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From cohesion policy to Spatial Planning and Return: A Regional Look on Territorial Cohesion

Dalle politiche di coesione allo spatial planning e ritorno: uno sguardo regionale alla coesione territoriale

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Abstract. Europeanization refers to the process of integrating EU public policy into the domestic discourse and national policy. Two main mechanisms of Europeanization of national policy planning can be identified: a soft mechanism characterized by policy transfer and learning, and a hard mechanism determined by the obligation to comply to EU regulations. The aim of the article is to explore these mechanisms of Europeanization within the regional cohesion policy context in Italy. The first will be illustrated by results of PRIN survey on stakeholder awareness of key concepts of European territorial development mainstream; the second mechanism will be showed by the analysis of ROPs elaborated by Italian Regions under ERDF policy process.

Keywords: europeanization, spatial planning, cohesion policy.

Riassunto. L'europeizzazione si riferisce al processo di integrazione, nel discorso e nella politica nazionale, delle indicazioni e delle forme della policy europea. Il processo di europeizzazione nell'ambito della programmazione nazionale e della pianificazione alle diverse scale si sviluppa attraverso due meccanismi principali: un meccanismo *soft*, caratterizzato da dinamiche di trasferimento di dispositivi e indirizzi di policy e apprendimento nei diversi contesti, e un meccanismo *hard* determinato dall'obbligo di rispettare i regolamenti UE. Lo scopo dell'articolo è quello di esplorare questi meccanismi di europeizzazione nel contesto della politica di coesione regionale in Italia. Rispetto al primo meccanismo si illustrano i risultati dell'indagine PRIN sulla consapevolezza dell'uso da parte degli stakeholder di alcuni concetti chiave del mainstream dello sviluppo territoriale europeo; il secondo meccanismo è illustrato mediante i risultati di un'analisi dei Programmi Operativi elaborati dalle Regioni italiane nell'ambito del Fondo Europeo di Sviluppo Regionale (FESR).

Parole chiave: europeizzazione, *spatial planning*, politica di coesione.

1. Introduction From cohesion policy to spatial planning: a Europeanisation process

Europeanization process refers to the integration of EU policies and socio-economic dynamics into the domestic discourse, political debate and policies within Member States at their different stages of elaboration. Europeanization comprises processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of different rules or procedures, which are transferred from the EU public policy to be integrated in the domestic discourse (Radaelli 2003). Thus, leading to systemic convergence in different sectors across the EU Member States (Demetropoulou 2002). However, this is not a one-way transfer, with EU Member States being both contributors and products of European integration (Papadimitriou, Phinnemore 2004).

If we consider the general structure of the European discourse - conceived as an uploading and downloading process but also horizontal cross-fertilisation between European territories - spatial planning appears to play a fundamental role (Elissalde et al. 2014; Faludi 2009, 2010, 2014; Farinós Dasí 2006). While the European Union does not have competences in the field of spatial planning, some strategic spatial concepts (in particular 'territorial cohesion') or European meta-narratives like the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) and the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (TAEU) have influenced national planning systems, despite their non-binding character (Reimer et al., 2014). These changes are the result of domestic actors experiencing new ideas and practices leading to cultural innovation models (Giannakourou 2005). Consequently, the planning discourse has been modelled, in the case of various Member States, according to the principles drawn out in the ESDP, but also through the INTERREG (Tosics et al. 2010) and ESPON initiatives (Dühr et al., 2007), often determining the diffusion of new instruments and the shift from land-use planning to a spatial planning approach (Giannakourou 2012).

The idea that cohesion policy as it has evolved in recent years now constitutes the real territorial policy of the Union is widely shared (Faludi, 2018).

In the European arena, Territorial cohesion may be defined as "the spatial declination of sustainable development" (Peyrony 2010, 122): the way how competitiveness, cohesion, and environment protection can blend together in a space with regard to the different territorial scales.

In the evolution of the European "debate" on cohesion (EC 2008; ECTP 2009; Faludi 2010), the elaboration of a specific level of European planning, endowed

with policy tools but not necessarily with territorial competence, seems to outline the concept of territorial cohesion as a reference to an approach integrating the definition of policies (D'Orazio 2014); thus an approach requiring to locate - in an actual cohesion policy- the whole set of the multidimensional and potentially conflictual objectives of the sectoral European and national policies inside a common framework considering the territorial dimension.

The process of Europeanization also tends to be more and more related to funding conditions for lower-level public authorities, with strategies at regional and local level becoming a prerequisite for EU financing (Albrechts et al. 2003). Europeanization can thus be regarded as a process of top-down and bottom-up European integration (Reimer et al. 2014), or better as an iterative cycle of uploading and downloading influences that links the EU level territorial governance with domestic territorial governance and spatial planning system (ESPON 2013a).

