.g. for cities the Local Agenda 21, the Leipzig Charter, the Smart City).

The explosion of "bottom-up" initiatives has revealed to be a factor, in ESPON, from which to start up diversified models of development and of territorial management.

Multiple definitions derive from the multitude of experiences. The results of some projects (e.g. FOCI 2010) claim that the cohesive development of the last twenty years has tended to standardize and reduce the distance that separated geographical areas at different "speeds" especially in urban areas. Another possible measure is based on economic criteria (GDP per capita, Concentration of functions and population, Trans-national Cooperation, Polycentrism, Provision of services of general interest - SGI NUTS3-FUA), while other criteria are related to the occupation and make reference to European average values (Productivity, Employed people, Unemployed people, Female employment rate).

Of course in all these analyses many things are still lacking:

- some dimensions (or components or domains) of well-being attributable to a macro-dimensional synthesis useful to the political economy of the new Programming ;
- "intermediate" investigation scales (NUTS 3, LUA, LUZ) and the related structural factors that allow you to include some determinants of local development in the European Union planning, and estimate levels of well-being significantly different from region to region, from city in the city.

Likewise, one must add the measure of territorial capability (organizational, managerial, perspective) as an institutional reference, through the indicators of the Territorial Agenda 2011 and Europe in 2020 (which includes and updates the indicators of the territorial dimension of the Lisbon 2000-2009, Gothenburg 2001 strategies).

For this reason, the new ESPON 2020 approach could evolve to support a policy increasingly directed to the - social and economic - integration (not just on cohesive basis) that will lead the regional strategic approach of the 2014-2020 period in order to renew the basis for territorial competitiveness (measured by 3 macro indicators: knowledge, innovation, optimization of human capital) through the pursuit of the goals of smart growth, sustainable development and social inclusion.

The demand of urban and rural areas was expressed mainly in this direction in order to remove the obstacles to the growth of quality of life by promoting an integrated approach to planning decisions (employment + growth + environment). Likewise also the request has become pressing to make the urban development truly sustainable through the ability to integrate economic, social and environmental objectives of the cities with an offer of "good" services that include those public and private, individual and collective interests.

#### WHAT TO INCLUDE IN THE TERRITORIAL AGENDA FOR ITALY 2020

A big amount of ESPON 2013 research has already suggested implementing the existing actions targeted at urban areas to improve their position in relation to the EU-28 medium-sized cities, by highlighting which structural resources to employ (e.g. in terms of accessibility, institutional efficiency, smart regeneration) in order to play a key role in providing a stable offer of employment.

Compared to the many possible solutions being tested in Europe, Italy has expressed a general - but not always convincing - adherence to a perspective of change and innovation to generate jobs, growth and social cohesion, to reconcile with the respect for the 'environment', addressing three areas: networks and knowledge, production and services competitiveness through the use of new technologies, the contrast to the ageing of the working population in order to reduce welfare costs, looking at an economic trend which is (although little) positive just now.

European Union addresses, the results of Programmes beyond ESPON (for example the Alpine Space) and of many debates (METREX) have completely changed the contents, processes and standards of the matter, suggesting that the country should face a deep structural reform by innovating lexicon, approaches, methods and processes in order to adjust the scope of the planning to the topics on which the bet of growth is placed and in order to support green economy and to combat climate change, to bridge the digital divide, to realize smart cities, ensuring the safety of the territory, to manage of an "aged" society, to offer new services for welfare, public health, accessibility; explicitly including the substantial principles of Community orientation as sustainability, cohesion, equality, subsidiarity, cooperation in land use, design and management of the labour market, human capital, cultural heritage, water, waste, energy, and much more.

However the major limitation for the country lies in being representative of a "linear process of cultural ageing", which excludes most of the aspects that ESPON has 'seen' as qualifying the planning actions:

- the adequacy of procedural instruments, which separates the action planning from the application of obsolete standards, obsolete computational and statistical localization models (e.g. demographic projections, settlements weights, productive activities, infrastructural and service resources and), including dynamic and cognitive approaches and supporting the decision making, in turn integrated, such as the Territorial Impact Assessment, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Environmental Impact Assessment, the UNI ISO;
- the weight given to the time variable (both in the preparation and in the implementation as well as in the management), partly supported by the use of dedicated GIS;
- the strong relationship between the economic and financial aspects and the action plan (knowledge

and use of the opportunities offered by European funds and related financial benefits vs. the spending review, the processes that regulate the balanced redistribution in the revenue/expense relationship in the mechanisms of institutional budget, from the use of the mechanism of subsidiarity, etc.)

