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).
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)
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.
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.*).
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.
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).
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**.
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
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), **awarenessly 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**») (Granovetter, 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”)


activism and capacity in **planning, cooperation, and networking** (in re-defining a **territorial identity** around a shared image/project)

ability in **self-contracting 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 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!