

Chapter 4

Geography and Territorial Planning in Italy



Piergiorgio Landini

Abstract The debate between urban planning and geography in Italy, based on common issues and concepts of city, territory, region and landscape, dates back to the second half of the last century. Due to a series of elements both internal and external to the discipline, geography has only had a marginal role in territorial planning, mostly in ‘vast areas’, identifiable at provincial and district level. The role of the geographer has mainly concerned territorial analysis, with particular attention to demographic and socio-economic aspects, as well as environmental ones.

Today, the matter deals with the structural and strategic significance of planning, along with the scale of intervention, with an interesting recovery of interdisciplinary relations. In this perspective, a fundamental issue is the administrative reorganisation of the Italian State, where a strong political and technical-scientific debate has been developed in recent years. In light of the stances adopted by the Italian Geographical Society (Società Geografica Italiana, SGI) and the National Urban Planning Institute (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, INU), a potential alignment of the two disciplines is promising, which would gain specific measures that are no longer avoidable against the collapse that the natural and constructed territory in Italy has now reached.

Keywords Italy planning · Regional Geography · Vast area · Administrative reorganisation

4.1 The Reasons Behind a Missed Opportunity

The relationship between geography and territorial planning in Italy could be defined as a missed opportunity. Unlike other countries both in and outside Europe, where the geographer has been considered as a full-fledged planner, in Italy he has assumed the role of an external observer, often critical and almost always unheard. Even when he accepted assignments in the planning field, this was more about

P. Landini (✉)
University of Chieti-Pescara, Chieti, Italy

personal and political situations related to individual contexts than from the acknowledgement of his specific professionalism.

There are many reasons to this situation, both internal and external to the disciplinary corporation. Among the internal causes, the most distant is the intentionally detached attitude that Italian geographers have had throughout regarding political practice, with the consequence of a self-exclusion of their scientific knowledge from the practice of planning. It has also stemmed from a fundamentally descriptive approach even after the middle of the twentieth century, which, moving from the natural territorial basis, was going further into researching the interdependences between physical and human elements, summarised under the concept of landscape: descriptions that were not alien to value judgements but completely lacking operational purposes. Even the analysis of economic and anthropic conditions was done from a historical standpoint and not with a programmatic approach; also, about the cities, geographers provided no more than a typological classification, related to topographic sites, geographical location and consolidated functions.

Indeed, there was no lack of approaches that were at least seemingly different. In 1950, the economic geographer Bruno Nice presented a report titled *Territorial planning for geographical landscape development* to the Italian Geography Congress in Turin, in which he traced foreign practice on the matter, immediately focusing geographers' interest on 'vast area' planning, namely the Territorial Coordination Plans, introduced in Italy by the new and still-in-force (see below) Framework Law on Domestic Urban Planning (Law no. 1150/1942). In this regard, he complained about the lack of a comprehensive view on planning which was present in other countries: actually 'individual partial plans could be in contrast', hence 'the need for their general coordination, which is what territorial or comprehensive planning properly called aspires: to contemplate not only one or more elements of the landscape, but the landscape as a whole' (Nice 1950, p. 532). Such an arrangement seems to predict the criticisms that, in the following decades, the sectorial nature and fragmentation of the planning activity, managed by planners, would have generated in the Italian context.

According to Nice (Nice 1950, p. 536), it is therefore the landscape, a founding concept in modern geography, the crux of territorial planning issue: 'a form of balance between the action of different forces, not only natural or human, but also between the different economic forces, which the planning is indeed aiming to mutually combine'. Even in this sense, he holds a farsighted view, which geographers do not unfortunately follow, thus losing the scientific pre-emption on this notion and on the 'principle of synthesis' that the discipline expressed, as was argued by one of the major geographers from the period, Umberto Toschi (1967, p. 8):¹ 'the geographic sciences study the empirical phenomena, spread across land surface and interconnected in spatial mix and put in place by them', namely the regions.

