

NEW GEOGRAPHIES OF SELF-ORGANISATION.

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EU territorial policies and the network metaphor

- ▣ EU territorial policies as local compensation for global neo-liberalism (Allmendinger, 2000): a **redistributive tool** used in advanced capitalist societies
- ▣ EU agricultural policies as protectionist (non-liberalist) policy: a form of **mitigation of unbalances** due to neo-liberal strategies

but

- ▣ neo-liberal principles remain **unquestioned**: decisions on communications, airlines or energy (Marshall, 2012)
- ▣ increasing **polarisation** (cities as nodes, high-speed railways as inter-connections): the **network metaphor** (Castells, 1996) emerging from structural changes in Western economies/societies
- ▣ **networking, governance and rescaling** (often interrelated), as the main paths explored in various and converging research fields (Scoppetta, 2012).

territory still matters

- ▣ **pervasive neo-liberal discourses** on objective, abstract and quasi-natural forces, autonomous from political decision and human control

but

- ▣ Badie's «**death of territory**» (1995) due to de-territorialised flows of globalisation: **nothing but a fashionable narrative** without substantive truth (Elden, 2005)
- ▣ if detached from the social/historical/political/economic territorial complexity and from «**path-dependence**» (Brenner *et al.*, 2010b) – many phenomena cannot be understood :
 - **RESCALING** (Swyngedouw, 1997; Brenner, 2000; 2001; 2004; Brenner & Theodore, 2002b; Gualini, 2006), i.e.: the ongoing re-articulation of politics at different spatial level;
 - **GOVERNANCE** ends to be the Offe's (2008) «**empty signifier**»: understanding the distinctive ways in which the «**actually existing neo-liberalism**» (Brenner & Theodore, 2002a) is translated at the local level;
 - **NEO-LIBERALISM** itself becomes nothing but a «rascal» concept (Brenner *et al.*, 2010a; 2010b): **assumption of power asymmetries** in terms of weakness of local governments (or local social actors) in the face of «external and more powerful actors» (Robinson, 2011)

territory in the Anglo-Saxon tradition

- ▣ the Brown's & Purcell's (2005) «local trap» and the Agnew's (1994) «territorial trap» connected to the Anglo-Saxon political-economy and economic-geography tradition: **territory as the spatial expression of the modern national state.**

but

- ▣ equivalence territory/state highly questionable (Cox ;1991; Agnew & Corbridge, 1995; Brenner, 2004) : the fruit of a **modernist discourse**
- ▣ differences and specificities in countries, such as Italy, with a long foreign domination in which **power was legitimised from outside**: the case of Sicily, where power was historically intended as **constantly negotiated** between the (often enemy) central and the local level (a small elite of landowners)

different approaches to territory

- ▣ **French or Italian human geography**: territory as **social relation** produced and transformed through **continual struggle**, a site of contested processes - see also: Soja (1989): each concrete spatiality is an arena of struggle;
- ▣ territory as **space mediated through power**; State as one actor among the others (**Raffestin**, 1980; see also: Lefebvre, 1980)
- ▣ **Sereni**'s studies on the Italian agricultural landscape (1961) , a Braudelian approach coming from a Marxist tradition: territory as the result of «the **inter-relation between history and nature**»; it becomes «also **aesthetically perceivable**» through landscape (Calzolari, 1999)
- ▣ **nature itself** is worked and collectively transformed into a social construct: Cattaneo's (1925) description of the Val Padana as a «**by-product**» of human activities, practices, strategies and «**projects**» (see also: Corboz, 1983), an **archive of inhabitants' daily life**,, «an immense **repository of human labour**» – rather than a gift from nature.

active self-sustainable territories

- ▣ territory as a complex product of a **co-evolution of both people and places**, the result of a long standing process of civilisation (Magnaghi, 2000, 2001; see also: Dematteis, 1985), a collective product/construct
- ▣ it can be expressed through the Deleuze's and Guattari's (1980) **cyclic movements of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation** defining the relationship between the *territoire* and the *milieu* (or *Umwelt*) it territorialises
- ▣ «**active territoriality**» (Dematteis, 2001; Dematteis & Governa, 2005; Governa, 2007) aimed at a (self)sustainable and durable local development
- ▣ identity means **sharing a common project**
- ▣ landscape is «a manner of seeing» (Farinelli, 1992), the Humboldtian “haze” describing not «what exists», but making possible «**what could be**» (*id.*), what «could allow for the unexpected, that **could promote change, even revolution**» (*id.*).