In this context, two main mechanisms of Europeanization of national planning systems can be identified: a soft mechanism, characterized by networking, policy transfer and learning, and a hard mechanism, determined by the obligation to comply to EU regulations (Giannakourou 2012).

As far as the soft mechanism is concerned, this is mostly based on the exchange of ideas, principles and concepts between the EU and national/regional institutions through transnational cooperation programmes (Dühr et al. 2007; ESPON 2013b) as well as directly financed programmes.

The hard mechanism thus comprises legally-binding tools such as ESIF (European Structural and Investment Funds) funding mechanism under cohesion policy, exerting a strong influence on spatial development, albeit mediated by other formal planning documents (sectoral and comprehensive).

The extent of the influence of the Europeanization process on different national planning systems is related to factors such as planning culture, national institutional settings related to planning or socio-economic settings (Giannakourou 2012). Its effects, on the other hand, are visible especially in relation to the participation in territorial cooperation programs, a more strategic approach towards regional planning or the emergence of new governance paradigms (Cotella, Janin Rivolin 2011).

In this context, the spatial planning systems rooted in the urbanism tradition, as the Italian one, appears more affected by transformations dynamics lead by the EU funds allocation constraints and rules (Cochechi, D'Orazio 2019). The regional development is then the

context where it is possible to observe on the ground these dynamics.

Taking into consideration the different facets of the Europeanization process discussed above, the aim of the article is to explore this process in Italian regional policy context with reference to the action of the cited two mechanisms.

The first 'soft' mechanism will be investigated by the results of a survey developed within the PRIN 2015 *Territorial Impact Assessment of Territorial Cohesion in Italy and Europe*, examining the diffusion and use of European concepts (Prezioso, D'Orazio 2012) and diffusion and use of European direct programmes.

As far as the 'hard' mechanism, the whole Regional Operational Plans (ROP) (2014-2020) under ERDF (European Regional Development Funds) of the Italian Regions will serve as source for investigating the pattern of 'integration' of EU indications on territorial development concerns.

2. Investigating soft mechanism evidence: a survey on participation in European programme and use of concepts

This part aims to analyse the results of a survey conducted in the framework of the PRIN 2015 project. The complete analysis of the survey is reported in (Prezioso 2018) and was conducted on a national basis to give an overview of the answers of the 76 respondents from almost all the Italian regions. At the start of the project, the questionnaire was aiming to identify the level of diffusion, awareness and use of concepts directly related with the scientific knowledge base of PRIN 2015 project.

The geographical distribution of stakeholders is enough well distributed in almost all National territory, and in particular within Centre and Southern Regions, while Northern ones are less represented.

Figure 1 shows the geographical distribution of 56 stakeholders involved in the survey: the remaining 20 are nation-level ones and cannot be identified in relation to a specific territory.

The concepts were proposed by the PI and shared consensually among the research units. The idea was to choose sufficiently broad concepts to encompass different fields of actions in regional development activities.

Two kinds of concepts from the field of territorial development were identified as potentially included within Europeanisation process at regional level:

- Concepts congruent with European objectives in terms of territorial development,

- Concepts coming from scientific literature in terms of territorial development.

The concepts chosen were: cohesion, competitiveness, sustainability, territorial diversity; inclusion; equity; Territorial Impact assessment; Inner areas/internal areas; territorial capital; green economy; productivity and territorial cohesion as overarching concept.

The questionnaire was submitted to 76 stakeholders, with the declared intent of deepening the competence, the consciousness and the use of the main project concepts in the different respondent work fields.

Aim of the action was to understand the level of consciousness of these main concepts (as mainly related to Territorial Cohesion) from the stakeholder working in this field, and to highlight how they use this kind of concepts and related strategies in their daily work. In addition, this survey investigated the involvement of respondents within European funding programmes (as issue closely related to the questions about the Europeanization process and the level of this process amongst the Italian main stakeholders working with European opportunities for territories.

To reach this aim, all the Research Units of the project have selected the stakeholders in order to represent a national-wide sample of Academic, and Local and Regional Public administration managers: the number of 76 is composed by 14 Academics working in 11 universities, 18 Main Stakeholder, 29 stakeholders with direct responsibility in policy/action application, and other 15 different elements. These stakeholders work mainly at Regional (29) and National (28) level, while 19 of them acts at Local level.