¹The book that the quote is taken from (posthumous: Toschi died in 1966) gathers and organises the author's thoughts as they were already conveyed in monographs for his university courses and published between 1948 and 1953.

Going back to Nice, the ending of his report at the Congress must be therefore surprising: ‘What I believe could explain the echo that the phenomenon [the planning *author’s note*] sparks in geographical literature in view not only of the practical scopes of application, but also of scientific grounds of interest that it offers to the geographer’ (Nice 1950, p. 536). It is almost a surrender to the professional application, which brings back the geographical discipline to the neutrality and above-mentioned detachment and which will have a negative impact on its future developments in the planning field.

Even in the 60s, as Governa and Salone (2003, p. 628) remember, another major Italian geographer from the past century, Lucio Gambi, speaking about the relationship between knowledge and action, namely the search for an active role for geography, stated that the few experiences that geographers had in determining policies for territorial development were often restricted to ‘a superficial, reportorial description of objects’ and he complained about the misunderstanding between ‘preliminary enquiry’ and ‘real, actual planning’: although the former involves technical ability in detecting the territorial conditions, only the latter ‘leads in a radical economic and social layout of a region’s demography and urban planning’ (Gambi 1965a, pp. 96–97).

A second internal reason for the lack of professionalism among Italian geographers is due to their heterogeneous education. A degree in Geography² has always been part of the university structure, but it was generally characterised by the addition of 2 years of Geography studies in initial curricula in Natural Science, Humanities, Political Science or Economics, and was therefore attended to attain a second degree by an objectively limited number of students. Otherwise, geographers came directly, and still come, from the aforementioned branches.

In the university reform which took place from 1999,³ specific degree categories in Geography have been maintained, both at the first level (degree) and the second level (specialisation and then master’s degree).⁴ Initially (2001–2002), there were quite a lot of locations where first-level courses were offered: ten (Bologna, Chieti-Pescara, Florence, Genoa, L’Aquila, Milan ‘Statale’, Padua, Eastern Piedmont, Rome ‘La Sapienza’, Turin), whilst the second level peaked with eight locations in 2005–2006 (Bologna, Florence, Genoa, Milan ‘Statale’, Pisa, Rome ‘La Sapienza’, Turin, Udine). Later, the reduction in Geography as a discipline at junior school and high school, the uncertainty of job opportunities and the fall in the number of university professors to teach the subject, within a general context of crisis in Italian universities due to the lack of resources and a decrease in applications, have noticeably brought these numbers down. In 2012–2013, there were only two

²Table XXXIV of Royal Decree no. 1652 from 30 September 1938, amended by the Ministerial Decree from 29 December 1992.

³Ministerial Decree no. 509 from 3 November 1999, replaced by Ministerial Decree no. 270 from 22 October 2004.

⁴In Ministerial Decree 509/1999: Category 30 (Geographical Science) for the first three-year level and Category 21/S (Geography) for the second two-year level. In Ministerial Decree 270/2004, respectively: Category L-6 (Geography) and Category LM-80 (Geographical Science).

first-level courses (Milan ‘Statale’, in conjunction with Genoa, and Rome ‘La Sapienza’) and three second-level courses (in the same venues with the addition of Bologna, as well as a course on Geography and Anthropology in Florence).

All this has obviously done nothing to favour the consolidation of a professional role for Italian geographers, and lesser so in the planning field. Staying in the university environment, and particularly in Economics faculties and departments, not a few geographers have received teachings on Territorial Planning or Territorial Organisation, which—sadly enough—mainly stems from the demand for diversifying such teachings, even in labelling terms, from the classics of Economic Geography, a definition that is even considered obsolete and still less attractive for students. It is clear that the content has been limited in the scope of Geography as a discipline, because specific teachings on urban planning are part of the degree courses in Architecture and Engineering.

