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of the Journal Scuola Democratica**

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VOLUME III

**Pandemic and Post-Pandemic
Space and Time**

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"

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**Pandemic and Post-
Pandemic Space and Time**

ASSOCIAZIONE "PER SCUOLA DEMOCRATICA"
Via Francesco Satolli, 30 – 00165 - Rome, Italy

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Territorial Development and 'Third Mission'

Donatella Capaldi and Alessio Ceccherelli

University of Rome 'La Sapienza', alessio.ceccherelli@uniroma2.it,

University of Rome Tor Vergata, donatella.capaldi@uniroma1.it

ABSTRACT: *The subject of the 'third mission' has been on the minds of universities for some time, albeit with differences in orientation at the international level, concerning the interpretation of the mission and the calibration of the commitment devoted to it, compared with what is already required by research and teaching. In Italy, the initial focus was on university-enterprise links, then shifted to continuing education. Recently, there has been a further shift of focus towards the territorial dimension. The concept of 'territory' has been the subject of a strong theoretical resurgence of attention in recent years. Alberto Magnaghi launched an important international movement ('territorialism') that led UNESCO to review the concept of cultural heritage in 2012. Renzo Piano has intervened several times to support the centrality of the actions of 'mending' devastated and degraded urban territories, towards new forms of coexistence. Richard Sennett has dedicated his latest reflections to the relationship between the built territory and the 'dwelling' ('ville' and 'cité'), a fundamental relationship on a social but also ethical level. This turning point coincided with the full affirmation of the network society, which has significantly transformed territories over the last twenty years. The reasons for this transformation lie in the change in the mode of production, the virtualisation of culture, and the restructuring of identities: while physical places become 'translocations' and network nodes, in work and daily life the inhabitants are exposed to often violent glocal dynamics. On the other hand, the growing interest in the territorial dimension (development trends, transformation processes, decay) has been matched by a policy focus on the creation of territorial networks promoting the efficient use of development levers (public and private investment, citizen participation, improving skills, etc.). This applies to the most backward areas, to find ways of connecting them to the infrastructures and dynamics of the network society; but it also applies to more advanced urban areas subject to degradation, to ensure governability, care and involvement of stakeholders and citizens. Universities are potentially decisive players in the transfer of innovation, the training of skills, but also the definition of policies themselves. In this sense, the development of third mission initiatives can be better addressed. In particular, three sectors of activity should be considered, in which promising opportunities and experiences are visible: 1) the enhancement of territories as networks (tangible and intangible heritage); 2) the continuous training of human resources in stable and organised territorial networks involving educational institutions, enterprises and other stakeholders (from ITS to ContaminationLabs), with which to co-design the offer; 3) the development of the Third sector, as interlocutor, recipient and at the same time partner of the initiatives aimed at social welfare. But to what extent can these dynamics be favoured by the current ANVUR evaluation system?*

KEYWORDS: *Third mission, Third sector, Territory, Cultural Heritage, Education.*

1. The 'territorialist' turning point

In 2012, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the 1972 UNESCO Convention for the Protection and of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage and the establishment of the UNESCO *World Heritage site list*, a new vision of cultural heritage was proposed, which placed the territory at the centre as a producer of culture, landscape and common goods. This position was inspired by the 'territorialist' movement and its leading exponent, Alberto Magnaghi. UNESCO had already broadened the definition of heritage: not only just individual assets to be protected (tangible heritage), but also millenary cultural processes such as languages, agricultural knowledge, craft techniques, festivals, rituals, dance and theatre performances. Since 2005, the notion of intangible heritage has been in fact introduced, as well as that of 'multiculturalism' as a guiding principle of protection. For Italian and French 'territorialists', the territory is also this: an asset to be protected: «a historical dynamic of long-term co-evolutionary processes between human settlement and the environment, nature and culture, and thus as the outcome of the transformation of the environment by successive and stratified cycles of civilization» (Magnaghi, 2010).

