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## The Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area in Marche Region. An integrated territorial project that includes inland areas and cities in a metropolitan context to relaunch local competitive systems

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### Abstract

i) Context and purpose of the research.

This paper describes a part of the applied research carried out by the Urban Planning Area of SIMAU Department of Marche Polytechnic University in Ancona Municipality.

ii) The scope of this paper is to demonstrate the short-sightedness of the decision, at a national level, of identifying 15 Metropolitan Areas according to dimensional rather than function and relational parameters, that trigger integrated metropolitan development.

iii) methodology: this paper starts from the Marche region experience, which is one of the regions not included in the 15 regions with urban areas classified as metropolitan areas pursuant to Regional Law no. 56/2014 (because it does not have cities with more than 250,000 inhabitants in the territory), to request that the criteria used to identify metropolitan areas in Italy be revised. The Region has started the creation of the territorial partnership called the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area (Area Metropolitana Medio-Adriatica – AMMA). This experience of a new method for the management of the territory was implemented by the Research project, by identifying functional connective systems that confirm its unitary structure and the current and future potential, for the widespread systematic development of the Metropolitan Area as a whole.

iv) Principal results and major conclusions.

This experience, is today in Italy, an extraordinary case study generated from of local participatory development (Community-

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Led Local Development – CLLD); a integrated, bottom-up process with the involvement of local communities. The results of the applied research, conducted in the Middle-Adriatic Territory, made it possible to identify critical and original aspects in the organisation of the “variable geometry” system of relationships between Municipalities, in terms of participation in complex projects and the introduction of specific Territorial Protocols of Understanding, to Identify *de facto* cities with respect to the *de jure* and developmental cities of the FUA in Marche region. The entire Area Vasta (Associated Local Health Districts) indeed behaves, like a large city, with a unique urban structure and strong functional interconnected relationships.

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## 1. Introduction

This paper describes a part of the applied research carried out by the Urban Planning Area of SIMAU Department of Marche Polytechnic University in Ancona Municipality, funded by the MIT Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport, from 2012 to 2014.

The recent introduction of Law no. 56/2014 in Italy has made it possible to overcome the obstacles behind twenty years of unsuccessful attempts to create metropolitan areas, and today opens a period of potential innovation (Bianchetti, 2013, Indovina, 2007). Although Marche Region is not one of the fifteen regions with the “metropolitan” cities constituted by the Italian law (because it does not meet the requirement of having at least one urban nucleus with more than 250,000 inhabitants), in response to the process for the implementation of the reform by local Italian authorities, it started a territorial cooperation which has led to the creation of the territorial partnership called the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area (Area Metropolitana Medio-Adriatica – AMMA).

The more general scope of this paper is to redefine the formation process of the metropolitan areas in Italy and indicate the limitations of the national reform, which led to the identification of 15 metropolitan areas based on dimensional parameters rather than functional and relational parameters, that trigger integrated metropolitan development. For this purpose, the main characteristics of the Middle-Adriatic Territory are firstly described, according to which a typical formation process was developed (Community-Led Local Development – CLLD); a integrated, bottom-up process with the involvement of local communities.

The current discrepancy between the functional and political-administrative organization of the territory has been generated by a lock-in in the evolution of the institutions on which the policy-making process at a local level is based. If a clear distinction had been drawn between the formation of *cities de facto* and the formation of metropolitan areas, it would have become evident that a further critical distinction was necessary between, on the one hand, expanding the administrative boundaries of *cities de jure* to make them overlap with *cities de facto* and, on the other hand, designing appropriate governance schemes for the corresponding metropolitan areas (Calafati & Veneri, 2013).

## 2. Towards the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area: the strategy of integrated urban development

Between 2013 and 2014 the reform involved the entire system of local Italian authorities, and with the introduction of Law 56/2014 started to produce, in 2015, its first concrete effects on the national territory.

The “Metropolitan cities” constituted by the “Delrio reform” are considered to be the most important tool to relaunch the economic competitiveness of the Country (Oliva, 2013), i.e. as local systems with direct access to European funding and the ability to attract private Italian and foreign investments.

The current strategic placement of the Mid-Adriatic Metropolitan Area, which originated from a *bottom-up* process of inter-municipal cooperation, is the result of the national programming policy introduced in 2003 by the MIT, which made it possible to identify strategic territorial platforms and promote an innovative package of “Ancona Ports and Stations” projects, plans/pilot programmes, at national level, such as:

- Jesi SISTeMA, Pivot corridors 1 and 2, Instrument supports;
- Fabriano, Strategic Plans and Urban Plans of Mobility.

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