There is also a third factor here, which is external, explaining the reason why geographers were left out of planning activities: the lack of a Professional Order or Register, despite various attempts to gain it, which would grant them a formal licence to carry the planning activity similarly to architects and engineers. In reality, the restriction only concerns the urban plans at the municipal level, namely the General Regulatory Plan (Piano Regolatore Generale, PRG), which however represented the true core if not the exclusivity of the Italian planning tools, at least until recent years, despite the aforementioned Framework Law in 1942 introducing the ‘vast area’ plans at an inter-municipal level (see above). This latter have been scarcely applied anyway, except for the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plans (Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale, PTCP), whose effectiveness has been strongly limited by their merely advisory character and not strictly regulatory nature.

4.2 Geography and Urban Planning: The Origins of a Debate

Ever since it was founded in 1930, the National Urban Planning Institute (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, INU) has been the reference point for urban planning and territorial planning in Italy. One of the few geographers that joined it was Umberto Toschi, who became part of the Commission named by the National Directorate Council in 1961 to create a proposal for the General Law for Urban Planning along with Camillo Ripamonti, Giovanni Astengo, Enzo Cerutti, Gianfilippo Delli Santi, Luigi Piccinato and Giuseppe Samonà, the biggest names in urban planning at that time.

Toschi, who had been researching the role of geographers in urban studies (Toschi 1956) since the 1950s, published important essays on the so-called Territorial Plans (1961) and City-region (1962), reaching a climax in the indispensable book on urban geography (1966), which made him the reference author in studies about

this field. Even echoing essential insights from his thoughts, in the last quarter of the century, Italian geography was experiencing a phase of epistemological re-foundation, driven by Adalberto Vallega (1976): in an international scenario with increased functionalism on a quantitative basis, the discipline regained interpretative and critical ability, not neglecting the territorial modelling but prioritising a systemic approach capable of reassessing fundamental qualitative concepts such as Toschi's 'geographical synthesis' (see above). The geographers were accredited as analysts and interpreters of complex territorial phenomena, favouring key themes such as regions, urban networks and local systems.

At this particular stage, the writer was facing, along with Pietro Mario Mura, one of the few Italian geographers who had taught in the Architecture faculty, the direct debate between geography and urban planning (Landini and Mura 1982) in the specific view of the regionalisation processes, in the majority regarding to 'vast area' planning favoured by the geographers.

Thus, focussing the attention on the space distribution methods expressed by urban planning and more, widely so, on the recognisable paradigms in the two disciplines, it emerged as if the similarities were not limited to a more or less contemporary demand to critically amend the respective content and to, as a result, redefine the actual areas of action, but as if this demand were to move from a similar condition, at least in the Italian situation. See what was written immediately after the second post-war period by the urban planner Giorgio Rigotti in his summary on the evolution of interests and the duties attributable to urban planning and the necessary cultural and professional attitudes:

I consider urban planning as a complex of art and sciences rather than a singular art and a specific science. It has indeed gone progressively from the old definition of 'art of constructing cities' to the new definition of 'organisational system of cities and territories'. [...] As a result, not only one but many sciences are needed to the urban planners to approach and resolve the infinite problems that they face.[...] The urban planners must therefore possess three specific characteristics: deep analytical qualities allowing them to outline and classify the essential elements; specific synthetic qualities that lead them to find solutions based on what is provided by analyses; and finally, above all, a fine balance [which he defines as a 'common sense', *author's note*] to provide the solutions with the necessary eurhythmia for the best human works (Rigotti 1947, pp. V–VI).

By translating the 'common sense' for 'synthesis' from Toschi, the crossroads position adopted by both disciplines seems clear. One could only ask: what mutual diversification between the two positions concerning the fields of interest and methodologies is there? One would be tempted to answer: only one, that urban planners know how to build a building, or a neighbourhood, and geographers do not!

Yet in the same year, one of the main exponents of Italian urban planning, Luigi Piccinato (1947, pp. 9–10), defined his discipline as the study of conditions, manifestations and the need for life and progression in cities: not an exact science but more of an art. Why not recall the extraordinary *summa* of Peter Haggett's thought and geographical profession (1990)?