introducing nature in discourses on territory

- ▣ **environment**, congenitally uncomfortable with boundaries, is one of the major pillars of EU policies
- ▣ environmental issues can summarise the 3 main elements – **networking, governance, and rescaling** – of the (apparently) de-territorialising metaphor and re-connect them to the territory
 - a river, constitutes a **network** that can be intended as both physical and immaterial, given the social, economic, cultural relationships between opposite banks
 - controlling its floods or building dams or bridges implies a certain degree of **governance**, at least in the form of coordination
 - considering a river basin instead of different national states implies a territorial **rescaling**.

EU concept of territorial cohesion

- ▣ the ESDP («Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of Europe»): **alleviating spatial differentiation among EU territory** to ensure a balanced achievement of «the three fundamental goals of European policy»:
 - economic and social cohesion,
 - conservation and management of natural resources and cultural heritage
 - more balanced competitiveness
- ▣ «people should not be disadvantaged by **wherever they happen to live or work in the Union**» (CEC, 2004).
- ▣ «a territorial dimension of the **European social model**» (CEC, 2009), which refers to the **Delors's European vision**: «a just **distribution of opportunities in space**» (Faludi, 2007; see also: Davoudi, 2005).

competitiveness vs. cohesion?

- ▣ the network metaphor (and the Lisbon Agenda): inter-urban competitiveness and **growth-first neo-liberal perspective**, naturalisation of market logics, “locking-in” of public sector, funding provision on the basis of economic potential rather than social needs (Peck & Tickell, 2002), enforcement of strategic/innovative sectors, focus on “**territorial excellences**”
- ▣ EU Sustainable Development Strategy (CEC, 2001; Council of the EU, 2006) as **a long-term complement** to Lisbon’s medium-term goals: cohesion and sustainability as **tools** for the achievement of growth-oriented objectives
- ▣ the idea of “balanced development” still remains, but it is interpreted as **functional for global competitiveness**: without levelling richness and accessibility (to infrastructures, to knowledge) it is impossible to compete on the global market.

a contradiction to be highlighted

- ▣ a strategy focusing on territorial excellences risks to **weaken and further marginalise** those territories that are already considered as spatially or economically peripheral
- ▣ territorial development **is not a neutral process**, as it involves interests and strategies that can also be **conflicting**
- ▣ the implementation of development policies can paradoxically **generate further and different imbalances.**

marginality

- ▣ a key-term for the conceptualisation of the Italian territory: mountains/non-mountains regions; North/South dichotomy – see the vast literature on the so-called “**Southern question**”: seminal works by G. Fortunato, S. Nitti, and A. Gramsci
- ▣ typical representation of the Italian territory and **also the main approach to regional development** from the formation of the national state (1861) until the ‘50s: **backwardness and regional unbalances** dominant in public and scientific discourse
- ▣ **top-down public policies** ended reproducing precisely those problems they were aimed to contrast: the **Cassa per il Mezzogiorno**, a top-down regional development plan explicitly devoted to the South of Italy **as an entire homogeneous “backward region”**
- ▣ marginality as lack of both capital stock and spatial accessibility: infrastructure provision, **indifference to endogenous actors**, a development model given by big firms (e.g.: FIAT) of the industrial North with “poles of industrialisation” to stop the massive internal and external emigration.

a more complex approach is needed

- ▣ allocation of EU structural funds: **quantitative/economic criteria** (population, density, age structure, GDP, employment, education, spatial accessibility...) mirror the **rigid, static and simplified image of marginality** (as in the Italian development policies of the 50s).
- ▣ **a broader articulation of contemporary EU local contexts**: transformations in urban/rural relationships/inter-dependences; rescaling and new territorial hierarchies
- ▣ suggestions from the Italian case: the more articulated territorial representation of the so-called “**Third Italy**” (Bagnasco, 1977), the category of “**local systems**” and the concept of “**industrial district**” (Becattini, 1979; 1987; 1989; 1990; 1991; 2000) , showing original local trajectories of industrialisation based on **local cultural features** and **learning mechanisms** given by a cognitive proximity

