

Foreword by Stefano Lo Russo

The European academic world is observing the phenomenon of territorial metropolitanization and of its inhabitants for several years now, in order to examine its economic and social reasons coming from the new lifestyles, the new mechanisms of interrelation and integration and the concept of dispersion in relation to the concepts of connection and interdependence.

Many studies and researches are now focusing on the models of governance of the metropolitan phenomenon, which adopts features and dynamics that are different according to each European territory and even within the single Member States, each one with its own legal system looking for its peculiar solution.

One thing seems certain: the territorial and social development dynamics have blurred the administrative boundaries of cities everywhere. With the diversification of the centres of production and of services, the growth of people mobility, the urbanisation within densely populated centres has lost some of its advantages.

The phenomenon of metropolitanization led to new challenges throughout every metropolitan territory of Europe, both in the redefinition of their spheres of action and both in the adaption to a new integrated territorial vision, in order to create their own fair and collective methods of development towards fragmented administrative realities. This is particularly relevant for the Metropolitan City of Turin, which has the goal of increasing the integration of multilevel governance throughout all its extensive and polycentric territory, mostly rural and mountain, to address the feeling of lack of belonging and lack of involvement in the processes guided by the metropolitan institution.

These new phenomena of metropolitanization and re-territorialization led to a new vision, where Metropolitan areas represent a place where strategic and spatial planning are tools to transform the phenomena of fragmentation and dispersion towards a path of collective and well-balanced growth, with the goal of providing the same liveability to all its communities.

This is the framework in which the ESPON METRO analysis was born: many metropolitan areas of Europe felt the need to empirically investigate if and how the main European policy of rebalancing economic, social and territorial development – the so called Cohesion Policy – is addressing these challenges. The same need was felt indeed, to different extents, throughout almost every Metropolitan areas of Europe, therefore in the preliminary phases of the project a selection of stakeholders was needed. The study, conducted by different research institutions in cooperation with nine European metropolitan areas and cities, sets a clear sample of the metropolitan joint work potential and opens the way for further collaboration.

According to METRO findings, all nine Metropolitan areas involved started initiatives, investments and strategies to connect places and people with the final objective of increasing their life conditions. As for the Metropolitan area of Turin, to think about the development strategies of its territories, means reflecting on how to build a polycentric metropolitan area functionally integrated and no longer based only on a centre-periphery approach, liveable and accessible in all its places, with different solutions according to specific needs, in order to contain territorial and social marginalization.

The COVID-19 pandemic experience was emblematic: it empirically showed how Metropolitan Areas, and the functions they express, have played a key role in mitigating the impact of the virus on their territories.

Cities and Metropolitan areas are indeed in the front-line and have a key role in the mitigation of the impact of present and future challenges, such as climate change and commodity crisis, as also stated by the European Commission. Indeed, the European cohesion policy 2021-2027 programming period includes for the first time a Strategic Objectives (SO) specifically dedicated to territorial development strategies, the SO5 "a Europe closer to citizens, by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU".

The METRO research investigate the potential of the Metropolitan institutions as drivers of development at territorial level, having the right dimension and potential for strengthening the impact and inclusion capacity of the EU cohesion policy. It also shows how the institutional architecture of Cohesion Policy leaves little room for Metropolitan level in the planning phase of the EU Cohesion Policy instruments, although its demonstrated capacity of connecting communities and territories. The ESPON METRO analysis represents a unique example on how the metropolitan perspective can contribute with an important added value to the European integration and its policies.

It seems more and more appropriate to recognize the potential and to strengthen the role of Metropolitan areas – such as Turin – within the European cohesion policy context, in order for them to act as relevant players in the multilevel governance system. In order to better face present and future challenges, we

hope for a better coordination among all levels of governance and therefore the increase of the importance of the Metropolitan Cities as protagonists of territorial development.



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