Going back to the interdisciplinary debate, the problem with the relationships between city and territory is clear on a methodological level even for Rigotti (1952,

p. VII), when he states: ‘We have never made a direct distinction between city and region, and we have actually always considered the urban structure as an integral part of a bigger structure made from territory, both of which are closely linked by many interdependence factors’. This approach which is completely acceptable by geographers could look like a kind of systemic perception; but in reality, in the following analysis, the only openly expressed regional concept is that of a uniform area as a criterion for defining specialised surfaces (Rigotti 1952, p. 367 and following). It is said that in those years, a breaking position regarding such traditional urban planning was defined in the themes at the National Urban Planning Institute Congress in Venice (Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica 1953): but it was an incidental initiation destined to amount to nothing for a long time.

Moreover, on the definitory and epistemological apparatus of urban planning, weighed the interference of two mental approaches: the predominant aestheticism of the architect and the practical positivism of the engineer. Even in this situation, therefore, there was a diverse education that nevertheless found its own recomposition in empowering both professional orders for urban planning tasks.

4.3 A Renewed Regional Geography Does Not Match the Planning

Italian geography’s transition from an idiographic to a nomothetic approach, which is generally ascribed to the creation of functionalism (see below), really began in the 1960s within the political and economic geographical current that refers to Francesco Compagna and Calogero Muscarà, largely inspired by the French voluntarism.

Starting from a research on urban system transformations in Italy, Compagna (1967) analyses the concepts of conurbation, metropolitan area and megalopolis, adopting both a European and a global scale, and he incorporates them into the Italian interpretative framework of so-called ‘meridionalismo’ (regarding the South of Italy), founding the origins of the North-South duality, for the first time, not only about the differences in physical conditions and the degree of industrialisation, but also about the inter-urban relations arising from different trajectories traced along the history of the territory. By classifying the supporting role of the upper public and private tertiary, the possible roles of big and medium-size cities are outlined, and a rebalance of trends can even be postulated via the creation of new functional relations in the Italian ‘Mezzogiorno’.

Analyzing the process of industrial development (1967), Muscarà introduces the concept of an ‘Italia di Mezzo’ (‘Middle Italy’) between the North and the South, providing significant importance to the decentralisation phenomena from the strong North-West, but also to the urban polycentrism that differentiates the middle of Italy from the other big partitions in the territory, and emphasizing the role of a widespread base of services, low labour costs and other endogenous production factors.

The objective glorification of the role of the city, as a centrepiece for demographic, industrial and infrastructural growth, as well as technological development, fundamentally changes the geographers' regional perspective. From the concept of region in which the kind of life represents the balance between natural resources and human capacity, in the framework of territory and landscape historical evolution, there is a transit towards a functional interpretation of region, where economic forces are what can define new organisational layouts. In fact, the concept of region loses its objective physical or cultural nature in becoming an area polarised by one or more urban centres. As a result, the inductive analysis methodology (direct observation integrated by descriptive statistical support) becomes deductive, with the use of gravitational models on a quantitative basis.

Therefore, the regional setup ends up being defined by the urban frame, characterised by different degrees of centrality/accessibility, namely with functional allocations usable by the market, and is thus represented by a hierarchy of centres and services that are interdependent amongst themselves to different degrees. It followed that the functional region, characterised by a certain hierarchic order, corresponds to the gravitational area on a centre (pole) and its boundaries are identified from the line of indifference compared with the competitor poles offering the same level of services.

