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## **THE ROLE OF SPACE IN EU POLICIES AND THE REGIONALIZATION PROCESS**

### **ABSTRACT**

*Space is one of the most debated issues related to the European Union policies. In terms of space, EU perspective is mainly focused on regions. Regions are, more or less successfully the core of spatial approach of European project. The debate moves around different approaches. In a constitutive perspective, regionalization process aims to create more homogeneous partitions. Anyway, the inequalities are more often inside the regions than among regions. To overcome this limit of the traditional top-down regionalization many scholars propose different approaches, from the place-based (Barca, 2009) to the relational (Celata & Coletti, 2014).*

*As it is proposed by Capello (2016), aspects of regional space should be studied in terms of location choices, productive and innovative capacity, competitiveness and relations with the local system. Some scholars (Stimson, Stough & Roberts, 2006) mention different traditional tools for measuring and evaluating regional economic performance. On the other hand there are some other approaches as well, for instance, Capello & Camagni (2008) give insight into forecasting as a way of implementing quantitative foresight (i.e. the MASSST model).*

*Looking at the space in a performative perspective, according with the critical geography, regionalization has a pivotal role in many fields of social activities, such as identity and migration. So, in the European Union the regionalization can't be considered as a collateral effect of economic or social goals.*

*This paper aims to reconceptualize the controversial relation between EU policies and space. Go further to an iconic slogan “The Europe of Regions”, the article proposes to contestualize how the space was included in the EU programmes. At the same time, it aims to analyze how space organization can be included in the EU activities, also in terms of relationship with the parameters often used to analyze regionalization.*

**Keywords:** Regionalization, regional economy, EU regions

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Regionalization and regionalism are constantly increasing their importance in terms of relationships between politics and space. Whereas many social activities, such as economical and political, were mainly based on the national scale and driven by national actors, it's possible to note a significant return of different partitions. The meanings of a region are not the same in different contexts. Different concepts are behind the same word, and it can easily create misunderstandings and radical mistakes. With regions in current use it is possible to indicate a sub-national dimension – such as in the rescaling of power inside any State –, a sovra-national, but also a multi-national – as in the case of transnational regions in the EU context. In this way, talking about regions is also useful in a discussion about different spatial grammar<sup>1</sup> of politics. In this process, European Union still has an important role. EU relations with regional policies create the framework for regionalization process in many EU and EU candidate countries. As many scholars suggest, it also contributes to create and modify some social elements as a part of identity of those countries. At the same time, the debate about the role of space and communities in the regionalization process, from a strict top down process to a more inclusive and place-based approach, suggests different perspective to all debate about regions and regionalization. In any case, those terms can have a different meaning in different cultural spaces. They can be defined in term of analytical framework, made by the different conceptual perspective, but also according to different cultures. In this way the article aims to provide its contributions to the debate. The paper will mostly pursue a teoretichal approach to the themes analyzed, focusing on the different perspective adopted in considered approaches. The authors come from different backgrounds. Katarina Marosevic and Andrea Giansanti mostly deal with regional economy while Daniele Paragano is a geographer. Moving from this point, the research idea is primarily to compare different scientific experiences on the same topic. Concepts related to region, regionalization and regionalism will be explored from two main but dif-

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<sup>1</sup> Amin, A., Massey, D., Thrift, N., *Decentering the nation: A radical approach to regional inequality*, Catalyst, London, 2013

ferent perspectives (economic and the geographical), looking into how these two approaches use and analyze those themes<sup>2</sup>. At the same time, two different experiences of regionalization will be confronted. Croatian and Italian regionalization processes will be explored mainly from a historical perspective, looking for the role that space had in different periods and how European policies and strategies contribute to modify those processes. The paper constitutes the first part of a research project in progress, focused on the role of space in the regionalization process of EU countries. According with the complete research progress, the paper aims to create the theoretical background for the future steps of research. So, it will mainly have focused on a literary review which will be used to analyze, in the following part of the research, the empirical evidence of the introduced themes.

In this framework, the expected result of the paper, which constitutes the first part of a research project in progress, is to underscore the differences much more than define the commons between analyzed cases and the adopted perspective. According with the role of paper in the research project, it will not reach defined conclusions. Rather, the article aims to promote a research strategy which can be included in a multidisciplinary approach and enable different perspectives to create a common result.

## 2. ECONOMICAL OVERVIEW: REGION AND REGIONALIZATION

One question, in this case regions, may be looked at from different perspectives. In economic view of regions, Capello<sup>3</sup> for example speaks of bond between regions and space, because productive resources are mostly concentrated in specific places, usually a region or a city. Besides, economic activities are usually dependent on space in terms of growth and development. With respect to development, geographical distribution and potentials are only minimally determined by exogenous factors, and mostly the result from factors such as human capital, social fixed capital, the fertility of the land and accessibility. As Capello explains: “*It is a source of economic advantages (or disadvantages) such as high (or low) endowments of production factors. It also generates geographical advantages, like easy (or difficult) accessibility of an area and high (or low) endowment of raw materials.*”<sup>4</sup> When emphasizing the importance and the field of study of the regional economy, it should be said that it is not the study of the economy at the level of administrative regions,

<sup>2</sup> According with the limitations of this paper, what will have exposed can't be consider an exhaustive representation of the huge debates about those topics. It's mainly the proposal of some key points for a multidisciplinary debate

<sup>3</sup> Capello, R., *Regional Economics*, Routledge, London and New York, 2016

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, p. Introduction

but should be bonded in analysis with the dimension of space and its effects on the market.

When taking into consideration regions and regionalization, certain authors, f. i. Storper<sup>5</sup>, speak in favour of importance of regions and regionalization in everyday economic life that became one of the really important question and economic and social factors from the 1980's.