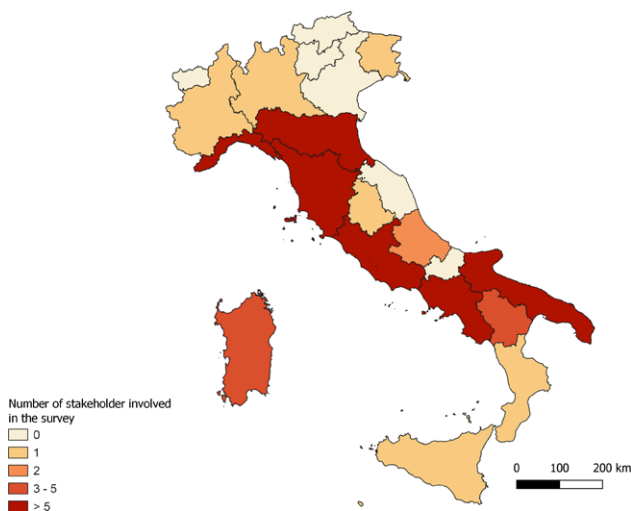


Figure 1. Regional distribution of stakeholders involved in survey. Source: authors' elaboration.

The set of first question submitted to the stakeholders provided a complex of knowledge regarding the situation of Italian public and private actors in managing European projects and related results: the answers give back the picture of a good use of European Programmes, in particular Horizon 2020, Life, Interreg and Espon, but also Erasmus + and Urbact (fig. 1)

Data are referred only to the answers given by the non-academic stakeholder respondents, in order to give evidence to the effective usage of European projects in policy-making and administrative process. A very little usage of very important programmes, like Euromed Heritage and Leader, points out a lack of knowledge about the centrality of the whole bunch of opportunities that come from European Programmes, and the dependence from particular involvement of territories in main projects, from where some inspirations come from.

The use of European projects is mainly master at National and Regional level, while Local level still lacks competence in this strategic field.

A specific question was submitted to the stakeholders, in order to understand what kind of information they expect to get from the used European projects, among these:

- General knowledge of European territory;
- Basis for the development of policy orientations;
- Analysis method;
- Other.

Aim of this question was to get a screening qualitative and not just quantitative about the role of the projects in the stakeholders’ daily work, highlighting the real centrality of the information obtained in the administrative process.

After cutting off the answers of academic researchers, we can see that the most important aim of respondent is to find some basic elements for the development of policy orientations. This is the main answer given by 68% respondents, in particular by the stakeholders responsible for policy implementation, but also from a large number of main stakeholders.

Very important is also to consider that 52% of respondents believe that the main role of this “tool” is pretended to be the general knowledge of European territory, while one out to two declare to keep analysis methodologies from Project reports: this answer is selected in particular from National stakeholders responsible in realization of policy actions.

It is interesting to note that two respondents declare not to be interested in European project results in their daily work: both of them, are Regional stakeholders, one from private network from a North Region, and one from a public research body of a Central Region.

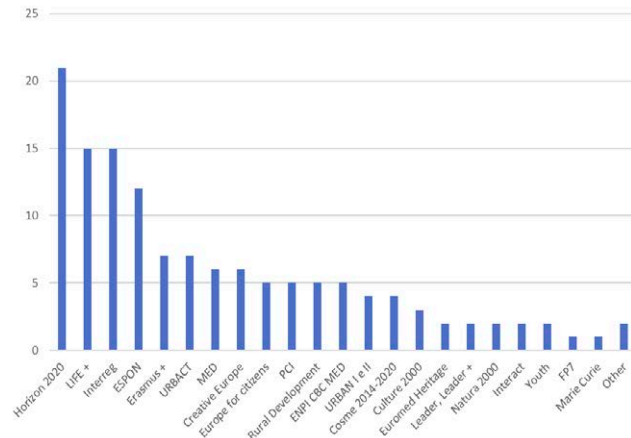


Figure 2. Use of European Programmes according to stakeholders’ answers. Source: authors’ elaboration.

The survey was particularly interesting in deepening how stakeholders are approaching main concepts related to Territorial Cohesion in their policy choices (Table 1). While fifty out of seventy-six declare to use Cohesion concept in their work – especially from National and Regional level – some interesting differences arises from the question related how they conceive this concept. In the definition proposed, cohesion concept is mainly stressed in the socioeconomic aspect of reduction of disparities – namely territorial ones – according with European Treaties targets. Stakeholders know well Cohesion Policy and related aims, and they are aware about the centrality of the concept within European strategy for 2020. Local level respondents have less familiarity with cohesion.

Table 1. Percentage in the use of the concepts.