In Italy, a gravitational model that would have been quite relevant in territorial literature and to which the geographers (Landini 1973) have made an important contribution, together with statisticians and economists, was created by SoMEA (Society for Applied Mathematics and Economics). Eight hierarchical levels of centres were identified (national metropolis; regional metropolis; regional cities; sub-regional cities; local urban centres; semi-urban centres; urbanised villages; basic centres) and as many levels of services. For each level of services, the model ascribed each centre to an area of gravitation whose dimension was directly proportionate to the functional allocation and inversely proportionate to the degree of accessibility calculated on a weighted graph. The substantial confirmation of the Italian regional imbalances ensued: the hierarchy of centres belonging to upper levels clearly underlined the strong urban frame of the North-West, polarised by the Turin-Milan-Genoa triangle, from which the Po Valley, Alpine alignment (towards Venice and Trieste) and Apennines one (towards Bologna and the Adriatic coast) branched off. The latter, along with the Tuscan transversal axis and the central Apennines area, highlighted the polycentric layout of the Middle Italy, which answered the progressive urban rarefaction of the 'Mezzogiorno' from southern Lazio.

Using this model and others, an attempt was made in vain to start an application for the regional planning on a national scale: the '80s Project', and particularly its Territorial Projections (Ministero Bilancio e Programmazione Economica 1969–1971), were then proposed but have remained substantially ineffective.

Conversely, in the years following immediately, urban planning was amongst the first competences transferred by the Italian State to the Regions (Law no. 382/1975). This resulted in a fragmented and uneven urban planning legislation, nevertheless based on procedural-legal centrality, from which more or less rigid hierarchies of

plan sat different scales (regional, provincial, municipal). Hence, the legislative framework was inevitably still the Framework Law from 1942, but even more so from Law no. 765/1967 (called an interim law in that it should have accompanied the transition to a still uncompleted reform) which actually made the urban plans mandatory on a municipal scale, based on zoning the land ownership. This was the opposite of the optimal urban planning law which should attribute to the plan ‘wide power, ample room for manoeuvre, without trying to predetermine the planning processes but instead guaranteeing the essential conditions’ (Crocioni 2014, p. 29) in the widest regional context, as the few attempts of ‘vast areas’ continuous planning have tried to do, most notably those from the Inter-Municipal Plan of Milan.⁵

4.4 The New Planning Directions and the ‘Vast Area’ Problem

From the 1990s, however, urban planning has reconsidered the importance of territorial analysis as an integral part of the plan on all its scales and dimensions. So, under the force of the directions proposed by the National Institute of Urban Planning, the legislative activity (mostly regional) concerning planning has captured decisively innovative elements which, starting from the definition and construction of the plan, regulate the management, control and monitoring of the effects in two different ways, strategic/structural and operational, sustained by shared fact-finding frameworks and based on the construction of a specific mapping of the places and landscapes (Landini and Properzi 2005).

These new directions—at least potentially—reassessed the contribution of geography to planning, thanks to the trans-scale approach that has gone into defining the new spatial orders created out of social changes and technological innovation.

The problem with the definition and legislation of the ‘vast area’ was still open, both conceptually and dimensionally. For the geographers, the reference to the regional theory appeared immediately, and by not having fostered the urban plan model, such a definition fit both the natural region and the homogeneous area under the cultural profile, and also the functional district and the local system. After all, already from the 1970s, Geography had taken part in the debate on the role of the intermediary institution between Regions and Municipalities, the latter being an expression of thorough widespread administrative decentralisation. The obsolescence of the provincial divisions⁶ gave way to many different proposals for

⁵It was launched in 1959 with a Decree from the Public Works Ministry, and entrusted to the Municipality of Milan, extending its reach to 35 bordering municipalities.

⁶At the time of the unification of Italy (1861), the administrative division was indeed based on the provinces (59 in total), whilst the grouping in compartments (the current Regions) somewhat overlaid the territorial structure of the pre-unification states, on whose statistical systems it was necessary to conduct the first census of the population in that same year. And for census purposes, Pietro Maestri, director of the Central Statistics Council, was in charge of reviewing the compartments,

recognising areas on a functional basis (generally called districts), which were a better response to the real and intense processes of redistribution of the settlements, both residential and productive, and as a result to the role of central locations emerging out of the relational and economic profile, with the corresponding influence areas (Landini 2013). Geographical research put into effect the theoretical-methodological advances that were aiming to define the gravitations to urban poles, through the creation of quantitative models (see above), disregarding any administrative limits and somewhat reading the representational flows of the actual territorial organisation.

