Innovations in practice. Regional regeneration strategies for municipalities networks.

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Abstract: - Territories and towns located near major regional capitals, or even more national ones, experienced often a process of cultural and demographic "colonization", from the hegemonic center, losing identity and traditions and being unable to offer alternative settlements, infrastructure and equipment of services. The same phenomena happen for municipalities located away from major infrastructures and development networks.
Changing these cultural and social dynamics, capable of determining new and different territorial suburbs rather than urban areas, with poor conditions or neglect within large metropolitan areas, is a field of research and practice poorly attended. The objective of this study is to identify possible strategies for territorial regeneration for networks of small and medium size municipalities, starting from models of sustainable local development, elaborated in a regional experience in Southern Italy compared with similar international cases.

Key-Words: - local development; Regional regeneration strategies; urban regeneration; municipalities networks; cultural capital; social capital; territorial capital.

1 Introduction[1]

The territories and small towns located near the major regional cities or even more the national ones (the cases of Rome, Paris, London, Berlin, New York are well known in the literature, see for example the contributions of [10][5][14]) have been often a process of cultural and demographic "colonization" from the hegemonic center, losing identity and traditions and being unable to offer alternative for settlements, infrastructure and equipment services. Inhabitants from the hegemonic center are "immigrants" in many municipalities close to it, maintaining close links with the center of origin, often imposing new habits because of their number and neglecting, because unknown, the traditions of the small towns that welcomed them.

Changing these cultural and social dynamics, able to determine new and different territorial suburbs rather than urban areas, with poor conditions or neglect within large metropolitan areas, is a field of research and practice little used. It's necessary to identify spatial conditions that inevitably accompany social and economic conditions aiming, for example, to promote employment, an easy access to public services for the most disadvantaged social groups, an adequate level of education and training for those out of the labor market in order to simplify their coming back home [24]. The term *periphery* does not just mean places outside, boundary or edge of the city but, now, has a meaning essentially sociological, economic, political, addressing these forms of territorial periphery. This involves the need to identify new possible strategies and actions, knowing that the territorial and urban project is an increasingly complex process rather than simply a design [16], capable to integrate actions of mainly physical nature, which are traditionally the field of planning applications and architecture, with processes and interventions for social and economic development. This can be defined as a real local territorialist development process [19] based on the creation of a system of relations.

The objective of this study is to identify possible strategies for the regeneration of territorial networks of small and medium size municipalities from models of sustainable local development. Consistent with this goal, after describing the approach of territorial development at the base of the present work, we analyze the assumptions and initial results of the Territorial Development Integrated Plan of three small towns around the capital of Apulia Region in southern Italy.

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[1] The paper is a joint work of the authors, also if Francesco Rotondo has written the sections 1 and 4 and Pierangela Loconte the others.

2 Territory as a resource for local sustainable development

According to a wide international literature (for instance[7][26][1][8] territory is a complex concept. It can be considered as a complex set of values and resources, a common good of fixed assets, material and immaterial, an exhaustible resource, a political and economic "fact", or a "social construction" deriving from the collective action of groups, interests and institutions [8]. It is clear that to work on territory means to work on the complexity of its parts: the synergy between actions allows to obtain environmental, economic and social sustainability in so that one is not achieved at the expense of the others [18]. The complexity of the system makes it necessary to adopt a defined and carefully strategy of development able to define as the determination of the basic long-term goals and objectives and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals [4].

The development of a strategy and specific objectives requires a thorough knowledge of the territory and its physical, human, environmental, historical and economic features. These resources, therefore, can be defined as a real *territorial capital*, which is connected to the identity values of places. As noted by the European Commission, each region has a specific 'territorial capital' that is distinct from that of other areas and generates a higher return for specific kinds of investments than for others, since these are better suited to the area and use its assets and potential more effectively[11].

This means that, although strategies and objectives of enhancement and local development may be common to most European territories, in reality there is a need to establish specific objectives and actions that may affect territorial strengths and activate latent opportunities. The territory, therefore, plays a central role in the transformation process and can be considered as a resource able to generate development opportunities: urban contexts, networks and rural areas, landscape and natural heritage intertwine with the historical origins, common identity and intangible heritage.