Certain types of capital have a really important place in contemporary economy. Camagni & Capello<sup>6</sup> highlight the importance of the concept of territorial capital. Through the empirical application of MASST as a macro-econometric regional growth model, they confirmed the role of territorial capital on regional growth. Results confirmed that the overall performance of the region is higher where there is an important role given to territorial capital assets. Capello<sup>7</sup> gives deeper explanation of this model, whose acronym is made out of different dimensions, macroeconomic, sectoral, social and territorial. Furthermore, this model integrates different theories which are crucial macroeconomic aspects and endogenous territorial assets, and the model is able to take into account macroeconomic trends and policies. It can also interpret regional growth differentials through supply elements that generate different effects at the regional level. Territorial structures in MAAST take into consideration propulsive forces of regional growth and the factors that give explanation for exogenous aggregate trends. Camagni<sup>8</sup> highlights the need for multidimensional perspectives of spatial aspects and claims that economic, social, environmental and cultural dimensions should also be taken into consideration. Toth<sup>9</sup> gives theoretical and empirical results but also critical remarks of territorial capital. Camagni<sup>10</sup> gives proposals on using adequate policies for spatial development.

No matter where the economic activity is made, economists are usually concerned with its (financial) effects. In broader context, usually the stage of being successful is measured in comparison to other regions or urban areas of a country. Ascani,

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<sup>5</sup> Storper, M., *The Regional World, Territorial Development in a Global Economy*, The Guilfor Press, New York – London, 1997

<sup>6</sup> Camagni, R., Capello, R., *Territorial Capital and Regional Competitiveness: Theory and Evidence, Part A: Spatial Competitiveness*, J-STAGE Vol. 39 No. 1, 2009, p. 19-39

<sup>7</sup> Capello, *op. cit.* note 3

<sup>8</sup> Camagni, R., *Territorial Impact Assessment for European regions: A methodological proposal and an application to EU transport policy*, Evaluation and Program Planning Vol 32 Is 4, 2009, p. 342-350

<sup>9</sup> Toth, B. I., *Territorial Capital: Theory, Empirics and Critical Remarks*, European Planning Studies 23 (7), 2014, p. 1-18

<sup>10</sup> Camagni, R., *Policies for spatial development*, in: OECD (Eds.), *Territorial Outlook*, Paris : OECD, 2001, p. 149-174

Crescenzi & Iammarino<sup>11</sup> provide an insight in the main concepts explored in the regional and local economic development and they also highlight the fact that disparities have been increasing within a number of cases of countries, although on the other hand there is some evidence of the convergence between countries. According to the same author, greater differences between countries suggest that distance and geography are important in a global world and that economic development is impacted by strong spatial concentration at the regional level. Furthermore, most of economic activities are related and concentrated to urban areas where there is geographical proximity and therefore frequent interactions and flows of ideas appear.

### 3. REGION AND REGIONALIZATION FOLLOWING A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE

Regions, regionalism and regionalization are some of the most relevant themes in geographical debates. Every phase of geographical thinking evolution is characterized by a different approach to regions and region-related issues. Anyway, the diffusion of these themes is not constant; periods with a strong theoretical debate alternate between less intensive phases of the debate<sup>12</sup>. Often, also in the more critical approach, the terms are used without a clear theoretical definition and conceptualization. In this framework, this section of the article aims to introduce some of the main topics related to regions, regionalism and regionalization processes. In accord with the introduction, the main purpose of this section is to point out some elements of the geographical perspective in these subjects. Especially it aims to analyze differences among these related issues. The following part does not long to be an exhaustive dissertation about the topics.

Looking at a region it is possible to include many elements in a geographical perspective. A region is mainly defined as a homogeneous part of territory with similar characteristics where the individuation of characteristics is a crucial part of the determination of the individuation of a region. Using different parameters, we can have many regions. Without a reference to different regions defined in the geographical debate, the focal point is the choice of parameters adopted to define regions. Usually common debate moves from a hypothetical defined set of regions (often the administrative ones) where spatial organization can be considered

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<sup>11</sup> Asciani, A., Crescenzi, R., Iammarino, S., *Regional Economic Development: A Review*, Search Working Paper WP1/03, 2012. Available at <http://www.ub.edu/searchproject/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/WP-1.3.pdf> Accessed 27 April 2018

<sup>12</sup> Paasi, A., *Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity*, European Urban and Regional Studies, 8.1, 2001, p. 7-28

unique in time and space. The same spaces can be organized in different regions in different times but also at the same time. Different factors can have different configurations of regional boundaries. It becomes important to extend the analysis to the process of creation of the regions to analyze how spatial and social elements are (or not) involved in it. At the same time, it is important to deeply analyze how the organization of (economic) activities in a space can be differently oriented and managed by the different managers working in the same territories. To do that, it is necessary to move from a traditional approach, which refers also to Gambi's approach<sup>13</sup>, between regionalism and regionalization.

Talking about regionalism and regionalization usually refers to different approaches in determination and creation of the regions. This dichotomy is also related – and sometimes overlapped - especially in terms of EU programs, to different regionalization processes at sub-national or supra-national scale<sup>14</sup>. At the same time, region-building and regional protection are often used to refer to the same approach to regionalism and regionalization process<sup>15</sup>.