Keyword	Total respondents	Policy-makers
sustainability	82,89	66,07
competitiveness	81,58	69,64
cohesion	65,79	53,57
green economy	64,47	55,36
territorial diversity	55,26	48,21
territorial cohesion	53,95	41,07
inclusion,	52,63	39,29
territorial capital	52,63	37,50
social inclusion	50,00	41,07
inner areas/internal areas	50,00	37,50
equity	44,74	35,71
productivity	44,74	33,93
territorial Impact assessment	25,00	14,29

Different results come from the questions related to the concept of Competitiveness: around 82% of the respondents works with this notion, while just two declare not to be interested in this topic: a researcher and a municipality-level civil servant.

Stakeholders show to be aware about importance of sustainability (economic, environmental, social ones) in the political strategies of EU, although answers are rarer when survey asks about to deepening. Just one on two stakeholders declare to habitually use concept of Diversity, and of Territorial Diversity, in their policy work. In particular, the concept is owned by researchers and by National level workers, while local public stakeholders show a less mastery of.

Concepts of Inclusion, Territorial Capital and Territorial Cohesion are used by half of the stakeholders involved in survey, especially at National and Regional level. 5% of respondents believe that inclusion is no concern to the work. In this case, we can see a low level of familiarity amongst territorial executives, proving how inclusion issue is still far from being completely conceived as a strategic priority among the officials responsible of territorial policy. For Territorial Cohesion, 10% answers not to be interested, especially from Local level; almost the same result is from Territorial Capital.

Interest of stakeholders go below 50% when talking about equity: cutting out researchers, just one out of three stakeholders believe that equity concerns his policy work, while 10% declare to be not interested in it.

Just 25% of respondents is familiar with Territorial Impact Assessment, while 15% declare to not use it, mainly stakeholder of national level. Social inclusion is used by one stakeholder out of two, mainly main stakeholders from local level.

Attention to Internal Areas is payed by half respondents, mainly researchers and executives from National and Regional level.

Three out four non-researcher stakeholders show interest in Green economy, and they are well distributed in National, Regional and Local level: this element is interesting because shows a good level of penetration of understanding of this important concept in policy makers culture.

3. Investigating hard mechanism evidence: integrated approach to territorial development in ROPs

It is well known that cohesion policy resources¹ are not the only funding instrument for regional develop-

ment, however the role that the related planning process assumed in these years is clearly a key-determinant in shaping the territorial regional approaches.

The European cohesion policy developed by the Structural Funds and other instruments oriented to convergence, has showed a change of perspective in recent years, in relation to the adequacy of the models of economic development of reference, in particular with respect to so-called regional development policies (Barca et al. 2012). The debate on the present regulation of the Structural Funds, in particular regarding the role of the territorial dimension and of the tools useful for the so-called territorialisation of European policies has been partially solved in rethinking of its articulation in particular in supporting territorial development at the local level (Polish Presidency 2011).

A development 'place-based' strategy (Barca, 2009) having in cohesion policy its main tool emerged and has been implemented by completely renovating the logic and mechanisms of allocation: the current formalization of the new regulation tries to make the necessary activities operational by understanding local contexts at different scales and by applying an integrated territorial approach.

The integrated approach in addressing territorial challenges requires that programmes financed by the Structural Funds reflect the diversity of European regions in terms of: employment and labour market characteristics; interdependencies between different sectors; commuting, ageing and demographic change patterns; cultural, landscape and heritage characteristics; vulnerability and impacts of climate change; land use

Union allocated more than 46.4 billion euro to Italy, 33.6 billion euro of which was specifically earmarked for the Structural Funds. We are the second Member State in terms of allocation after Poland. To the European amount, some National resources were allocated in the Development and Cohesion Fund, with the aim of economic and social rebalancing. The resources for the 2014 - 2020 programming period are about 54.8 billion, 80% of which are allocated to the areas of Southern Italy and 20% to the areas of Central and Northern Italy. These resources must be considered additional, i.e. they do not replace the ordinary expenditure of the State budget and of the decentralised bodies, in line with the analogous criterion of additionality provided for the European Union structural funds. In addition, there are other national resources for co-financing and resources for complementary programmes. Overall, the resources made available for cohesion policy in Italy amount to more than EUR 140 billion. The strategic framework and the decision on the thematic objectives on which to concentrate the actions financed in the period 2014 - 2020 are defined in the Partnership Agreement with the European Commission of 29 October 2014. The Agreement was amended by Implementing Decision C(2018) 598 final of 8 February 2018, to include the greater Community resources allocated to Italy compared to what was established in 2014, following the technical adjustment of the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework related to the evolution of gross national income.