Then, the adoption of a unified strategy based on the local identity must be able to stimulate the economic and social context, reducing the emerging gaps. This strategy, therefore, must be based on the existing relations between the elements that form the context and the new relationships that can be built between the parties in order to activate the processes of enhancement and local development.

Territorial development policies (policies with a territorial approach to development) should first and foremost help areas to develop their territorial capital. An important element in this respect is the cooperation of various actors, authorities and stakeholders [11].

The result of this process is what Augé defines a place "*as relational, historical and concerned with identity*"[3]. Integrated management of resources allows to create a development process rooted in the territory and based on its values from the cultural, economic and social point of view: man builds landscape through actions that change the reality in which past and present coexist [20].

Within the territorial complexity, therefore, the cultural capital and social capital play a role of particular importance.

The concept of cultural capital defines an asset which embodies, stores or provides cultural value in addition to whatever economic value it may possess [27]. Each area has its own intrinsic cultural capital, which was built by layers of history and of human actions and this heritage, tangible and intangible, can be the starting point on which to build sustainable local development. It should be emphasized that the development of cultural capital has the function to implement the development of integrated and multi-sectorial policies for urban and territorial regeneration not only for tourist purposes but able to activate a process of re-appropriation of the territory by the resident population. This results in enhancement of goods, implementation of services for citizens and revitalizing the economies of scale. Furthermore, this means that both tangible and intangible forms of cultural capital exist as a capital stock which could be assigned an asset value in both economic and cultural terms at a given point in time [28]. The cultural capital of an area is a huge resource because culture will provide specific skills, working methods and codes that will be transferred into other sectors of the economy and combined with other skills [17] and, at the same time, contributes to build or strengthen the identity of places. Heritage creates the personality of the territory [12] but only through the use of a strategic vision and interaction, discussion and cooperation with local actors, both public and private, heritage can change in meaning becoming an opportunity for the community. It's known that one of the strategies to put in place for local sustainable development of

a region is to create networks of relationships among stakeholders [2]. This interaction is what today, in strategic planning, we define as social capital [21]. The territorial social capital is a set of potential by which local stakeholders can express and enhance local identity in order to facilitate the development [13]. The wealth of resources plays a key role in promoting local economic growth but the project of territory is first of all the production of knowledge: individual, collective and public. The strategic territory plan contributes to the creation and raising awareness of social capital: we must not forget that in the cultural networks and relationships that support human activity exists intangible cultural capital [29].

This shows the strong relationship between territory, cultural heritage and society that change in a reciprocal manner in each context. Local sustainable development based on the complexity of the territory appears as a process of territorial development based on the sustainable exploitation of tangible and intangible resources present in a certain territory, which also involves the social and cultural sphere and the ability of self-organization of people [9].

3 Innovation in local development practices

As already mentioned, the goal of this work is to understand what are the territorial regeneration strategies for networks of municipalities and, in particular, what are the actions to be implemented in a specific geographical area for a real sustainable local development. For this purpose we tried to understand what strategies and innovative practices have been tested in different European contexts. The intention is to evaluate how the objectives of development and sustainability can be achieved starting from what we have so far defined as Territory Capital strongly linked to the identity of places and historical background. The study, therefore, will focus on innovative practices in local development starting from the knowledge of the context and the identity and structural characteristics and will analyze the policies and actions taken for the enhancement of territorial capital. In particular, we will look at some examples of regeneration processes of territorial networks at European level, focusing attention on the Italian case of Territorial Development Integrated Plans.

3.1 Municipalities networks' territorial regeneration process: an international review

In the European context, it was possible to find a huge variety of policies and regeneration processes of territorial networks of small and medium-sized municipalities. We have a very complex and varied scenarios characterized by a wide range of institutional or voluntary instruments which pursue the same objectives. Here, we will refer to two cases which, although very different, are considered particularly interesting to describe how the complexity of the territory and the territorial capital can be a source of development.