In the first approach, usually classified as regionalism<sup>16</sup>, a region “is generally conceived as a territorial container of functional, or cultural, or historical, or administrative, or physical attributes, or at times all of these things together”<sup>17</sup>. This approach is strictly related to a traditional approach to regions and regional production which directly comes from regional approach of French geographers such as Vidal de La Blanche and key Vidalian concepts such as *genre de vie*, *genius loci*, and *personnalité*. From this perspective, a region *exists itself* and “is also often presented as a sort of spontaneous, ‘organic’ container, produced by the working of local communities, their histories and mundane geographies”<sup>18</sup>. The main purpose of social actors is to *define* the boundaries of these regions, according to the parameters used to define them. The creation of regions pursues – and at the same time reveal – the approach used to analyse spatial relations and activities. In the recent period, also related to the globalization process and the role of formal and infor-

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<sup>13</sup> Gambi, L., *Le “Regioni” italiane come problema storico*, Quaderni storici, XII, 34, 1977

<sup>14</sup> Bialasiewicz, L., Giaccaria, P., Jones, A., Minca, C., *Re-scaling ‘EU’rope: EU macro-regional fantasies in the Mediterranean*, European Urban and Regional Studies, Vol 20, Issue 1, 2013

<sup>15</sup> Amin A., *Regions unbound: towards a new politics of place*, Geografiska Annaler, Series B, Human Geography, 86:1, 2014

<sup>16</sup> Spagnoli, L., *«Regionalizzazione» o «Regionalismo»: I termini di un dibattito ancora in corso*, Bollettino della società Geografica Italiana - Serie XIII, vol. IX, 2016

<sup>17</sup> Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones, Minca, *op. cit.* note 14, p. 61

<sup>18</sup> Ivi.

mal networks<sup>19</sup>, many scholars pay attention to the relational spaces. According to the Doreen Massey reflections about “relational sense of place and space”<sup>20</sup> a different perspective to region in which spatial continuity is replaced by the networks among places as key point of region classification is suggested. It follows from “the political challenges of these two spatial registers of place respectively as the *politics of propinquity* and the *politics of connectivity (or transitivity)*”<sup>21</sup>. In the framework of relational approach, many scholars propose “to substitute fixed, bounded, nested and geometric imaginations which are typical of the new regionalism, with a geographical imaginary that is networked, open and topological”<sup>22</sup>.

The regionalization process follows a more performative approach to geography. This approach has grown in the furrow of critical approach to geography which characterizes geographical analysis from the ‘90s. The critical geography, which refers to some philosophers like Foucault, Derrida and Said, deeply focuses on the political role of geography, according with the Foucault theory of power/knowledge, which becomes “geography means power” in O’Thuatail seminar work *Critical Geopolitics*<sup>23</sup>. As Elena dell’Agnese summarizes, in this approach geography “is not only a name (*geography*) but a verb which indicate an action (*geo-graphy*): make geography a means to, in some ways, geo-graph the world”<sup>24</sup>. According with this approach, the geographical elements – the geography – of the places do not exist in itself but are production of human activities; especially the attention is posed on the social and dialectical activities that produces spaces and places. Regions, in this perspective, result from a regionalization process which *creates* regions. Allen et al. note that regions are not ‘out there’, waiting to be discovered, rather they are our (and others’) constructions<sup>25</sup>. According with some scholars “region-making projects now, as then, are fundamentally about the (power-full) making of spaces for political action”<sup>26</sup>. With regionalization there is the creation of new geographical categories<sup>27</sup>. This process, as it will be showed in the following parts of the article, can pursue many different purposes. Anyway, the process of

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<sup>19</sup> Celata, F., *L’individuazione di partizioni del territorio nelle politiche di sviluppo locale in Italia: ipotesi interpretative*, Rivista geografica italiana, 115-1, 2008

<sup>20</sup> Amin, *op. cit.* note 15, p. 37

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36, italic in original

<sup>22</sup> Celata, F., Coletti, R., *Place-based strategies or territorial cooperation? Regional development in transnational perspective in Italy*, Local Economy, Vol. 29 (4-5), 2014, p. 399

<sup>23</sup> O’Thuatail, G., *Critical Geopolitics*, Routledge, London, 1996

<sup>24</sup> Dell’Agnese, E., *Fare Geopolitica critica*, Guerini Editore, Milano, 2005, p.10, italic in original

<sup>25</sup> Paasi, *op. cit.* note 12

<sup>26</sup> Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones, Minca, *op. cit.* note 14, p. 62

<sup>27</sup> Celata F., Coletti R., *Cross-border cooperation in the Euro-Mediterranean and beyond: between policy transfers and regional adaptations*, International Journal of Euro-Mediterranean Studies, 9(2)

regionalization can radically define the evolution of the territories in all of its characteristics. Despite the main reasons of regionalization process, and the aspects which drive it, social structure, identity, culture and all the others social elements can be modified by this process<sup>28</sup>. In the regionalization process a leader role belongs to formal institutions, both at national and supra-national scale, but often other social, formal or informal, such as chambers of commerce, enterprises or communities promote spontaneous process of new regionalization<sup>29</sup> and collaborate in “rather informal multi-actor coalitions”<sup>30</sup>. At the same time is important to emphasize the role of narratives in the creation of geographical imaginaries<sup>31</sup> and, in this case, a territorial invention called region<sup>32</sup>.

In terms of regions, the analysis could move, according with these approaches, in a perspective that is both dichotomous and integrated. Following a regionalism perspective, it is possible to analyse the region inside and in relations to other regions of the same territory (or created in the same process). Concepts like homogeneity, cohesion, uniformity and consistency of the components analyzed become crucial in evaluation of the region. Anyway, according to regionalization process, attention can be posted on the process itself, how regions are created and which social and cultural transformations can be generated. These approaches are only apparently dichotomous. Looking at the regionalization process, the role of the actors involved is also to participate and to emphasize the structure of regions and the possible evolutions.