innovative parameters

- ▣ abandonment of a restrictive concept of “unbalance”, **unidirectionally centred on the idea of economic growth**
- ▣ construction of more complex, dynamic and **pluralistic geographies of development**, within which **marginal territories may actively participate** (and not merely survive)
- ▣ recent trends towards the so-called «*decroissance*» (Grinevald, 1979; Latouche, 2005, 2008), and search for **innovative parameters** for measuring development also including concepts such as **justice** or **happiness** – both referred to the social and environmental context (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004) rather than to individuals

autonomy and slowness

- ▣ the local level: greater accessibility to information, effective **democratic control** on both production and exclusion processes
- ▣ from inter-dependence (at the basis of the network metaphor) to autonomy: enlarging participation in decision-making (especially as regards the management of resources), **awarenesslessly rescaling down** (shifting the centre of gravity of economic processes closer to the level of political participation)
- ▣ «**slow territories**» (Lancerini, 2005; Lanzani, 2007): a different and slower trajectory towards sustainable development, which requires time in order to allow collective learning processes.
- ▣ **assigning centrality to marginality**: a “litmus test” for sustainable development policies.

the role of social capital

- ▣ **territory as the result of long-standing evolutionary processes** between human settlements as local *milieaus* and the environment
- ▣ **social capital** (a constantly used public good) - and its «dark side» (Cremaschi, 2007):
 - «**horizontal**» (not «vertical») social capital (Putnam, 1993) generating trust and cooperation,
 - «**bridging**» (not «bonding») social capital (Putnam, 2000), based on «**weak ties**» (not «strong») (Granowetter, 1983)
 - social capital as «**social support**» (not as «social leverage») (De Souza Briggs, 1998) facilitating access and changes of opportunity structures.
 - social capital as «**autonomy**» (not as «embeddedness») (Woolcock, 1998) building links with the outside: not “assimilation” of marginal territories to hegemonic visions and values, but the construction of a **critical relationship between “slow” and “speed” territories** (a more pluralistic way of thinking the concept of “development”)

“capacitation” of slow territories_1

- ▣ activism and capacity in **planning, cooperation, and networking** (in re-defining a **territorial identity** around a shared image/project)
- ▣ ability in **self-constructing from below** alternative ideas of development
- ▣ the way in which power is given to **weak actors**, and how this is used to support a shared place-based spatial strategy
- ▣ «**capacitation**» (Sen, 1999) as ability to acquire an autonomous capacity to **express different development models**
- ▣ autonomy as **self-regulation** not simply as decentralised power but as ability in **developing individual and collective preferences towards sustainability** through **non-paternalistic strategies** (i.e.: making sustainable development concretely desirable)
- ▣ **persistence** of established ties, values and methods (**outcomes in immaterial terms of processes** rather than of material achievements)

networking slowness

- ▣ EU territorial and political rescaling: ability of slow territories in **constructing larger networks**
- ▣ **inter-municipal dimension**, which may not correspond to any existing administrative entity, as it can be conceived as **a result of sharing actions over time**
- ▣ spontaneous forms of inter-municipality as an intermediate level at which projects, strategies and agreements towards local sustainable development can be effectively and fruitfully established and implemented:
 - the French experiences of the so-called “**Pays**” (Santangelo, 2003) due to the Law LOADDT (1999) : clustering municipalities based on mutual consent
 - the Italian “**Unioni di Comuni**” (“Unions of Municipalities”) due to legislative changes in territorial organisation initiated from the Law n.142/1990 (and also due to public spending “cuts”)

slowness as a social construct

- ▣ slowness as an **evolutionary process**: a longer time is required by the **cognitive dimension** of the collective cultural construction aimed at the **co-evolution of people and places**

but

- ▣ **short-term indirect and unexpected outcomes** are not to be excluded
- ▣ the spatial strategy **as a construct rather than as a product**
- ▣ it consists of the **re-production of common goods**: the basis and the most qualitative element of development, **by giving a stronger sense to the concept of “social cohesion”**, and allowing a **non-contradictory approach to the notion of “development”**.

**THANK YOU VERY
MUCH!**