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## Territorial Impact Assessment of Territorial Cohesion in Italy. Foreword

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*Territorial Impact Assessment of Territorial Cohesion in Italy* is the main topic as well as the title of this special issue, which makes available the intermediate results of an Italian National Research Project PRIN2015 which will be closed in February 2020 (Project 73. PI Maria Prezioso - 20155NXJ8T - SH3 “Territorial Impact Assessment della coesione territoriale delle regioni italiane. Modello, su base place evidence, per la valutazione di policy rivolte allo sviluppo della green economy in aree interne e periferie metropolitane”).

From February 2017, ten academic groups acting in collaborative partnership have discussed and implemented visions by literature review and experimental application of an innovative methodological approach, methods and tools, producing data, mapping and geographical studies. This intensive activity, which is involving more than sixty researchers, national and regional policy/decision makers, stakeholders and practitioners is already collected in a book (Prezioso, ed., *Quale Territorial Impact Assessment della coesione territoriale nelle regioni italiane. La concettualizzazione del problema*, Bologna, Pàtron, 2018). It preceded as theoretical contribution and methodological addresses the applied phase presented in this issue.

The research has been the shared space where working together and, consequently, growing and confronting each other by a critical review with European experts and large audience. The dialogue has developed around the STeMA-Territorial Impact Assessment methodological approach and the related ex-ante evaluation (data, mapping and place evidence of status quo at 2018 by the related STeMA GIS) of Italian Territorial Cohesion, analysing four main dominions (pillars and flags) of the Europe 2020 Strategy: smart, sustainable, inclusive growth and funds spending. Processing and applying a new STeMA-TIA 3.0 version devoted to territorial Cohesion in Italy, the research selected 73 representative indicators; they have been covered and mapped at NUTS 2 (regions) and NUTS 3 (sub-regional level), referring to new 7 Systemic Regional Functional Typologies that territorialise spatial data to the geographical diversity of Country.

This new methodological approach goes over the traditional discussion coming from some scientific and institutional inputs *relating to growth and*

*employment, the adaptation of the Cohesion Policy to the Enlarged Europe, and to Sustainable Development Indicators to monitor the implementation of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy.* Within the new framework 3.0, the application of STeMA-TIA demonstrated that the 2020 monitoring/evaluation proposal based on spatial and synthetic indicators is not adequate.

The new methodological approach also offered a concrete and operational response to *how* the Italian Geography of regions and sub-regions (NUTS 2 and 3) can achieve a territorial cohesive Strategy responding to 2020 targets and later, making use of their territorial potential capital. It also shows *what* the territorial systemic functional typologies (required by CEMAT, DG Regio, CoR and CE) are, and which could best benefit from using the 2020 and post Structural Funds in a cooperative way (new macroregional cooperative programs and voluntary cooperation among territories).

This also explains *what* Territorial Cohesion means for Italy in Europe and *how* to create a common policy and language able to support decision making in Italy.

STeMA-TIA is fruitfully applied to the territorial investigation of spatial (statistical) data; hence, it will also be used at the end of research to put forward a proposal for developing inner cross-thematic co-operative regions, identifying their potentialities according to the cross border and transnational cooperation, since it involves a 'bottom-up' approach to the study of the regional and sub-regional qualitative and quantitative values.

The soundness of the STeMA-TIA has been confirmed (Beta test). A more selective and "customised" set of policy recommendations has been showed by PRIN research together with three scenarios supporting the implementation of the 2021-2027 Strategy on going. Sectoral and regional policy recommendations concerned the *different capabilities* shown by the territories and their aggregated hypotheses on a co-operative base, confirms: this geographical methodology is a pioneering approach that helps assessing the potential impact of the policy choice, by taking into account the specificity of each region (i.e. their environmental, economic and social geographical diversity) as well as any related policy need.

The related selected indicators underwent a further process of development and updating, considering the EU Cohesion Policy. This allowed to assess its political effectiveness before new National Operative Programs and the 2014-2020 ESIF programs were launched as part of the EU Cohesion Policy. Guidelines, approaches, proposals and initiatives defined the sub-regional (provinces or districts) level as subsidiary of the increasingly

close relationship between spatial/territorial dimension and programming responsibilities regarding the organization and government of territory, economy, society, environment. STeMA allowed policy/decision makers and stakeholders to determine how all Italian provincial and other sub-regional organisational (metropolitan cities and inner peripheries) has been excluded from planning choices. It also explained why the EU called for major reforms, specifically with regards to the regulation of economic-territorial competitive development, thus also negatively impacting the changes introduced by the recent conditions reform.

These experiences helped to shape innovation within the PRIN research, which is now emerging as a reference of Italian national geographical research studying territorial cohesion referring to many trends (e.g. inner peripheries, rural and urban/metropolitan areas).

Starting from the Europe 2020 Strategy and its allocated ESIF budget, the research also is drafting the post 2020 national policies, which happened more ten years after the *Research on territorial cohesion indicators for monitoring 2007-2013 programmes in Italy* in order to help strengthening the link between structural policies and economic governance via intergovernmental cooperation based on the Territorial and Urban Agendas.