The EU regionalization is actually one of the most interesting cases in which the two perspectives of region creation/definition can be used. According to Luisa Bialasiewicz, Stuart Elden and Joe Painter<sup>33</sup>, in the constitution of EU territory it is possible to include two regionalization approaches among the “ways of reading the changing political geographies of Europe”. The same authors’ words can be used to describe two ways of EU regionalization:

“The first of these refers to the European Union (EU) as a regional bloc in a multi-polar economic world along with NAFTA, Japan, ASEAN and

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<sup>28</sup> Paasi, *op. cit.* note 12; Paasi A., *The region, identity, and power, Regional Environmental Governance: Interdisciplinary Perspectives, Theoretical Issues, Comparative Designs (REGov)*, Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences 14, 2011

<sup>29</sup> Celata, Coletti, *op. cit.* note 27

<sup>30</sup> Söderbaum, F., *Introduction: theories of new regionalism*, in: Söderbaum, F., Shaw, T. (eds), *Theories of New Regionalism*, Palgrave-Macmillan, London, 2003, pp. 1-2

<sup>31</sup> Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones, Minca, *op. cit.* note 14

<sup>32</sup> Gambi L., *Le “Regioni” italiane come problema storico*, Quaderni storici, XII, 34, 1977

<sup>33</sup> Bialasiewicz L., Elden S., Painter J., *The Constitution of EU Territory*, Comparative European Politics, 2005, p. 333



so on (Gibb and Michalak, 1994; Frankel, 1998). Regionalization in its second sense refers to the strengthening of regions below the level of the nation-state and to the emergence of cross-border regions (Jones and Keating, 1995; Jeffery, 1997; Keating, 1998; Bialasiewicz, 2002). The promotion of such regions has long been associated with European integration and regional development has been an important element of EU policy for at least 30 years. The Treaty of Rome contains an explicit commitment to the reduction of inter-regional disparities, a commitment that gained institutional expression in the formation of the European Regional Development Fund in 1975. The EU has also promoted political representation at the regional level, although the rather patchy development of autonomous or devolved regional governance scarcely matches the expansive rhetoric of a ‘Europe of the regions’ that became popular in the early 1990s<sup>34</sup>

In the EU policy is possible to define a process of creation of macro-regions above the national scale and micro-regions inside the single states. At a supra-national scale, regionalization process includes the creation of geographical categories such as the EU neighborhood<sup>35</sup> but also the EU itself and its relations with other geographies such as the Mediterranean<sup>36</sup>. This process can’t be distinct to the creation of Europe of regions. The region as a reference scale, more important than the state, is an EU idea that is extended to the new member countries or all the neighborhoods as a spatial organization. At the same time, the creation of many cross-country regions is often based on the proximity<sup>37</sup> and suggests a new perspective to the spatial organization of European spaces. As some scholars like Celata and Coletti<sup>38</sup> suggest, it implies a rescaling of regionalization because the “polycentric, multi scalar and not isomorph” (Brenner, 2004, p. 4) political space which characterizes multilevel governance model adopted by the EU is ‘exported’ on the other side of the union borders”. Anyway, all of these regionalization processes suggest many reflections about the implications of how it can be related to the other regionalization process inside the European countries, if there is consistence or alternative, and, at the same time, how it can influence geographical trajectories of the spaces involved.

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<sup>34</sup> *Ivi.*

<sup>35</sup> Celata, Coletti, *op. cit.* note 27

<sup>36</sup> Bialasiewicz, Giaccaria, Jones, Minca, *op. cit.* note 14

<sup>37</sup> Celata, Coletti, *op. cit.* note 27

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 378

#### 4. REGIONALIZATION PROCES IN CROATIA

Geographical aspect on the development of the beginning of regionalization process is not exclusively, but is greatly, as it is quoted by Magaš<sup>39</sup> related to geographical regionalization of Croatia from author Rogić from the early sixties of 20<sup>th</sup> century, taking into account not only theoretical approach, but also practical application of two geographical regionalization models - “physiognomic” and “functional” one.

When speaking of modern nodal-functional or gravitational regionalization of Croatia, Magaš<sup>40</sup> arises from flexible and changeable circumstances of interaction between central settlements in the country, meaning that spatial differentiation model also takes into account their flexibility and changeability. As Koprić<sup>41</sup> points out, in the period from 1992-2001 Croatian counties have served for centralization of the country while the county territorial structure was tailored according to political and not administrative or technical criteria and were used for bureaucratization and unfortunately not for economic, cultural or social development. But, on the other hand in 2000 there were changes of Constitution that gave a good base for development of counties as regional self-management units supported by further legal changes.

In 2009 when there of Regional development law was adopted (NN 153/2009), first steps were made toward regional development changes. This was one of the biggest institutional frameworks regarding regional development ever made in Croatia, after which there were some changes regarding institutional regional development framework, f. i. the regional development law from 2014 (NN 147/2014) and regional development law from 2017 (NN 123/2017).

According to Magaš<sup>42</sup>, contemporary regional development process is manifested in direct consequences of uneven development and present process of polarization, which is usually more pronounced at the periphery of administrative regions. One of the direct consequences is usually related to the disparity of the Croatian administrative and territorial system and the principle of geographical regionalization. Magaš<sup>43</sup> highlights the following: “*This discord that is insufficient scientific ap-*

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<sup>39</sup> Magaš D., *Contemporary Aspects of the Geographical Regionalization and Administrative – Territorial Organization of Croatia*, Geoadria Vol. 8/1, 2003 p. 128

<sup>40</sup> *Ivi.*

<sup>41</sup> Koprić I., Uloga županija u hrvatskom sustavu lokalne samouprave i uprave 1990-ih i perspektive regionalizacije nakon promjene Ustava iz 2000. godine, *Hrvatska i komparativna javna uprava: časopis za teoriju i praksu javne uprave* Vol. 3 No.1, 2001, p. 63-87

<sup>42</sup> Magaš D., *op. cit.* note 39, p. 127-147

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 135

*proach to the regionalization especially from geographical and economic point of view characterizes not only present-day administrative-territorial division of the country, it was typical for older divisions too.*” It is emphasized that in Croatia polarization of the regional system is the biggest error of them all. Furthermore, Magas<sup>44</sup> states that in the last few decades, practices was based on a model for defining regional perspective according to four macro-regions, considering their continuous, functional and economic development as well as some other indicators, but contemporary situation regarding development stagnated in certain areas and that actually changed the actual nodal-functional system. Nowadays, distinguishing regional centers with gravitational influences within their counties as well as in neighboring counties and those that do have nodal-functional significance within their own counties is of the greatest importance.