- the transparent distribution of tasks between government institutions (government) and governance (multilevel set of rules) of the territory.

The institutional weakness represented today by Law 1150 of 1942 and by the setting of regional laws on the 'government of the territory' is therefore not bridgeable with simple regulatory 'integrative' actions.

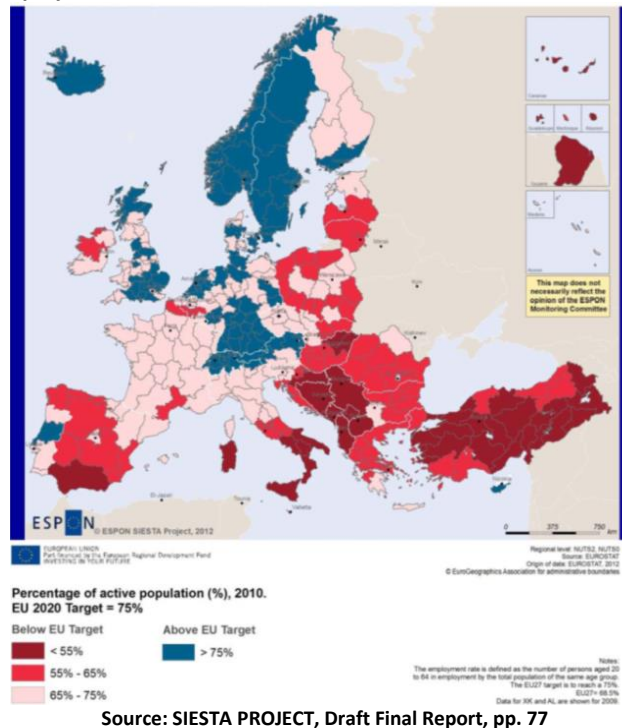
Rather, it is necessary to order in a single general set-up, different subjects and yet all place-based subjects, from which the regions, real transnational partners along with the large areas, will benefit in terms of exclusive power in government of the territory, today defined as a Territorial Agenda.

That is what Europe means under town planning, this is what Europeans call the Integrated Territorial Development Strategies of Planning to designate different forms of documents/plans and rules oriented to territorial development defined as the process that informs an economic, social and environmental change through policies and Programmes in accordance to the size of its territory.

Faludi (2011, p. 51) believes that in the crisis should be faced by keeping a close relationship between planning and geography "look at the map before implementing policies", quoting the Baltic Sea Strategy, which, crossing the borders between countries, gave a trans-national cooperative response to the global crisis (NORBA).

The Territorial Agenda 2020 requires Italy to reach an employment rate above 70% as is the case in many parts of Germany, Great Britain, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Austria, which already exceed 75%<sup>10</sup> (Map 1).

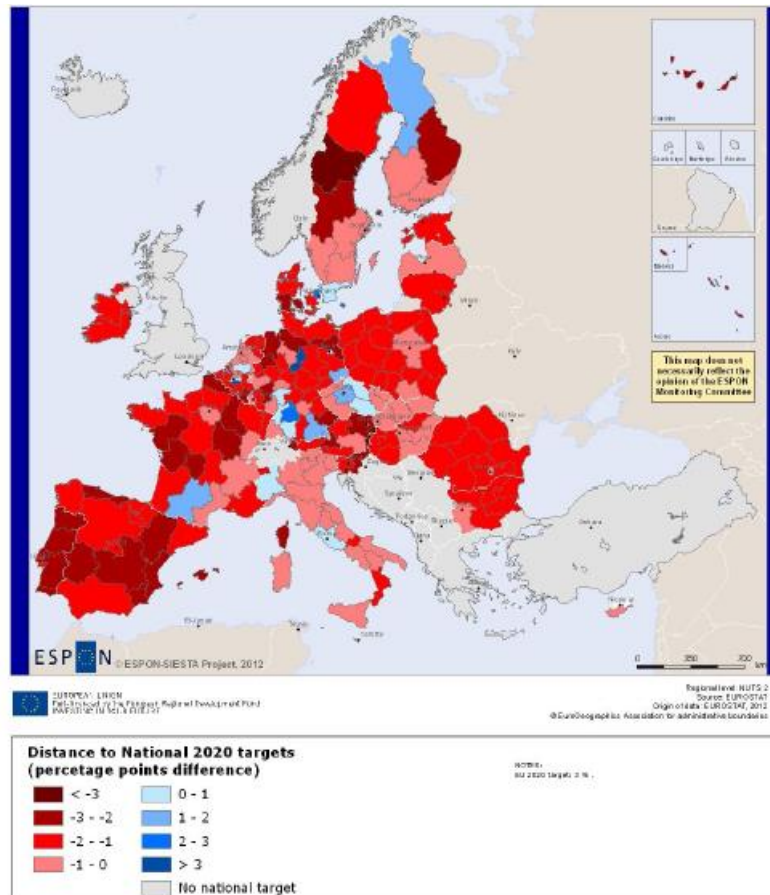
**Map 1: Employment rate, 20-64, in 2010. Distance to National 2020 Target, SIESTA**



