



2nd International Symposium "NEW METROPOLITAN PERSPECTIVES" - Strategic planning, spatial planning, economic programs and decision support tools, through the implementation of Horizon/Europe2020. ISTH2020, Reggio Calabria (Italy), 18-20 May 2016

European Union urban policy does not meet development of peripheral European metropolis

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Abstract

European urban policy, after a pilot program, was widely experimented with Urban. In a second step, the urban issue was integrated in one axis of Operative Regional Programs for the Regional Development Funds. This move let suppose that it could fuel the development of peripheral metropolis, but the program was anchored to the aims of its start and was still used more as in an equitable perspective to rehabilitate distressed neighborhoods or support medium size cities instead of focus over a metropolitan policy aimed to the growth of competitiveness. On the contrary, the Italian metropolis more active in the process of confronting with global competition and changing themselves to develop factors identified as indicators of global cities, relied on urban policy enacted by city government, based on local resources with the support of state funding. On the bases of this review, it does not seems that nor a European neither a national policy now exists to support peripheral metropolis in the continent.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of ISTH2020

Keywords: metropolitan planning; European Union urban policy; metropolitan global systems; regional development

1. Introduction

European Union convergence policy was decided after European Spatial Development Prospective document pointed out the strong imbalance among a continental core area named "blue banana" and, subsequently "pentagon" in the following ESPON studies, with the surrounding periphery including Mediterranean and central European

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counties. After two decades of programs aimed to the integration, a significant range of lower and middle income economies (Europe's South) has experienced the built-up of unsustainable external imbalances, an accelerating rise in the debt position (mostly of the private sectors) and strong distortions in their economic structures to the detriment of a sufficiently strong tradable sector (Landesmann, 2013). The persistence of the divide is highlighted by many economic studies. In a "reappraisal of income coverage across European regions over the last two decades by using a semiparametric partially linear model to approximate the relationship between the average growth rate of GDP per capita and the initial GDP per capita" the findings "suggest a divergence for low income regions, a convergence for medium income regions, and no evidence of convergence for high income regions" (Azomahou et al., 2011). On the bases of many evidenced of the difficult poorer economies catch up wealthier ones, many claimers are lunched to review the convergence model, directly or indirectly involving European Structural Funds strategies, because for some analysts the main shortcoming are in the macroeconomic European policy with its emphasis on stabilization rather than loosening the growth.

Our focus moves to city change, starting from the some evidence of the gap strength and surveying its physical expression in the comparison of some Italian cities. In that nation, North-South difference passes inside the country. The process of transition to post-industrial metropolis has different pace in the most populated cities in the two geographical areas. While de-industrialization hit anywhere, northern cities are re-organizing their space according to new economic development paths, southern one are lagging and leave the industrial areas vacant and blighted. The evidence of this trend will show in three major Italian metropolises: Milan, Rome and Naples.

On the other side will be considered European urban policy and its committeemen to lower the North-south divide. A preliminary statement is that urban policy has, from the start, a controversial issue because member states with federal constitution devolve urbanism legislative powers to regions and are reluctant to centralize it in the upper tier of government (Faludi, Waterhout, 2002). In addition, European Union addressed Structural Funds to regional imbalances and the institutional actors that managed the program are not city governments. This program is mainly structured in thematic objectives (EU Regulation 1304/2013), although, in the consultation stage, some debate was devoted to the effectiveness of place based policy (Barca 2012). For the joining of the former factors and some other evidences developed in the following review, a thesis that we have not experienced a clear support to the development of metropolitan areas is presented, despite, in EU documents and scientific literature, more and more relevance is given to metropolitan role in economic development. So is quite consequential an investigation on potentials of peripheral metropolises to regional equilibrium and what policy may activate them. The following are just the first observations and arguments on the item.

2. Globalization and city inertia

The speedy of change relates to the position of the city in the hierarchy of the metropolitan European network or, in other word, with the role it play in the globalization of economy. The process involved, at first, cities that moved to the global stance assuming the profile Saskia Sassen (1994) identified in societal and economic terms. However, the spatial result of the globalization process was different because its impact on existing cities found a patrimony of valuable built environment that acted as inertia to change and a resource to be employed in the new configuration. The strength of previous city asset may be measured in their historical deepness as can be understood comparing Milan and Rome. While change process of the former is involving the most central node of its structure impinging in the very image, skyline and plan; the later has confined the some development to suburban and marginal areas, as a sort of other city, added to the older. In Milan the renewal of industrial site started in 1985 when the Pirelli plant at Bicocca closed and an agreement was signed with Unions to preserve the occupation of the company workers (Nepoti, 2003). After that a long planning process developed, in a partnership of the city and the tire company that had the ownership of the land, the development could be implemented thanks to an important investment of the University that decided to built there the facilities of the new program in Environmental Sciences opened in 1994. Then, added other research and teaching programs attracting until 50.000 students in an autonomous new University named Bicocca, as the old factory. This new part of the city of Milan is the first buffer of old industrial development but is not be designed as a suburban area neither in the organization of building types and blocks, neither in the functional mix. There is in addition to the University, a theater, for some years hosting temporary the Scala opera performances, a multiplex movie cinema, office of multinational companies, and any kind of shops (Moccia, 2012).

But, if this is a first move to a new model of metropolitan development alternative to the configuration of rings with decreasing density and public services from the center to the suburbs, a more important change occur with the

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