Kleibrink<sup>45</sup> (according to Rokkan and Urwin 1982; Flora et al. 1999:7) emphasizes the importance of center-periphery relations because of their importance to all organizations and institutions of a political system. The same author, Kleibrink<sup>46</sup>, mentions that the process of decentralization in Croatia was accompanied with little political willingness to accommodate any particularities of historical regions. Koprić<sup>47</sup> cites the need to implement decentralization as it emphasizes centralized management of the entire system, reflected in a number of levels, such as the impossibility of effective action or regulation. Furthermore, one of the most important preconditions for the decentralization of affairs and the autonomy of local and regional self-government units is considered to be a change of territorial organization. Some other authors, f. i. Klarić<sup>48</sup> want to investigate if decentralization of local self-government in Croatia improves quality of local public services in local government units. The same question can be asked regarding counties and regional level. As Klarić<sup>49</sup> states, Croatian local-self-government is organized in two levels - local self-government units, cities and municipalities as polytypic local government units and counties which are responsible for many of decentralized public services on the local level, f. i. coordination between local government units on their own territory after contemporary division of counties in Croatia is made

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<sup>44</sup> *Ivi*

<sup>45</sup> Kleibrink A., *Political Elites and Decentralization Reforms in the Post-Socialist Balkan, Regional Patronage Networks in Serbia and Croatia*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 1

<sup>46</sup> *Ivi*.

<sup>47</sup> Koprić I., *Problemi s decentralizacijom ovlasti u Hrvatskoj*, HKJU-CCPA Croatian and Comparative Public Administration God 14 br. 1, 2014, p. 133-148

<sup>48</sup> Klarić M., *Problems and Development in the Croatian Local Self-Government*, Zbornik radova Pravnog fakulteta u Splitu, God. 54, 4/2017, p. 807-823

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

with 20 counties and one more special county for the capital city of Croatia, City of Zagreb.

All afore mentioned is in area of action of the regional policy. Regional policy of Croatia is highly present contemporary question regardless of scientific aspect, but unfortunately there are a lot of unsolved questions. Some scientific aspects, f. i. the one from Kordej-De Villa and Pejnović<sup>50</sup>, say that regional policy is one of the most complex public policies and its priority is to create homogenous development of national territory. On the other hand, there are a lot unsolved questions regarding uneven regional development which probably result from broadness of the issue. A lot earlier than European Union (EU) accession, Bogunović<sup>51</sup> highlights the importance of regional policy in the context of development and existence for the EU integration because of its multidimensional regional perspectives, and also a way of achieving convergent regional organization and regional economic policy.

It is evident that certain changes regarding institutional level were made and a great number of laws and lower institutional regulations as well, but unfortunately a great number of them exist just on paper, without adequate implementation. So, although the importance of regional policy has changed, there is still a big gap between theory and reality.

## 5. REGIONS AND REGIONALIZATION IN ITALY

The attention to the subdivision of space, within the Italian territory today can be traced back, even conceptually, to the Roman era. One of the first examples of subdivision of the Italian territory, the one adopted by Cesare Augusto, was based on a functional criterion linked to the urban element, but also kept in mind ethnic, environmental and structural factors<sup>52</sup>. Only after the creation of a unitary state, however, there was an effective reconceptualization of the national space. The regional division of Italy that, despite some changes over time constitutes the structure of the current one originates from the grouping of the existing provinces, operated in 1864 for statistical purposes by Pietro Maestri. Those compartments had to be of a temporary nature according to the same author, as they were aimed at illustrating the results of the first census, carried out in 1861, of the newborn Kingdom of Italy. The establishment of a new state entity therefore corresponds

<sup>50</sup> Kordej-De Villa Ž., Pejnović D., *Planska područja Hrvatske u kontekstu regionalne politike*, *Hrvatski Geografski Glasnik* 77/1, 2015, p. 47-69

<sup>51</sup> Bogunović A., *Regionalna politika EU i Hrvatska [Regional Policy of the EU and Croatia]*, *Ekonomska istraživanja* (1331-677X) 17, 2004, p. 58-73

<sup>52</sup> Salvatori F., *La geografia di Augusto: durevolezza e discontinuità nella regionalizzazione del territorio italiano*, *Bollettino della Società Geografica Italiana*, Roma, Serie XIII, vol. IX, 2016

to the subdivision of the territory into functional partitions, which however over time assume an identity nature, maintained until today, creating centers and peripheries in itself. Those partitions were free of geographical, economic, ethnic or environmental reasons to motivate the aggregation, however, they found their space in schoolbooks as sub-state divisions, favoring the strengthening of the identity process. Compartments assumed the name of Regions in 1912: they resisted until the approval of the Italian Constitution<sup>53</sup>, which institutionalized this division - slightly modified by some splits made by Ferdinando Targetti - despite the proposals linked to a more modern conception of rationality, such as those of Gaetano Salvemini or Adriano Olivetti<sup>54</sup>. The idea of Salvemini, in particular, was based on municipal federalism that led to the determination of the Regions as free associations of Municipalities and Provinces, while Olivetti considered the Community - as a geographical space delineated on natural or historical grounds - the primary level onto which the Region is defined and planned as a regional State for its independence and amplitude of powers, having also the function of connecting with the Federal State<sup>55</sup>.