<sup>10</sup> Average rate to be achieved, also in qualitative terms, compared to the targets set for 2020, with regard to the population between 20 and 64 years.

As in other transition moments, spending on Research and Development (R&D) (Map 2) will play a substantial role in the assessment of national and regional capacity levels to invest in growth, but also to measure the distance that separates the lagging regions by targets and the impact that common policies with high added value (see Programme Horizon 2020) might have on future scenarios in the construction of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESPON ET2050).

**Map 2: Total expenditure on R%D, 2008, Distance to National 2020 target, SIESTA**



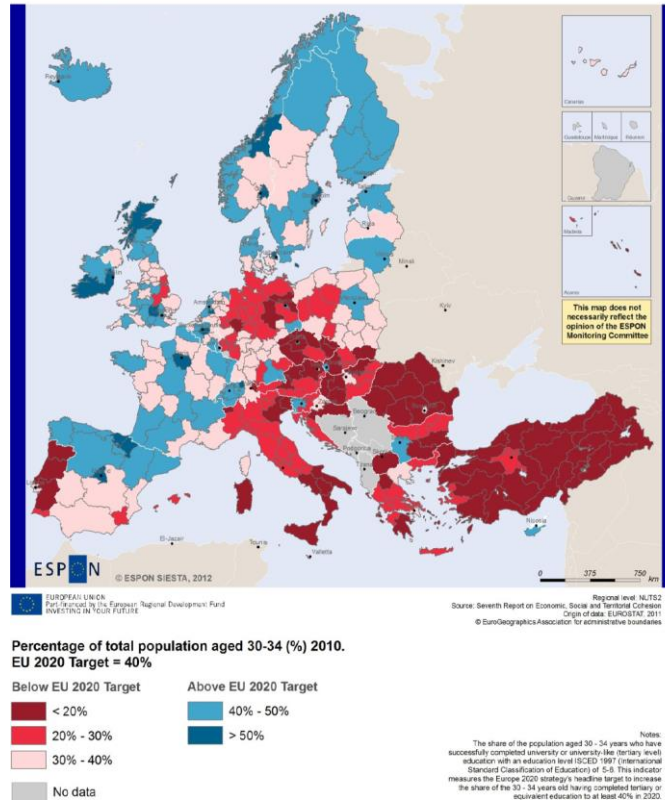
Source: ESPON SIESTA, Annex C, pp. 14

For Italy finding areas of investment for R&D means bringing the level of education of the population between 30 and 34 years to the European level (Map 3) and, of course, we cannot expect any support from the Union in this direction shortly.

Italy is an "ageing region" in every sense, in contrast to many European regions, and it seems unwilling to give up its dominant cultural models, where the regional economy has a strong influence on the ability to relate the local with the global also in terms of education. This consideration also explains why some regions in Italy (e.g. Emilia Romagna before the earthquake, Valle d'Aosta and Friuli, where a lot has been invested in tertiary technical education) seem to have been less affected by the crisis and it also explains why the regions with the highest rate of employment in the manufacturing sector have been affected in terms of employment by the effects of the recession only in the latter period.

The reaction to the effects of the crisis in the industry was initially very different: Germany, Netherlands, Sweden and Finland seemed to have reacted positively to having started since 2007 innovation and integration policies among productive sectors, by limiting the employment in services by focusing on their quality and efficiency, and by making the most of "temporary support" guaranteed by the Structural Funds 2013.