An important example at international level is the International Building Exibition Emscher Park. The Ruhr Area is an economic and geographical region in North Rhine Westphalia, criss-crossed by the rivers Emscher, Ruhr and Lippe. This is a polycentric area consisting in 20 municipalities characterized by low density urban agglomerations. The Ruhr is an urban landscape that is characterized by the interests of large coal companies and the steel industries that have been active here in the past and so are today[22]. The process of deindustrialization of the region and the change of the economic role of this area resulted in the need to find new meanings and opportunities for growth and development both in term of socio-economic and ecologic revitalization. The strategic idea for restructuring the region and build up this new post-industrial landscape was based on the "change without growth" model and with the beginning of a new culture of planning and building, starting from the existing heritage in the area, the old industrial buildings for coal and steel transformation and, than, starting from the awareness of its history and its identity. In particular, the Emscher Landscape Park is the central project and connecting topic of this Building Exhibition. It is designed to make the Emscher region's landscape more attractive and gives it a more comprehensive urban planning system [15]. It covers an area of 450 Km2 and is composed by different elements that completely change the perception of the space and remodel urban context. The Ruhr experience is innovative because it focuses on the environmental and economic regeneration of a region on the existing territorial capital: nature and cultural and industrial heritage give them new meaning inside the context. The Emscher river represents the structural element on which project has been constructed: the

regeneration of 350 Km of river is the fundamental principle for ecological and environmental change and it is the way to create new opportunities both for people lifestyles and regional economy. The linkage between landscape, nature, industrial heritage and the reinterpretation of local identity has created new social impulses and new forms of tourism giving vitality to the Rhur Area. In the context, jobs were relocated from industry and trade to communication and services [25].

Another interesting example are the policies of territorial regeneration and enhancement in the Brittany Region in France. The process of development of the area is structured on the promotion of tangible and intangible resources: the strategic goal is to promote the socio-economic development of the area through the activation both of environment and cultural recovery and enhancement policies and tourism-related ones through the creation of a territorial brand and of "labelled" cities. They use voluntary enhancement tools which individual communities in the region decided to join in order to promote sustainable local development and synergistic area. It is clear that the basis of this kind of policy with mainly tourist purposes is the recognition of a strong and uniquely defined regional identity, which is based on the history and environment and cultural heritage. An example of these policies of enhancement and development are *Les Petites Cités de Caractère*. The label was created in Brittany in 1977 by Jean-Bernard Vighetti and was later extended to other regions with the goal to preserve and enhance the authenticity and diversity of the heritage of some small towns of less than 6000 inhabitants. There are specific criteria for listing as a *Petite Cités de Caractere* (for instance to have at least one monument or site listed as being of historical or cultural importance or interesting old buildings, sufficient to form a homogenous group of the same period or character or having a constituted a conservation area) and the priorities of the association of municipalities are to safeguard, restore and maintain the heritage of member towns and to develop and promote amongst residents and visitors alike the economic development of member towns and communes [29][30]. Using cultural tourism they wants to preserve the unique urban history of France and revitalize the economies of these old towns some of which have suffered from rural depopulation and lack of investment for years.

3.2 An Integrated Plan of Territorial Development – Apulia Region - Italy

Even in Italy, the local development processes have received some attention by national and regional laws. For example, in one of the main regions of Southern Italy, the Apulia Region, intermediate levels of planning, called "vast areas" (similar in intention to the "*Pays*" in France) were introduced within which the Apulia municipalities found autonomous modes of aggregation on the basis of common elements. The Regional Law n. 21/2008 "*Rules for the urban regeneration*" is meant to *promote the regeneration of parts of cities and urban systems in accordance with municipal and inter-municipal strategies aimed at improving the urban, residential, socio-economic, environmental and cultural circumstances of human settlements and by means of action drawn up with the involvement of residents and public and private entities concerned* (Art.1). In order to achieve this objective, the municipalities of the Apulia Region must prepare a Planning Document for Urban Regeneration with the participation of the resident population and all public and private stakeholders. The document must be able to identify and deepen the level of knowledge of the territory and identify areas that need regeneration actions, in order to improve the quality of life of the population.