The attention of the Italian geography towards regional articulation proved to be weak: only on the occasion of the Geographical Congress of Bologna in 1947 - following the determination of the regional section approved by the Constituent Assembly the previous year<sup>56</sup> - Aldo Sestini proposed a definition of the concept of the region based on the integration between environmental and anthropic elements, suggesting a revision of the regional partitions to be more responsive to the territorial localization of collective interests<sup>57</sup>. The work of Sestini aroused interest in Gambi, since it placed the attention on the idea of a functional integral region<sup>58</sup>. This is also in line with the evolution of the debate on the regions that was developing at international level. Leading elements in the regional structure were almost exclusively administrative needs. The effective exercise of the administrative functions and of the legislative powers entrusted by the Constitution to the Regions began only in 1970: close to this phase, the debate on territorial

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<sup>53</sup> Lando F., *Le regioni da Piero Maestri alla Costituzione*, in Muscarà C., Scaramellini G., Talia I., Tante Italie una Italia. Dinamiche territoriali e identitarie. Vol. 1 Modi e nodi della nuova geografia, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2011

<sup>54</sup> Treves A., *I confini non pensati: un aspetto della questione regionale in Italia*, ACME - Annali della Facoltà di Lettere e Filosofia dell'Università degli Studi di Milano, Volume LVII, Fascicolo II, Maggio-Agosto 2004

<sup>55</sup> Olivetti A., *L'ordine politico delle Comunità*, Nuove Edizioni, Ivrea, 1945

<sup>56</sup> Novacco D., *L'officina della Costituzione italiana, 1943 - 1948*, Feltrinelli, Milano, 2000

<sup>57</sup> Sestini A., *Le regioni italiane come base geografica della struttura dello Stato*, Atti del XIV Congresso geografico italiano, Bologna, 8-12 aprile 1947, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1949

<sup>58</sup> Treves, *op. cit.* note 54

cropping resumed in view of the fact that the transfer of functions from the central state to the local authorities should have encouraged, on one hand greater efficiency in the public administration and on the other, responded to the requests for participation prompted by the cultural movements developed at the end of the 1960s<sup>59</sup>. During '70s the regions were considered executors on the territory of the policies promoted by the central state, but starting from the following decade - also because of the European Structural Funds, which included the principle of partnership between the European Community, the Member States and Sub-state authorities - a process of progressive increase of regional autonomy began. In the nineties, hand in hand with the new regionalism widespread in Western Europe<sup>60</sup> - also as a consequence of the end of the Cold War, which had contributed to a substantial immobility of the political-administrative system - in Italy reformative movements speeded that were aimed at restoring the attention on the territory and on the redistribution of powers, attention nurtured by the fact that regional identities were not determined only in relation to the national state, but also by virtue of supranational factors, including economic and political integration in the European Community. A first outcome of this change occurred in 1995 with the direct election of the presidents of the regional councils, which was completed in 1999 with the first constitutional reform in a federalist direction, which granted the regions full statutory autonomy, and with the Bassanini reforms in 1997 that were based on the decentralization of powers. In 2001, the Italian Constitution was modified in an even more markedly federal way, with the expansion of the legislative, administrative, organizational and fiscal functions of the Regions with the aim of strengthening the decision-making power of citizens in the determination of political guidelines and to bring public power to the specific situations and needs of citizens<sup>61</sup>.

In fact, however, we had to wait until the 2000s for the territorial dimension to have a relevant role in regional policies as well as in relation to the different behavior of regional actors in relation to the cultural, social and economic globalization which is accompanied by a process of Europeanisation of public policies<sup>62</sup>. In 1999, in conjunction with the first federalist reform of the Constitution, a study by the Italian Geographic Society on the territorial Reorganization of the State,

<sup>59</sup> Groppi T., *Lo stato regionale italiano nel XXI secolo, tra globalizzazione e crisi economica*, *Revista d'studis autonòmics i federals*, n. 21, aprile 2015

<sup>60</sup> Keating M., *The new regionalism in Western Europe*, Cambridge University Press, 1998

<sup>61</sup> Cecchetti M., *Le riforme costituzionali del 1999-2001 sulla forma di Stato dieci anni dopo*, *Nuove Autonomie*, n. 1, 2010

<sup>62</sup> Conti S., Salone C., *Il Nord senza bussola: dinamiche spaziali e strategie territoriali a centocinquant'anni dall'Unità*, *Semestrale di Studi e Ricerche di Geografia*, Roma, XXIII, Fascicolo 2, luglio-dicembre 2011

in collaboration with the CNR, on the basis of a reasoning at European level on the simplification and reduction of sub-state administrative levels proposed the abolition of the existing Regions and Provinces and replacing them with a single intermediate body between the Municipality and the central State. This body should have contained within it the necessary resources to ensure adequate connections to the European urban network, rearranging the territorial organization hand in hand with a reconfiguration from the model of local governance that focuses on the theme of municipal cooperation. The spirit of the proposal, which transcended the previous administrative subdivisions, was drawn on an organizational idea founded upon new localization factors which were able to identify a plurality of strategic centralities. The elements on which the subdivision of 36 new regional authorities, in place of the 20 Regions and 103 Provinces existing at that time<sup>63</sup>, was based was the unavoidability of urban functions relating to metropolitan systems with greater settlement density, a delimitation of the physical space functional to the reference gravitational system from a residential, productive or free time, infrastructural accessibility on the basis of connection networks and the enhancement of relational, cultural and social capital. The proposal envisaged self-sufficiency of the region, which were to be able to exercise within itself the greatest possible number of functions and was considered to be the new crop as the result of an inter-municipal aggregation and not of a consolidation of the existing provinces<sup>64</sup>.