The territory should therefore not be considered as a simple concentration of resources to be exploited, a container of vestiges and monuments. Rather, it is the real forge of heritage, insofar as it is the relational heritage of environmental, anthropic, landscape, productive and artistic components that have sedimented and hybridised over the centuries. To survive over time, the territory needs communities that care for it and transform it in a far-sighted and sustainable way: Communities that can activate awareness and knowledge of the common territorial goods by forming them, which are essential for social and bio-topic coexistence. The ability to recognize the identity of places, their archives of knowledge, millenary experiences lost and to be recovered, memories and techniques for representing space is fundamental. The territory is continually restructured by human groups, projecting work and energy into space – and time – to adapt its conditions to economic and social needs (Raffestin, 1977; 2005). New forms of 'territoriality' are thus created, through which the space is culturally moulded, acquiring a particular morphology that is also recognisable thanks to scattered point-like signs: landmarks, often distinguishable only by the local population (paths, mines, meeting places, milestones, erratic boulders, such as that of the poet-shepherds in Camuti, Catania or Amatrice). The transformation of the territory passes through 'transfers of places' (for example, the re-functionalisation of buildings with a change of use such as the World War II bunkers studied by Virilio), or other traces, that are

often minimal but which constitute a submerged memory rooted in the landscape. Moreover, 'territorialisation' implies inclusive but also exclusive processes between communities of different cultures, which coexist, conflict and mix 'behind the landscape' (recalling a poetic collection by Andrea Zanzotto), giving shape to a 'landscape' in which nature is not the only feature. Processes that should also be interpreted as a 'deterritorialisation', in cases of land depletion, resource impoverishment (including cultural and human), unsustainable exploitation, or catastrophic events that have emptied and abandoned places. Or as a 'reterritorialisation', through space reconfigurations (e.g., the invention of 'paths', religious or otherwise, as St. Francis way or the Robbers' Road), environmental and urban 'repairs', technological innovations, infrastructural changes, multicultural settlements.

The turning point based on 'territorialist' awareness coincided with the full affirmation of the network society and the 'informational' mode of production (Castells, 1996), which has significantly affected the morphology of territories in the last historical phase, marked by several factors: globalisation, the network reorganisation of all processes, the accentuated culture virtualization and the perception of space and time, and an accelerated identities restructuring. As places become 'trans-places' and network nodes, in work and daily life both subjects and the territory are exposed to strong glocal dynamics, as crossroads of local and global imaginaries, created and remediated by technologies and media.

It is in this context that it is necessary to rethink territories preservation, not only by adopting conservation strategies, nor only 'green' strategies, but also by favouring the creation of 'landscape communities' as active subjects – acting in continuity – and endowed with adequate motivations and skills. Taking care of the territory, whether urban or rural, is a complex activity, requiring multiple skills. Experiences and models have multiplied over the last twenty years, starting with the strategies of slow food and slow travel. They require local care, but also the ability to deal with complex supply chains – productive, technological, communicative – in the field of food (agriculture, processing, distribution) and tourism. As far as urban planning is concerned, Renzo Piano has repeatedly proposed a strategy of 'mending', aimed at reconfiguring the suburbs by intervening on spaces, opening up passages between house blocks, in the 'built-up area', and creating infrastructures and meeting points for social and cultural activities. More generally, Richard Sennett (2018) theorises a 'dwelling' of the city as a re-appropriation, by those who live there, thanks to forms of living and 'construction' that respond to the needs of citizens from below, in contrast to the dominant concept of 'closure', of 'building' that compresses living spaces top down. Sennett identifies the 'reconfiguration' of the territory as a re-conquest of an artisanal way of operating, in a co-designing to which citizens and institutions contribute through the use of social platforms. In this sense, the role of associations and the 'third sector' becomes fundamental, also

in the economic sense, as a 'transfer' of needs, requests and bottom-up planning.

2. Territory, third mission, third sector

A movement of reconversion towards the territory can also be observed about the 'third mission' of the university (and, in perspective, of other institutions). The subject of the 'third mission' has been on the minds of universities for some time, albeit with differences in orientation at the international level, concerning the interpretation of the mission and the calibration of the commitment devoted to it, compared with what is already required by research and teaching. A fluctuation of the definition at the theoretical level is already evident from the outset. Gibbons and other researchers (1994) pointed out the shift from a linear 'Modus 1' view (the third mission as the transition from basic to applied research) to a 'Modus 2' view (the third mission as the interaction between researchers and producers). The idea has been reworked in the 'triple helix' theory (Etzkowitz, 2008), which enhances the role of universities in technology transfer and the knowledge economy in general. It prefigures a very first pattern of hybrid university that is: 1. entrepreneurial; 2. in connection with the outside world, society and institutions, in a co-productive relationship and industrial partnership; 3. with researchers and students acting in an entrepreneurial way. Mode 2 consequently implies that the products and indicators of university activity are patents, spin-offs, start-ups and patronage of industry. Other scholars, such as Carayannis and Campbell (2012), have gone further, emphasising a Mode 3: Openness to the territory and society and the involvement of civil actors together with universities in a co-design of common activities (fourth helix). And soon (2012) they added a fifth helix, based on the strategic role of universities in sustainability and preservation of the natural environment facing the climate challenge. The 'shift' – in different phases – of the third mission's declinations has stressed a more complex model of university hybridization and has also been accompanied by an enhancement of the university's offer of continuing education, another very relevant aspect, strategic in updating and enriching knowledge and skills.