¹ In March 2017 the implementation of the 2007-2013 programming was concluded. For the 2014-2020 programming period, the European

and limited availability of resources; potential for a more sustainable use of resources including renewables; institutional and governance arrangements; connectivity and accessibility and links between rural and urban areas.)²

This part aims to investigate the hard mechanism by a structured analysis of the 21 Italian Regional Operational Programmes of ERDF, paying attention on the degree and the modalities in adopting an Integrated approach to territorial development. This comparative analysis is facilitated by the ROP elaboration methods required in the current programming period 2014-2020.

In the present programming period, the structure of the OPs is bound to what is indicated in specific implementing regulations of the European Commission³, which have standardised the collection and transmission of information and made mandatory both the use of predefined templates and the use of the electronic data exchange system SFC 2014⁴.

The common models to be adopted, both for the OPs under the Objective "Investments in favour of growth and employment" and for the cooperation programmes under the Objective "European Territorial Cooperation", are set out in the Implementing Regulation (EU) no. 288/2014.

These templates, while on the one hand they limit the ability of the Managing Authority to customize their own program (it is possible to insert only text and values in pre-organized tables), on the other hand they facilitate, once known their structure, consultation of any Operational Program, as well as comparison among OPs, being the same structure for all Operational Programmes of all Member States.

Moreover, the obligation to fill in the forms directly on the SFC information system allows to have structured data available, which can be compared with each other for possible processing. In fact, the OPs present numerous tables, which allow the immediate acquisition of the main information that characterises each Programme.

The structuring of an appropriate rationale for intervention is one of the most important innovations in the 2014-2020 programming of European funds. In general, the proposed strategy must be anchored in the diagnosis of the strengths and weaknesses of a territory/sector, the specific objectives and results must illustrate the expected changes and the result indicators must translate these

changes into objectives to be achieved (compared to a starting point) through concrete actions.

In each OP, and for each Investment Priority (IP), the specific Objectives/Expected Results taken from the Partnership Agreement (PA) are contextualised and framed in relation to territorial and sectoral strategies.

In the definition of OPs, a central role in clarifying their ambitions (thematic and/or territorial) and operational choices, in the wider strategic context of the PA, is entrusted to the clarification of the so-called "logical programming framework" to which the OP Template, prepared by the EC on the basis of Community Regulations, is informed. The logical framework represents fundamentally and in a linear sequence the following elements:

- 1) Needs: Problems/Opportunities considered relevant in the context of reference and that can be concretely faced with the policy action
- 2) Objectives/Results to be achieved/reached through policy action defined as important in relation to problems/opportunities highlighted as relevant and addressable;
- 3) Interventions/Actions to be activated chosen among those most suitable to achieve/approach the results defined in the specific context

In the case of the 2014-2020 OPs for Italy, the basic choices to be made have already been shared in the proposal for a Partnership Agreement (PA) which has identified the results to which the programming as a whole is oriented and the types of actions to be implemented, on the basis not only of a specific diagnosis of the needs for the Italian case, but also of the general guidelines of merit already contained in the Regulations (in particular the specific priorities (IP) under single Thematic Objectives).

In the general organization of the 2014-2020 programming for Italy, the OPs give operational substance to the PA by choosing, with adequate reasons, on which of the results foreseen by the PA they focus and with which (types of) actions represented in the PA as useful they proceed towards the selected results.

In particular, the PA contains for each Thematic Objective:

- expected results (RA) and result indicators, which are declined with reference both to the different Funds (ERDF and ESF) and to the different investment priorities (IP) of the Funds;
- possible actions (types of) (considering IP) to achieve the RA.

Formally the OPs were constructed by expressing their own specific logical framework using the OP template and the strategic elements contained in the PA in an appropriate way.

² General Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 Annex I 6.4.

³ Details of the contents can be found in Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013, in Articles 27 and 28 for all EIS funds (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, EMFF and CF), and in Article 96 for the Structural Funds (ERDF, ESF) and the Cohesion Fund.

⁴ Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 184/2014 of 25 February 2014

The 2014-2020 Operational Programmes⁵ are made up of priority axes. As a general rule, a Priority Axis concerns a Fund and a category of regions, corresponds to a Thematic Objective and includes one or more Investment Priorities of that Objective, in compliance with the provisions of the specific rules of each Fund (see Reg. (EU) No 1301/2013 for ERDF, Reg. (EU) No 1304/2013 for ESF).

In the context of one of the two main Objectives of cohesion policy, the Objective “Investments for growth and jobs”, the related Operational Programmes are divided into 12 sections⁶.