This study followed the work done by the Giovanni Agnelli Foundation which, between 1992 and 1996 - in the period in which more political space was given to the suggestions linked to federalism, even with secessionist hypotheses - had imagined an Italy subdivided into 12 regions, mostly deriving from the aggregation of existing ones<sup>65</sup>. In 2012, with the approval by the Government of the Law Decree that reduced to 51 the Italian Provinces in the Regions with ordinary statute - also in this case uniting some of the already existing Provinces - the geographers went back to the issue, starting from the 1999 proposal. The reflection launched in the last five years has explored several of the factors examined so far. The industrial districts were the spur for the creation of new provinces during the nineties, but there haven't been counterpoint considerations on the decline of the existing districts, nor were the provincial coordination plans reinforced for a more current management of the collective services. The Territorial Pacts and the Integrated

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<sup>63</sup> At present, the Italian administrative division consists of 20 Regions, 80 Provinces and 14 Metropolitan Cities

<sup>64</sup> Archibugi, F. (eds.), *Una proposta di riorganizzazione urbana e di riequilibrio territoriale e ambientale a livello nazionale-regionale*, Gangemi Editore, Roma, 1999

<sup>65</sup> Pacini, M. (eds.), *Un federalismo dei valori*, Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli, Torino, 1996

Programs have fueled the proliferation of entities placed at an intermediate scale between Municipalities, Provinces and Regions, which also include other subjects such as the Health Authorities, the Mountain Communities and the Optimal Territorial Areas, for a set of subdivisions that risk causing overlapping of skills and dysfunctions in the use of services by citizens as a consequence of an intricate administrative mechanism. In recent years, in fact, other forms of administrative partition have arisen, such as the Metropolitan Cities - included in the Constitution with the 2001 reform - or the Unions of Municipalities. However, it was a matter of processes imposed from above, according to a top-down approach: when literature questions the place-based approach with a view to greater involvement of the territory, the Italian reality sees an almost null involvement of citizens in the continuous changes of the overlying administrative system, to the point of causing confusion in the identification of institutions of reference - who does what - and difficulties in the continuity of the provision of services.

### **5.1. Beyond the administrative partitions: other forms of regionalization**

Next to the administrative dimension, the Italian territorial structure was also based on the creation of other types of partitions. These often followed different motivations with respect to administrative ones, sometimes also linked to specific functional needs and management of economic and financial resources. The thrust dictated by the possibility of access to resources deriving from European funds has identified, starting from the nineties, new forms of territorial partition, such as those determined by territorial pacts and integrated territorial projects, with which it attempted to take into consideration the specific features of the territories<sup>66</sup>. These methods of subdivision took the form of industrial districts, which according to Fabio Sforzi<sup>67</sup> had to enhance the work of Giacomo Becattini taking into account the local communities, the “socio-cultural and institutional milieu within which the individual enterprises and constitutes a condition of life”<sup>68</sup>. From the district identification methodology proposed by Fabio Sforzi<sup>69</sup>, we have moved on to a model established by Istat which is based on objective statistical indicators that refer to local systems of work without taking into account the administrative boundaries of Regions and Provinces, thus creating trans-regional districts: this system however deprived large areas of districts, particularly in the South. Indicators were therefore predetermined differently for the southern regions, but the areas so identified often did not correspond to perceptions of local

<sup>66</sup> Celata, *op. cit.* note 19

<sup>67</sup> Sforzi F., *Il distretto industriale: da Marshall a Becattini*, *Il pensiero economico italiano*, 16, 2, 2008

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*



actors and directors' expectations<sup>70</sup>. For these reasons, the task of identifying the districts has been entrusted to a political decision-maker, i.e. the Regions, which led to an increase in the areas identified, their average size and the portion of covered territory, reinterpreting the meaning of the district, in one case as a supply chain, in another as a local production system, in another as a meta-district. This resulted in difficulties in adopting methods of partition based on objective and uniform criteria in favor of broad indications that offer spaces for an ideological approach to the overarching political project, and allow to modify the boundaries, in a concerted manner, according to specific cases<sup>71</sup>.

The forenamed aggregation of the territory, determined by the local labor systems, is based on the socio-economic elements of the individual territorial areas: the SLL can therefore be considered a sort of statistical translation of economic theories on the segmentation of the labor market of the seventies. Their cropping is based on algorithms of regionalization, whose task is to identify homogeneous labor markets, i.e. areas in which - on the basis of the data available and input into the algorithm - an overlap between demand and supply of labor is determined<sup>72</sup>. According to the aforementioned definition of Gambi, local labor systems are also a form of regionalization based on statistical elements called upon to identify portions of territory on which there is a sufficient number of activities able to offer employment and services to the resident population, based on the principle according to which work is the structure the territorial configuration of the communities.

From an administrative point of view, local labor systems consist of the aggregation of two or more adjacent municipalities, based on self-containment, i.e. the ability of an area to include the greatest possible amount of human relations between workplaces and those of residence<sup>73</sup>, creating a territorial grid that completely depletes the national space<sup>74</sup>.

As far as the territorial pacts are concerned, their introduction into the Italian legal system did not contemplate the identification of the reference areas, which follow those of the Municipalities that signed the memorandum of understanding. This aspect determines a process of voluntary aggregation which, although rare in re-

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<sup>70</sup> Celata. *op. cit.* note 19

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Coppola C., Mazzotta F., *I sistemi locali del Lavoro in Italia: aspetti teorici ed empirici*, MPRA Paper, Quaderni di Ricerca, 2, novembre 2005

<sup>73</sup> Sforzi F., Wymer C., Gillard A. A., *I sistemi locali del lavoro nel 1991*, Istat, I sistemi locali del lavoro 1991, Roma, 1997

<sup>74</sup> Barbieri, G., Pellegrini, G., *I Sistemi locali del lavoro: uno strumento per la politica economica in Italia e in Europa* in Atti del Convegno Uval-DPS. Ministero del Tesoro, Roma, 2000

gional development policies, reflects on constitutional principles for the revision of administrative boundaries. A procedure established at central level and imposed as a condition for access to funding but which leaves local actors the right to freely determine the areas of intervention, offers margins to the geography of the places - as for historical-geographical regions, functional areas or local production systems - and encourages cooperation, although lending itself to possible discontinuity or forms of exclusion from access to finance<sup>75</sup>.