The definition of 'third mission' has moved from the initial focus on the university-enterprise link to that on continuing education in Italy too. But recently a further shift towards the territorial dimension can be observed. Especially in some regions (first in the North for fifteen years, then in the Centre, more recently and only partially in the South, despite the greater availability of public investment), the growing interest in this dimension (development trends, transformation processes, decay) has been matched by a policy focus on the creation of territorial networks promoting the efficient use of development levers (public and private investment, citizen participation, improving skills, tangible and intangible heritage, etc.). This applies to the most backward areas, to find ways of

connecting them to the infrastructures and the dynamics of the network society; but it also applies to more advanced urban areas subject to degradation, to ensure governability, care and involvement of stakeholders and citizens. Universities are potentially decisive players in the transfer of innovation, the training of skills, but also the definition of policies themselves and in the co-participation in grassroots planning initiatives coming from territory. In this sense, the development of third mission initiatives can be better addressed. In particular, our experiences on the field concern three sectors of activity that should be considered, in which promising opportunities and experiences are visible:

1. the enhancement of territories as networks of tangible and intangible heritage, as territory heritage.
2. the continuous training of human resources in stable and organised territorial networks involving educational institutions, enterprises and other stakeholders (from ITS to experimental trials, as Contamination Labs), with which to co-design the offer.
3. the development of the Third sector, as interlocutor, recipient and at the same time partner of the initiatives aimed at social welfare.

The following considerations are based on these experiences.

3. Listening to territory actors and co-designing the project

To verify the 'territorialist' tendency in the context of third mission activities, it would be necessary to distinguish interventions based on a centralised project strategy from the mass of initiatives that universities carry out. In the cultural sphere, for example, the latter sees the territory as the place where the academic activities branch out (the management of cultural assets) and spread (the creation of events). The territorialist mission implies a grassroots listening system of territories, as a basis for valorisation (e.g., of cultural heritage or services for social welfare). Local stakeholders must be involved in various ways and for various objectives: for the formation of networks, enhancing the assets and taking care of the territories; for tourist and sustainable development; for the support of economic activities, craft and micro-business production, training initiatives; for active citizenship and its forms of association. Territorial networks, in short, and not just individual activities that can be carried out at the local level.

In particular, cultural heritage and the development of the third sector are the driving force behind the development of the territory, creating chains of activity. In the context of the continuous development of technologies and communication systems, the design and care of the territory must necessarily overcome the logic of sporadic initiatives, and constitute a process of transformation that the university can follow as a partner. In this sense, the relationship between the university and the territory is reversed with respect to the concept of the third mission based on the ideas and practices of the entrepreneurial university. The

university is not the subject that 'transfers' (knowledge transfer, intellectual capital enhancement). On the contrary, the territory is an organism in continuous mutation with which the university must tune in, interpreting its dynamics and transformations in their 'glocal' development, to become an actor in collaboration with other players. This entails actions that are planned in the medium and long term, not dependent on the immediate and contractual realisation of resources by the structures. As already noted, the immediate profitability of partnerships with industry risks overshadowing projects dedicated to service communities (Moscati, Boffo, 2015).

There are several possible and already practiced strategies for implementing programs of this kind. The first one concerns an aspect that has been little investigated, namely the contribution that students can make to identify needs and initiate a dialogue with the local area. The first step in making contact with local stakeholders, aimed at creating networks and co-design communities, can be achieved as a result of the most classic and widespread schemes of teaching based on 'social constructivism' (Watzlawick, 2008), even in curricular courses. Examples already described (Ilardi, Gola, 2019), and other ongoing experiences despite the limits to mobility imposed by the pandemic, the REWIND project of the Sapienza University of Rome (Capaldi, Ceccherelli, 2021), regard the application of technologies and methodologies suitable for supporting territorial cultural heritage. Project work by students' groups, especially if set up on an interdisciplinary basis, involves: The studies and analysis of territorial resources, the identification of stakeholders, the development and discussion of sustainable enhancement strategies, the creation of digital infrastructures and communication products (transmedia storytelling, gamification, events built on the most advanced technologies, etc.). Art and archaeology, history, entertainment, digital and audiovisual communication, applied IT, social media marketing and other specialist and transversal skills intersect in the field experience, creating a socially useful output. The relational approach with the territory is engaged in the interconnection of cultural heritage (tangible, intangible and hidden) from which to develop tourism marketing strategies and local productive activities. In general, schools and other local training agencies, citizens' associations, tourist, productive and craft actors, and often the institutions themselves (municipalities, museums, parks, etc.) are contacted to reconfigure the territorial area.