In order to investigate the relation between the cohesion policy and the regional spatial planning approach as well as the degree of incorporation of Euro-

⁵ The logical framework underlying an Operational Programme is represented by:

- Priority axes which, in general, correspond to the Thematic Objectives (art. 9 of Regulation (EU) no. 1303/2013);
- Investment priorities, expressly provided for by the specific Fund Regulations (art. 5 of Regulation 1301/2013 for the ERDF; art. 3 of Regulation 1304/2013 for the ESF);
- Specific objectives, in Italy correspond to the Expected Results foreseen in the Partnership Agreement (see Annex I, “Expected Results-Actions” scheme);
- Expected results of the Programme, expressed through specific indicators and targets;
- Actions, in Italy, are declined in the “Expected Results-Actions” scheme (annex to PA).

In terms of implementation, the overall strategy of the Programme must be summarised in Table 2, while section 2 illustrates the breakdown of the Programme into Priority Axes, Investment Priorities, Specific Objectives, Expected Results and Actions. This section, repeated for each Axis and articulated in paragraphs with the same numbering, provides fundamental elements for a subject involved in the implementation of the Program. It is possible to determine: the specific fields of intervention of the Programme; the eligible actions; the types of beneficiaries; the expected results; the targets set.

⁶ 1. Strategy for the contribution of the Operational Programme to the Union’s strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the achievement of economic, social and territorial cohesion;

2. Priority axes;
3. Financing plan;
4. Integrated approach to territorial development;
5. Specific needs of geographical areas particularly affected by poverty or of target groups at higher risk of discrimination or social exclusion (where appropriate);
6. Specific needs of geographical areas suffering from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps (where appropriate);
7. Authorities and bodies responsible for financial management, control and audit, and role of relevant partners;
8. Coordination between the Funds, the EAFRD, the EMFF and other European and national financing instruments and with the EIB;
9. *Ex-ante* conditionality;
- ¹⁰.^{reduction} of administrative burden for beneficiaries;
11. Horizontal principles (sustainable development, equal opportunities and non-discrimination, gender equality);
12. distinctive elements (major projects; framework for the efficiency of the implementation of the Operational Programme - summary table; relevant partners involved in the preparation of the Programme).

pean insights, a particularly relevant aspect of the ROP is the Description of the integrated approach to spatial development (section 4).

In this section, considering its content and objectives, an OP describes, if envisaged, the integrated approach to territorial development, taking into account the PA, and indicates how the Programme contributes to the achievement of its objectives and results. and specify:

- the approach to the use of participatory local development tools (Articles 32-35 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) and the principles for identifying the areas in which it will be implemented;
- the indicative amount of ERDF support for integrated actions for sustainable urban development to be carried out in accordance with Article 7(3) of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013 and the principles for identifying the areas in which it will be implemented ERDF Regulation and the indicative allocation of ESF support for integrated actions;
- the approach to the use of Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI, referred to in Article 36 of Regulation (EU) No 1303/2013) and the indicative financial allocation for each priority axis;
- the arrangements for interregional and transnational actions under the OP with beneficiaries located in at least one other Member State;
- the contribution of operations under the Programme, any macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies, where Member States and regions are involved, subject to the needs of the areas covered by the Programme as identified by the Member State.

Sections 5 and 6 of the model, which deal with areas with specific geographical features, are also important: these concern identifying the ways in which the specific needs of geographical areas particularly affected by poverty, or target groups at higher risk of discrimination or social exclusion, are addressed, and the specific needs of areas with demographic or natural disadvantages.

Consequently, our analysis of the 21 ERDF ROP documents of all Italian regions focused on section 4⁷ and produced a comparative table in order to identify the different regional ‘behaviour’ about

1. Community Led Local Development (CLLD) instruments,
2. Support for sustainable urban development,
3. Use of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI),
4. Coordination with cooperation activities and macro-regional and sea-basin strategies,

⁷ As well as on section 5 and 6 for some aspects related to disadvantages areas.

5. Contribution of the planned interventions to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies.

A summary of the analysis is presented in Table 2. Particularly significant is the degree of acceptance of the two new implementation tools for multi-fund integrated strategies (CLLD, Community Led Local Development, and ITI, Integrated Territorial Investments). While the use of the first instrument is limited to only two regions (column 4.1), the second option (column 4.3) is partially accepted

In most cases the ITI is the instrument of choice for the implementation of the National Internal Areas Strategy (SNAI) but in some cases, it is adopted also in Sustainable Urban Development Strategies.

Only in one case, the ITI is an instrument for the implementation of an integrated territorial process based on a specific planning (Union of Municipalities)

Sustainable urban development actions are widespread: some are based on the adoption of a specific urban axis; others are based on multi-axis and multi-fund integrated processes.

The analysis of the section 4 of the ROP is also particularly interesting to evaluate the ways in which the different Italian regions interpret territorial development.

The examination of the descriptive part of this section which requires the "Description of the integrated approach to territorial development taking into account the content and the objectives of the operational programme in relation to the Partnership Agreement", allows to identify the adopted regional strategies and to understand the level of the integration between the formal planning instruments (both comprehensive and strategic) and the ROP development strategy.