**Map 3: Population aged 30-34 with a tertiary education – Average 2007/10. Distance to National 2020 target, SIESTA**



**Source: ESPON SIESTA, Final report pag 61**

On the opposite Portugal, Spain, Ireland, Italy and Greece seem to have reacted negatively for exactly opposed reasons, but especially for not acting on the 12 competitiveness<sup>11</sup> pillars reported by the World Economic Forum in 2009. The all to witness, once again, the lack of unity of the country to the European system and the enduring of implicit forms of protectionism in national economic policy, beyond the Euro, as evidenced by the strong attention the spread has had.

Quite simply, one could say that even the ESPON studies have suffered the effects of the crisis, when it was already clear and irreversible, focusing on the negative values of the South compared to the Centre-North of Europe and imputing their high negative rate to a lack of competitiveness; in addition, one might add that the projects have guessed the crisis but not analysed it in terms of finding solutions. And if a criticism can be made, at the time, this refers to the epistemological ability to understand that this long-lasting crisis is not only due to debt, to the speculation and to the distrust of the markets but to the problems of a European Union which is far from being politically cohesive and therefore less dependent on domestic political variables and on the trend of the Euro.

Slow growth, with low rates of productivity growth and demand in southern Europe and therefore also of the country, has certainly triggered the current economic recession that preceded the hardest phase of the crisis. In Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal, the symptoms were evident: economic activities are increasingly tied to specific contexts (many of whom considered by business "success stories"), requesting them and the public policy of providing positive externalities (post-Fordism), neglecting the value of internality.

<sup>11</sup> Institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, higher education and training, goods market efficiency and goods, labour market efficiency, financial market sophistication, technology, market size, business sophistication, innovation, all interrelated to each other .



Public investment, implemented in the majority of cases through the Structural Funds, have been almost never directed (infrastructure, innovation, energy, services, etc..) and measured on the demand. The public investment were mediated, since 2009, by a European policy of fiscal constraint - sometimes even from ideological myopia of the central and local governments. They has minimized the importance of the existing resources in the regions, focusing rather on the remetropolitisation and reconcentration of economic activities mainly in those areas already equipped with the necessary framework conditions (Map 4).

The theoretical background of these actions have been several ESPON studies and, depending on the country, it has mixed with the effects of the "new growth theory" (use of highly professionalized human capital) and many other theories (from the institutionalist, to the evolutionist one, and that of clusters, etc..), so creating a melting pot of difficult orientation for a system that claims to be unitary such as the EU.

Watch Italy through ESPON - Studies conducted by the ESPON projects on European regions and provinces envisaged - potential and actual - crisis scenarios even for Italy, making it possible to anticipate the effects of economic and territorial unwanted European policy implemented through use of the Structural Funds 2006 2013, almost always designed to 'catch up' and not to support one side the competitiveness and innovation of production systems still in the process of economic transition (Piedmont) or already established (Lombardy), or the other, the sustainability of the activities considered 'safe' and attractive such as energy, tourism or hospitality for major events (Valle d'Aosta, Lombardy, Lazio).

The most recent projects support the thesis of reconcentration of some systems that have always been considered metropolitan in the form of macro-region. This is characterized by phenomena of established re-metropolitanization in the already known large urban area (Milan-Bergamo-Brescia, Bologna-San Lazzaro, Venice-Padua) outlining the polycentric model of the macro-region of the Po and a shared planning path in an attempt to reach the high performance that are found in the global regions of Central Europe.

The extent of this state, defined as the absence of a national rather than regional cohesion and external (to the EU), has widely limited the expected results (effectiveness) in the use of resources, despite the availability of national and European aids for the regions of the Centre-South (Umbria, Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise, Campania) - beyond the catastrophic events that have hit the country in recent years.

The lack of national cohesion proved to be 'contagious' for the regions of central and southern Italy and rapidly spread and branched (Adriatic area, for example), disrupting those processes aimed at an integrated employment (ageing of a working population scarcely inflexible, micro entrepreneurial dimension) in leading sectors of the Italian economy.

