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New Networking Perspectives towards Mediterranean Territorial Cohesion: the multidimensional approach of Cultural Routes

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Abstract

In the context of Europe 2020 Strategy, where the cities' role in the global competition brings along a scale shift in terms of networking system, the paper refers to a research project investigating the potential socio-economic impact of major advancing Euro-Mediterranean cohesion. Highlighting a holistic multidisciplinary approach the paper stresses the role of local cultural heritage towards a Mediterranean sustainable development process, especially in less-known destinations, where the cultural resources are the main strategic assets for development. In conclusion a research model is presented in order to design a systematic tool to combine the Mediterranean common roots, territorial development needs and Euro-Mediterranean policies aiming at contributing to the multicultural dialogue in this transnational panorama.

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Keywords: Mediterranean; Cultural heritage; Macro-region strategy; Development models; Evaluation.

1. Introduction

The paper refers to the potential role of the cultural/tourism sector in the sustainable development of the regions of the Mediterranean Basin. It aims at contributing to the current debate on the "Mediterranean macro-region" and its possible implementation.

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Looking at the Euro-Mediterranean policies and reading positively the substantial failure of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Barcelona Declaration, 1995; reviewed in 2008), aiming at the implementation of the Euro-Mediterranean Zone of Free Trade, and the European Neighborhood Policy (ENP, 2004; reviewed in 2014), with the objective of avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbors, we can state that a significant part of Europe is interested to develop exchanges with the extra-EU Mediterranean Regions. Furthermore, consulting the Europe 2020 Strategy it could be noted the absence of the Mediterranean from the European Union's planned consideration on its future, despite the several political announcements on the strategic role of the Mediterranean. In addition, any assessment of existing-current territorial cooperation instruments in the Mediterranean has to deal with overlapping schemes: the MED COOPERATION PROGRAMME 2014-2020, the ENPICBCMed 2014-2020. This intersecting tools could lead to a lack of effectiveness and dispersion or competition between instruments.

As argued as follows, bearing in mind this panorama, the paper address the challenge of exploring a macro scenario and a key feature for developing a joint Europe-Mediterranean agenda which could be articulated around the priorities and objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, and hence be integrated into EU policies.

1.1. New Networking Perspectives towards Mediterranean Territorial Cohesion

Macro-regional Strategies (MRS) are an instrument to make smarter use of the financial resources available and to maximize the effectiveness of European Union regional policy investment. MRS include areas which gather different countries or regions, inside and out with the European Union, which face common challenges and situations. Based on exploring comparative advantages together, macro-regional strategies strengthen cooperation within the area, leading to deeper economic, social and territorial cohesion. And furthermore, without the need to create new large-scale institutions¹. The EU has put in place 4 strategies, covering several policies, which are targeted at a macro-region:

- The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region
- The EU Strategy for the Danube Region
- The EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region
- The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

A Mediterranean macro-strategy hasn't been defined yet, although important initiatives exist in this field². For the European-Mediterranean Regions, due to environmental, social, and ultimately economic interdependence the new paradigm of multilevel governance can only be implemented, in the Mediterranean, as multilevel governance across the Mediterranean (Calleja S., 2006). Therefore, the Mediterranean should be taken as a whole, or at least as a set of basins including both northern and southern regions (Amoroso B., 2000).

Concrete measures and instruments to advance in this direction should be figured out and implemented to demonstrate that the regions have an important role in territorial cooperation in the Mediterranean because they can act locally and in a decentralized way and thus contribute to the global political agenda, and that this does not necessarily mean dispersion or the prevalence of local political interests. To conclude, European Mediterranean regions are strategically interested in promoting a change of paradigm in EU dealing and cooperation with the Mediterranean Partner Countries, in order to stop being considered "external" to the EU and hence subject to its external action and to allow them to be seen as part and parcel of the European Union Area.

Considering that the Europe 2020 Strategy identifies regions as engines for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, cities are therefore the places where the required action to achieve its objectives and, therefore, to

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/

²Some references: a) Towards an Integrated Maritime Policy for better governance in the Mediterranean [COM(2009) 466 final]; b) European Parliament: report on the evolution of EU macro-regional strategies: present practice and future prospects, especially in the Mediterranean (2011/2179(INI)); c) The Mediterranean Action Plan <http://www.unepmap.org/index.php?lang=en>.

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