For example, when describing strategies, ROPs can refer to consolidated plans or can select 'simply' areas of implementation of formally declared national strategies, which in the Italian case are the Internal Areas Strategy and the Urban Agenda.

As result of this analysis, we can differentiate the attitude of the regions by grouping them into four types (see first column Regional Type of Table 2 and fig. 3):

Group 1: Strong 'conservative' Regions

They refer to a consolidated spatial planning system and consistently declare their development strategies, presenting them in the framework of the national strategies of the Partnership Agreement. In general, they do not adopt the new integrated instruments.

Group 2: Strong 'innovative' Regions

Approach as in the first group but they adopt new integrated instruments.

Group 3: Weak 'conservative' Regions

Regions with a less efficient planning system, which use the ROP as tool for spatial planning, generally in strict coherence with national strategies. They may or may not adopt innovative instruments within the framework of their specific needs.

Group 4: Weak 'innovative' Regions

Regions with a less efficient Planning System but which in implementing the National Strategies adopt new tools to innovate their processes

4. Some concluding remarks

The two streams of investigation show an articulated picture regarding the dynamics related to cohesion policy discourse and construction in the regional context.

Certainly, the requested strong alignment of regional programming phases with European constraints and timing produced solicitation in changing the institutional regional bodies in order to comply with the complex of policy addresses and technical specifications. However, beyond the common template and shared monitoring system, the way regional officials build the development strategy is informed by their background, institutional context and learning capacity.

The different penetration of diverse concepts in the professional use maybe witnesses the different weights of related policy priorities. A deeper analysis of the definitions proposed by single stakeholders could reveal conflicts among these priorities.

Among the methodological innovations, the territorial dimension of the 2014-2020 programming includes the proposals for integrated territorial instruments (ITI and CLLD), as implementation methods that can be adopted in the context of regional territorial strategies or territorial cooperation. The integrated approach to territorial development is therefore the basis of policies for the regeneration of places, for self-determined local development and for long-term sustainable development. The choice of ITI instead of CLLD as main implementation instrument could be justify by the explanation included in Partnership Agreement⁸.

⁸ In this document, they are distinguished by a number of aspects, including (i) the different role given to local private actors in defining and managing intervention strategies; ii) a different eligibility of the conceivable project types, which, with the ITI, provides for the possibility of carrying out also important and less important works; iii) a different role for the public body and the delegation of operations which, in the case of ITIs, may also include regional management.

Table 2. Synthesis of the analysis of ERDF Regional Operational Programmes 2014-2020. Source: authors' elaboration.

	Regional Type regarding Integrated approach to territorial development	4.1 Community Led Local Development instruments and the principles for identifying the areas where it will be implemented	4.2 support for sustainable urban development	4.3 use of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) other than urban development	4.4 the mechanisms to ensure coordination with macro-regional and sea-basin strategies	4.5 the contribution of planned interventions to macro-regional strategies and sea-basin strategies
Piedmont	2 Strong 'innovative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis	ITI within SNAI	NO	Coherent with EUSALP
Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	NO	NO	NO	Coherent with EUSALP
Liguria	2 Strong 'innovative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities	ITI within SNAI	NO	Coherent with EUSALP
Lombardy	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis	NO	POSSIBLE	Coherent with EUSALP EUSAIR
Autonomous Pr Bolzano/Bozen	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	NO	NO	NO	Coherent with EUSALP; EUSAIR
Autonomous Pr Trento	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	NO	NO	NO	Coherent with EUSALP EUSAIR
Veneto	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities	NO	NO	Coherent with EUSALP; EUSAIR
Friuli-Venezia Giulia	2 Strong 'innovative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis	ITI within SNAI	NO	Coherent with EUSALP; EUSAIR
Emilia-Romagna	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis	NO	NO	Coherent with EUSAIR
Tuscany	1 Strong 'conservative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis	NO	NO	NO
Umbria	2 Strong 'innovative' Regions	NO	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis	ITI for Integrated Project for wide areas (Union of Municipalities)	ENVISAGED	Coherent with EUSAIR