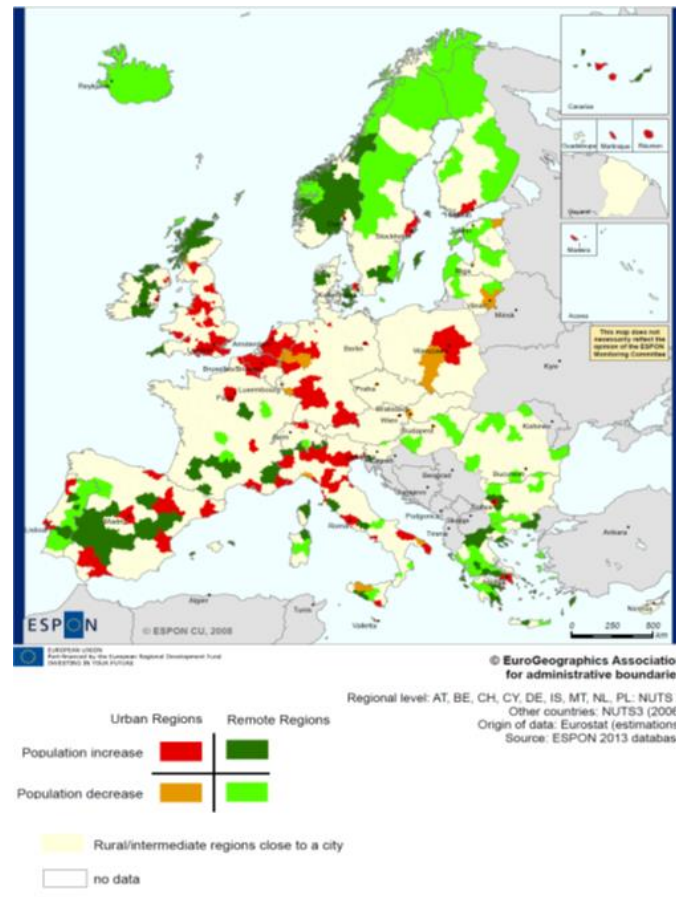
It is therefore not surprising that in Italy there has been, just in the initial phase of the crisis and on EU boost, a significant increase in spending of the Public Administration in the formation of regional GDP (health, education and local government) in compensation of the national one, focused on military spending between 2008-2010, which ensured the participation of the country to the great operations of international politics.

To compensate for the negative effects that it produces, the Italian regional economy has turned, in the short term, to the exports focused on traditional sectors, accentuating the already existing trend in the service sector and the low sectoral diversification, where the less accessible rural and mountain areas have been excluded though.

The Southern regions were particularly weakened by these processes, making it even more evident to the EU the economy and employment instability in regions such as Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily, Sardinia, triggering urgent demands of cohesive policies based on flexibility and labour mobility, energy and waste recycling, technological innovation for businesses and social integration, to fasten to the efficiency of the infrastructural network.

The regions that have always been the bearers of a strong social cohesion (such as Valle d'Aosta) have reacted by focusing, as it was obvious, on their potential and reducing the investment in ICT and R&D, which proved higher in regions where the support for social cohesion has failed (Piedmont, Lombardy, Emilia Romagna, Marche).

**Map 4: Population growth in urban and peripheral regions, DATABASE, 2010**



**Source: ESPON Database, 2013**

And therefore it becomes evident the impossibility of pursuing homogenizing actions (convergence) for the relaunch of growth in Italy, because this assumes an ambiguous connotation in lagging regions, as highlighted by the empirical evidence with respect to the labour market with a poor attention in the North Italy (but also in Slovenia and Austria) to the inclusion of economic and social labour forces that are still potentially active between 55-64 years, in favour of the youth labour force who choose not to continue in university education (more than 30% in Italy, Spain and Luxembourg).

The gross domestic expenditure on R&D (identified in Europe by the acronym GERD), which would have to reach in 2010 the 3% of GDP to be devoted to two thirds to the private sector (aeronautics, transportation technology, etc.), is low in many European regions of early industrialization (not only in Italy) and mirrors the weight of the low per capita productivity in our country,

It is evident, therefore, the need to implement policies to stabilize economic and territorial contexts. First of all the prices in regions of low productivity of the South (before the crisis, prices in Italy were in the European average and did not vary more than 7%), which poorly compete with the merger of the North and with the decrease of specialization and purchasing power of wages in front of the contraction in consumption.

Productivity does not correlate with the rate of employment in some regions of Southern Italy and Europe (France, Greece, Spain): Sicily, Calabria and Campania in 2006 showed higher rates of productivity than the European average but low levels of employment, in contrast to Germany, 'Fennoscandian' and Switzerland, whose long-term unemployment rates were similar to those that were recorded in the German Laendern born after the unification.