The municipalities of Cellamare, Capurso and Valenzano are three small towns located in the metropolitan area of Bari, the capital of Apulia Region, with a total population amounted to 39,517 inhabitants. The local context is strongly influenced by the presence of the city of Bari, able to offer more opportunities to the population in terms of employment, competitiveness and services. The new awareness of the three municipalities to be included into a common historical and natural context done by tangible and intangible shared assets, have created the need to build a regional network able to allow the achievement of development goals of the plan and improving the quality of urban and regional planning. Issues emerging from the analysis of the local context are the lack of awareness of local government in respect to the assets and territorial resources, the existence of disrepair and neglect historical artifacts, the limited knowledge on the part of the inhabitants of the environmental and cultural heritage in the area, an inability to build relationships, both tangible and intangible between the three municipalities, the lack

of awareness of the population on the issues of sustainable mobility and the historical and artistic heritage, the need for development of services and the system of needs and the steady population increase due primarily to the migration of a large part of the population from the city of Bari, with a significant presence of foreign people which led to the formation of a new context living young and foreign to local conditions. The drafting of the Territorial Development Integrated Plan is aimed to strengthen, upgrade and, where necessary, to design functional networks and the networks of relationships that connect the systems with smaller urban towns and, particularly, those strongly connected to each other from the natural, cultural and historical point. With these objectives, the three municipalities have signed a Protocol of Agreement through which they are committed to the promotion of an integrated plan for the development of a network of slow mobility and green territorial value for the use of common cultural heritage through the activation of specific policies to rebuild, strengthen and enhance existing relationships in the textures of the territorial system.

The goal is, therefore, to enhance and protect the weak and forgotten territorial resources and, at the same time, to found physical or virtual circuits on resources that can create cultural and social ties useful to initiate and develop durable and sustainable economic activities: In this way it is possible to protect the heritage for future generations and to regenerate the territory. In particular, the main action provided for in the plan is the creation of a pedestrian and cycling network that is able to allow the use of cultural heritage and widespread environmental and reconnect with the settlements and the existing goods and services in order to enhance the identity characters. For this purpose, the plan draws a territorial network of primary and secondary routes in the rural context with the function of enabling people to benefit of historic and natural landscape, encouraging and promoting the use of the landscape and of artistic, historical and archaeological assets in common making them accessible. Upgrading of services within the urban areas and improving the quality of urban and territorial space are at the heart of the entire project, with the aim of activating local economies and making region more attractive both in touristic and economic terms. The redevelopment projects of existing public spaces have the aim of making these places new urban centers, able to

respond to social needs of the population as well as return to the usability of the community property of historical and cultural value. The implementation of the participating process, the building of the plan shared with the citizens of the three municipalities and the drafting of individual projects for the construction of the network and nodes are currently in progress. In particular, with regard to the construction of the plan, the three administrations involved in the process wanted to create an ongoing dialogue between expert knowledge and citizenship with the aim of drawing up a plan to respond to the real needs of the territory in order to follow a shared project development and at the same time, increase the sense of attachment to places and knowledge of heritage and territory.

4 Conclusion

The examples presented are very different from each other for local context, culture and society in which they are made and for the substantial difference between the historic Italian landscape, predominantly agricultural and characterized by the presence of historical and natural heritage and German or French landscape. Although there are not grounds for a comparison of the cases analyzed, it is clear that the process of local sustainable development that they propose starts from the same assumptions.

There are four keywords in common:

1. *inter communality* as a starting point for the construction of a real and shared development. The territorial project gives the chance to each reality to grow and develop knowing that the sharing of resources, their implementation and their use allows the increase in the social and economic value, bringing greater benefits to all users and enhancing the quality of life of the resident population;

2. *enhancement of rural, natural and cultural heritage*, as an added value of an area that represents the uniqueness and individuality outside of its context and that may constitute of attractor of economic, touristic and social flows;

3. *landscape project* (urban, natural, rural) and their forms of intersection and integration, as an element able to respond to the variety of social issues, from the economic to the cultural ones through the implementation of integrated actions;

4. *regeneration* for sustainable local development that departs from existing resources, which reads the identity of places, understands the

changing in the history and is able to reinterpret them with new interpretations.

As we have seen form the precedent paragraphs, there's a need to enlarge the concept of urban regeneration to a territorial level, to promote a real sustainable local development based on the specific territorial heritage, as Magnaghi [19] and Choay [6] as already underlined. The precedent key words could be the guiding words of this process, which needs to be promoted by academics, policies and practices to offer a real development strategy for municipalities' networks and this paper is just a first step in this direction

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