The second driving direction implies something more stable in the field of lifelong learning: a continuous training of human resources in stable and organized territorial networks involving educational institutions, enterprises, and further stakeholders co-designing the offer. The instruments can be various. There are two most interesting hypotheses for moving from the practice of spot interventions (such as training camps or summer schools or training events in excavation campaigns) to that of strategic and structured interventions: organic participation in super-professional ITSs rooted in specific territorial areas; and the

currently embryonic Contamination Labs. The latter formula – less executed – derives from a chain experimented in the last PNR of the Ministry of Education, Universities and Research (MIUR, 2016-20), involves the collaboration of business professionals, students, researchers and also stakeholders; it can easily be used to create stable and aggregated project communities dedicated to specific territorial areas. Project-based learning is thus directly linked to socially useful and shared planning, with good chances of project implementation. These projects must be well prepared and nourished by advanced scientific and technological skills, addressing the various social and economic players who can be direct protagonists in the construction of the offer.

The third line of action concerns a more systematic relationship with the varied world of the third sector. Voluntary associations, organisations and third sector bodies, in general, are the true mediators between the requests that arise from the local area and the possible implementation of concrete actions in agreement with the public administration. The ETS (Enti del Terzo settore, according to the 2016-17 reform) collect citizens' requests, can network and are often able to intervene and prevent needs. The university can provide its expertise, not in a transmissive logic, but in a participatory one, contributing to co-planning paths and the training of key figures in the relationship with the territory. A concrete example is the *Formazione Quadri Terzo Settore (FQTS)* project, which has been financed by the *Fondazione con il Sud* for about 10 years. Its primary objective is to build an infrastructure of relations and skills for the third sector. Within it, in a non-formal, but highly organised learning context (Balzola, 2021), various training paths are making it possible to build skills in different areas: community development (Squillaci, Volterrani, 2021), social co-programming, social innovation (Fazzi, 2019), territorial animation, communication, sustainable development. Some professors from different universities have made their contribution, participating in a collaborative, experiential, and project-based training system, carrying out research-action experiences, and developing project ideas. FQTS has relations not only with individual teachers, but also with the universities involved (Roma La Sapienza, Rome Tor Vergata, Rome Tre, Naples Federico II), through agreements with some study courses and – in the case of Roma Tre – with a certification system provision for skills developed in some training courses. Of course, the relationship between universities and the third sector could become even more systematic and coherent, thanks to continuous moments of confrontation and work in which to involve – in addition to teachers – also students in their courses, in the logic of the first hypothesised strategy.

Conclusions

What has been said up to this point constitutes a reversal, or at least a major correction, of the entrepreneurial university paradigm. It is not an

autonomous driver of the human capital enhancement, but it shows how appropriate is to move towards an effective hybridisation, which tends to be driven by the current phase of cultural and economic evolution. But to what extent can these dynamics be favoured by the current ANVUR evaluation system? And how to reorient governance and possibly differentiation processes in the university fabric?

The movement we have started to describe probably implies a change in the logic of external evaluation, but also in the logic of internal organisation and quality assurance in universities. What is needed are structures or at least 'delegations', in each university or in networks of (regional) universities, which maintain a dialogue with specific urban and rural areas. ANVUR should move away from an evaluation pattern based on quantitative parameters to a system more akin to the one adopted for many years now for teaching (existence of dedicated structures, improvement actions, with verification of results, etc.). Aspects to be verified should be: dialogue with citizens, stakeholders, associations; synergies with the third sector (not only in the social-health field); contribute to active citizenship movements; dissemination of co-designing events and structures for the sustainable enhancement of territories and the mitigation of criticalities; creation and management of more or less complex networks; creation of territorial technological infrastructures; participation in the elaboration of business plans and territorial fundraising.

What should be assessed and rewarded is the action effectiveness as a whole. Not the atomization of individual initiatives, even generous ones, but scattered or unconnected.

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