	4.1 Community Led Local Development instruments and the principles for identifying the areas where it will be implemented	4.2 support for sustainable urban development	4.3 use of Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI) other than urban development	4.4 the mechanisms to ensure coordination with macro-regional and sea-basin strategies	4.5 the contribution of the planned interventions to macro-regional and sea-basin strategies
Marche	Regional Type regarding Integrated approach to territorial development 2 Strong 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities Implementation by ITI NO	ITI for Urban areas and Crisis Areas (including ITI within SNAI) NO	POSSIBLE	Coherent with EUSAIR
Lazio	3 Weak 'conservative' Regions	NO	NO	NO	European Neighbourhood instrument; Mediterranean strategy PACA Region
Abruzzo	4 Weak 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis NO	ITI within SNAI NO	NO	Coherent with EUSAIR
Molise	4 Weak 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities Implementation by ITI NO	ITI within SNAI NO	POSSIBLE	Coherent with EUSAIR
Campania	3 Weak 'conservative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis NO	ITI within SNAI NO	NO	NO
Apulia	2 Strong 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by Priority Axis YES	NO	NO	Coherent with EUSAIR, IPA CBC; ENI CBC MED
Basilicata	4 Weak 'innovative' Regions	NO	ITI for implementation of ROP in urban areas and internal areas including ITI within SNAI NO	POSSIBLE	Coherent with EUSAIR
Calabria	4 Weak 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities Implementation by ITI NO	ITI within Territorial development strategies and Urban Sustainable Development Strategy NO	POSSIBLE	Coherent with EUSAIR
Sicily	4 Weak 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities Implementation by ITI YES	ITI for Urban Agenda and within SNAI NO	POSSIBLE	Coherent with EUSAIR
Sardinia	4 Weak 'innovative' Regions	Urban Sustainable Development Strategy by designation of Urban Authorities Implementation by ITI NO	ITI for Urban Agenda and within SNAI NO	ENVISAGED	Coherent with Italy, France Maritime; AdG ENI CBC MED

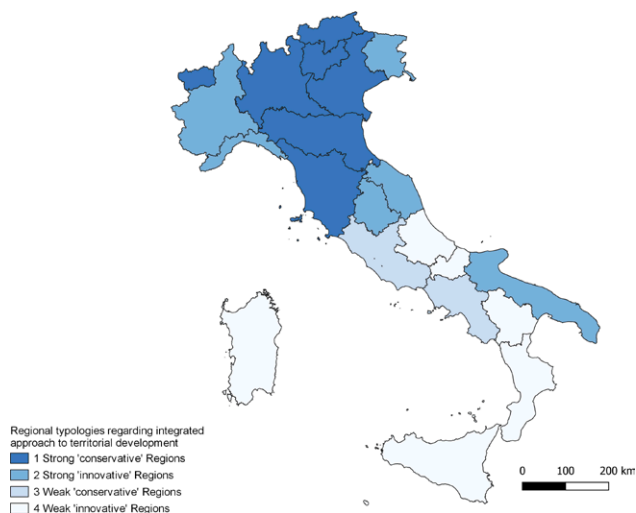


Figure 3. Groups of Regions according to the type. Source: authors' elaboration.

Regarding the ROPs clusterisation clearly these assessments relate to the *ex-ante* approach of the ROPs and not to the results as regards the institutional capacity activated in the implementation processes, i.e. the innovation actually produced in the planning and programming systems at the end of the period.

This requires an *ex-post* attentive evaluation of the induced dynamics in regional spatial planning mechanism, in particular in relation to urban development as well as to the effectiveness of the locally adopted Strategy of Internal areas. In theory this national strategy built on place-based approach, focusing on a process of multi-level local 'negotiation' that in particular identifies as areas of intervention functional regions that are chosen through a policy process. In addition such kind of approach adopts as objectives of regional policy both the reduction of under-utilisation of territorial potential and the reduction of social exclusion; it identifies as instruments of intervention the provision of integrated packages of public goods and services and the introduction of institutional change; it adopts as a method of external intervention, on the one hand, the conditionality of contributions, on the other hand, the collection of information and the definition of priorities and preferences at local level. Investigate the coherence of Italian regional planning with that place-based approach could be useful in negotiating and implementing the future cohesion policy. Indeed, the future cohesion policy will encourage synergies between different EU instruments through the strategic planning process, which will identify common objectives and common areas for activities across differ-

ent programmes⁹. To address specific challenges at the sub-regional and local level, both CLLD and ITI will be strengthened and harmonized. Future cohesion policy, then, will focus more on functional areas for the implementation: this requires a necessary evolution of regional planning towards the recognition and management of different grouping of territorial units not automatically related with formal administrative borders. Although experience of development strategies for internal areas could be helpful, the spatial planning approach and capacity of Italian regions will be challenged.

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⁹ The content of programmes should be more streamlined and strategic. To harmonise and speed up the programming process and implementation at the beginning of the period a common programme template for the ERDF, the Cohesion Fund, ESF+ and EMFF programmes is envisaged. Proposal regulation (Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council COM (2018) 375 final 2018/0196 (COD)

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