From 2005 to 2017, a new geography of cohesion was developing, served by a sound methodological and scientific tool applicable to several projects in the field of the EU cooperative programs. It helped to adopt a more marked *challenge-based approach* and it also enhanced the multidisciplinary interpretation of the geographical knowledge.

In the following papers, national and international researchers and national decision makers discuss the Italian general and thematic topics, since in the post 2020 context Italy's economic position and prospects remain unsure, and cohesive targets seem far to be reached.

Papers also open a dialogue on place-evidence policy recommendations, for promoting territorial cohesive choices revisiting National and Regional Operative Programs towards 2020 and post. Starting from the literature on impacts of Territorial Cohesion, a first result of the study is related to the importance of regional analysis in spending, in order to provide compensatory actions for inner and peripheral areas, helping local policy needs to be redefined towards green economy policy and investment priorities. With the participation of European experts, the research provided results in order to fuel the debate about Territorial Cohesion development in Italy, and about the geographical narrative methodological approach that introduces to the

use of advanced tools in the impact's mitigation of a low regional spending; also looking to mid-term and long-term future scenarios for the possible evolution of the Italian economics.

Some policy questions lead the development of this special issue, starting from concepts, common lexicon and shared definitions:

- How to let national and regional stakeholders better understand Territorial Cohesion value, and its relationship with place.
- How new methodological approaches can help policy makers to make appropriate choices of investments based on policy needs.
- What kind of TIA for a Territorial Cohesion policy 2020 and post, coherently with EC, CoR, European Parliament addresses.
- How to move from the spatial Cohesion Policy to the Territorial Cohesion, also analyzing in deep European policies, pillars and flags.
- How to design territorial functional typologies able to valorize the regional diversity in policy decision making.

Contribution from national institutional Observers participant to the research (Presidency of the Ministers Council, Agency of the Territorial Cohesion, Ministry of Infrastructures, Ministry of Environment, National Council of Italian Regions) are directly or indirectly included to enrich the discussion between research and policy. Results of a survey involving external academics, students, stakeholders, practitioners, etc. are instead available by the mentioned book.

However, the Issue collects suggestions and remarks for regional and local policy recommendations that will be developed at the end of the PRIN process (ex-post evaluation) for supporting the policy/decision making in sustainable and competitive programs by an efficiently use of the EU funds (pre-conditionality of post-2020 Cohesion Policy). Since in the post 2020 context both funds are reducing and Italy's economic position and prospects remain unsure, and cohesive targets seem far to be reached, the research intended to open a dialogue on place-evidence policy recommendations, for promoting territorial cohesive choices in revisiting and relaunching National and Regional Operative Programs towards 2021-2027. To this scope, impacts of Territorial Cohesion is a first result of the study, which is related to the importance of regional analysis in spending, in order to provide compensatory actions for inner and peripheral areas, helping local policy needs to be redefined towards green economy policy and investment priorities.

Papers included in this special issue follow the order of the research's agenda, organized in several focus and

regional empirical analysis: *Methodological Approach for a new Economic Geography of the Territorial Cohesion in Europe and Italy* (M. Prezioso); *Inner vs Metropolitan and Regional Peripheries* (G. Scanu, C. Donato, G. Mariotti, C. Madau, V. Camerada, S. Battino, C. Podda, S. Lampreu; L. Scrofani, G. Petino, A. Di Bella, A. Arangio; and F. Bencardino, A. Cresta, I. Greco) and *Accessibility* (F. Pagetti, D. Ietri, P. Molinari); *The Territorial Capital Value* (T. Amodio, M. Bencardino, G. Iovino, S. Siniscalchi; and S. De Rubertis, E. Ciavolino, M. Labianca); *Territorial Cohesion and Competitiveness* (F. Dini, S. Grandi, F. Martellozzo, F. Randelli, P. Romei) *towards Green Economy* (F. Krasna, G. Borruso, G. Mauro, J.P. Zaccomer); *Inclusive Growth* (S. Mangano, P. Piana, G.M. Ugolini); *looking at Territorial Cohesion by Spatial Planning* (D'Orazio e M. Pigliucci); *Territorial Development, Territorial Gaps, Place-Based Policies, and Intervention Scales* (I. Tasia); *Italy's Reorganization of Public Investment* (L.P. Scandizzo and S. Maiolo) *by Cohesion Policy* (V. Russo, F. Lavecchia, A.R. Rocca, S. Trento and P. Galletta).

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politics together so that they are not divergent worlds in the arena of socioeconomic and territorial development, providing qualified support to the processes under way (Cohesion Policy and Funds 2020) and to those that will come (post-2020).

This is possible if we build a common language, capitalise the results of research by making them an intermediary tool and disseminate them, simplifying, but not reducing, the way in which the questions that accompany research meet those of politics and citizenships.