The integrated territorial projects, established in 2003 within the framework of the Community cohesion policy, were born with the intention of introducing forms of collaboration between public and private actors which are able to transform the existing institutional contexts<sup>76</sup>. The need to understand most of the territories has conditioned the methods for identifying the areas, entrusted to the Regions or the concertation among local authorities and excluding the selectivity in access to the funds since the valorization of the quality of local processes appears incompatible with the inclusion of (as wide as possible) territorial portions, in addition to ensuring that these areas rarely coincide with those of territorial Pacts, giving rise to yet another geographical sub-division founded on the modalities of management interventions<sup>77</sup>.

## **5.2. The Italian administrative partition in the light of the European framework**

If in fact in the first phase of its history the European Union did not adequately consider intermediate territorial levels because of the state structuring of the EEC - so much so that, in the Treaty of Rome of 1957 establishing the Community there is no mention to the sub-state entities - the cohesion policy and the tendency towards decentralization that characterized the Member States' approach in the 1980s made the regions visible in the European debate.

Another element considered was the geographical distribution of the territory of the European Union on the basis of the NUTS, on which the redistribution of the Community structural funds is built. In Italy NUTS 3 territories correspond to the Provinces, the NUTS 2 to the Regions, and only the NUTS 1 belong to macro-regional allocations that do not correspond to administrative entities, but which substantially follow European electoral constituencies. The increase in the

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<sup>75</sup> Celata, *op. cit.* note 19

<sup>76</sup> Lefebvre C., La Nave M., *Competitività e pubblica amministrazione. Il ruolo degli enti locali nei processi di sviluppo agli inizi del Terzo Millennio* in Muscarà, C., Scaramellini, G., Talia, I., Tante Italie una Italia. Dinamiche territoriali e identitarie. Vol. 1 Modi e nodi della nuova geografia, Franco Angeli, Milano, 2011

<sup>77</sup> Celata, *op. cit.* note 19

third level territorial units that occurred in Italy between 1992 and 2004, with the province number rising from 95 to 110, is found only in Spain, while the opposite process took place in Denmark, Sweden, Great Britain and Germany in spite of the unification<sup>78</sup>. The novelty of the approach lies in consideration for the provisional nature of changes in administrative boundaries “because it is impossible that, despite intelligence and comprehension of all the requirements, an administrative *découpage* - inevitably made based on the needs of a precise historical moment - can maintain its effectiveness through the mutability of the decades”<sup>79</sup>. This also highlights the need for the involvement of different disciplines beyond geography in the delimitation of the areas. On this basis, the recent proposal for territorial reorganization issued by the Italian Geographical Society is founded upon the combination of three principles: the functional dimension of the cropping, the territorial identity - where the justification of the community “place based” approach is - and the physiognomy of eco-systems set on their geomorphological dimension<sup>80</sup>.

### 5.3. Some consideration about Italian regionalization process

The overcoming of the fixed administrative boundaries takes up the considerations of Gambi<sup>81</sup> on the need to update the regional articulations according to the evolution of the economy, society and culture. The reflections made highlight the ability of geography, in the various historical moments, to propose alternative solutions to the *status quo*<sup>82</sup>. Some scholars<sup>83</sup> question the feasibility of this hypothesis because functional criteria that should represent one of the factors of updating the territorial design have changed in a relevant and sudden way since the fifties: the redefinition of the boundaries that would derive from it would have caused evident problems of stability and administrative continuity to the regional authorities. Another issue is related to the difficulty of providing a single

<sup>78</sup> Società Geografica Italiana, *Per un riordino territoriale dell'Italia*, Roma, giugno 2013

<sup>79</sup> Castelnovi M. (eds.), *Il riordino territoriale dello Stato, riflessioni e proposte della geografia italiana*, Società Geografica Italiana, Roma, 2013

<sup>80</sup> Società Geografica Italiana, *Oltre le regioni: aree metropolitane, poli urbani, comunità territoriali*, Caire, Reggio Emilia, 2014

<sup>81</sup> Gambi L., *Questioni di geografia*, Edizioni scientifiche italiane, Napoli, 1964; Gambi L., *L'irrazionale continuità del disegno geografico delle unità politico-amministrative*, in Gambi L., Merloni F., *Amministrazione pubblica e territorio in Italia*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1995; Gambi L., *Le “Regioni” italiane come problema storico*, Quaderni storici, XII, 34, 1977

<sup>82</sup> Luca D., Salone C., *Teorie regionali e regioni istituzionali. Per un'ontologia del rapporto tra spazi di governo e spazi di azione collettiva*, Rivista Geografica Italiana, 122, 2013

<sup>83</sup> Desideri C., *Regionalism and territorial politics in Italy*, Acts of Convention Federalism, Regionalism and Territory, IACFS e ISSIRFA-CNR, Roma, 19-21 settembre 2012

region dimension, albeit provisional and limited in time, able to summarize all the functions and criteria that would be considered. Finally, if on the one hand - as Mennini recalls<sup>84</sup> - the weakness of the idea of Italy is reflected in the lack of coincidence among the people-soil link and the connection between political entity and territory – then on the other hand for Nevola those regions born as statistical compartments “have consolidated over time as such and institutionalized in the collective imagination, in political culture, in political and administrative practice and sometimes even in the daily life practices of citizens. Transmitted from one generation to the next, these “invented regions” have become “realities”, social reality, contexts of political and territorial life. They have become elements of the landscape of national collective memory, containers defined by events and characters, of myths and stereotypes or “regional” characters of the Italian nation”.

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<sup>84</sup> Boria E., Mennini B. M., *La carta geografica come veicolo dell’“Idea d’Italia” nel periodo risorgimentale*, Studi e Ricerche socio-territoriali, Napoli, 1, 2011, pp. 149-196

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