However, the district issue clashed with the prevailing political inactivity regarding territorial planning: not managing to define a regulatory categorisation, the problem of potential relationships, be they complementary or substitute, between districts and provinces was unresolved. On the other hand, the fact that the aforementioned Law no. 382/1975 delegated the competences established by the Constitution concerning planning and administrative governance of the territory to the Regions made clear the relinquishment of the state power to the determination of uniform criteria for the redesign of the sub-regional layout, namely the 'vast area'.

At the end of the 1970s and throughout the following decade, the Fordist industry crisis and, with it, the crisis of agglomerative urban concentration led to the emergence of the productive model based on local industrial districts, which was progressively spreading not only in the North-East and Centre, the 'Third Italy', but also in the South, where district characteristics were clearly recognisable in the North of Bari, in Salento, Materano and Eastern Sicily. This reinforced the variety of the Italian territories correlated to the pre-existing economic activities and historical-social bases, against the flattening of territorial peculiarities caused by

in which he favoured the 'continuity of physical constitution', the 'correlation and economic compliance' and also the civil traditions in the provinces that constituted them (Maestri 1864). Since then, these groupings, which at the time lacked any legal value, which they would have assumed with the Republic Constitution in 1948, haven't undergone any substantial changes, subject to the subsequent annexations to the Italian State of the Venices, Lazio and Trentino-Alto Adige, the loss of the Giuliano-Dalmate provinces after the Second World War and the division of Molise from Abruzzo in 1963; conversely, their internal partitions have become all the more fragmented with the cropping of new provinces (particularly in 1923–1927, 1992, 2001 and 2004), up to the number of 110.

If in some cases the cropping of the new provinces has mirrored demands for decentralisation linked to the long distances at the time (Matera, Enna, Ragusa and Nuoro in 1927) or social and productive transformation processes of the territory (La Spezia and Taranto in 1923; Vercelli, Varese, Savona, Terni, Pescara and Brindisi in 1927; Pordenone in 1968; Rimini in 1992; Barletta-Andria-Trani and Fermo in 2001) or even physical processes (in the case of the large redevelopment area at Littoria, later Latina, in 1934); in other cases, on the contrary, it has represented an attempt to give self-governance to areas that were marginalised from the metropolitan growth of Rome and Milan (Viterbo, Rieti and Frosinone in 1927; Lecco and Lodi in 1992; Monza-Brianza in 2001) or from economic isolation (Isernia in 1970, Oristano in 1974, Crotone and Vibo Valentia in 1992), not to mention the four provinces activated with the Sardinian regional law (2004: Olbia-Tempio, Ogliastra, Carbonia-Iglesias and Medio Campidano). The Prato and Biella situations are also emblematic, established in 1992 when the model of the 'mature' textile district that shared them was already in crisis.

mass development, and it re-evaluated the endogenous resources, not only in the industrial sector but also the agricultural, cultural-naturalistic and tourism fields, focusing the Country on new sustainable development strategies based on territorial systems and their relations from local to transnational scales.

In the 1990s, this gave substance to the idea of regionalism on an identity, socio-political and economic basis, with substantial institutional reflexes on the competences of the territorial bodies and a marked tendency to identify regionalism with federalism. The first signs were seemingly found in Law no. 142/1990, which should have opened a phase of structural change in territorial governance and which remained however, after a promising initial debate, amongst the biggest unfinished tasks of national legislation in the last 30 years. A merely apparent progression was given by the Constitutional Law no. 3/2001, even this one going unapplied, which with article 4 (replacing article 118 of the Constitution) established a substantial principle of equiordination of local authorities. In this sense, the administrative hierarchy would have been abolished which, notably in the planning field, had determined cascade-type forms of control (from the State to the Regions, the Provinces and the Municipalities), limiting the acceptance of the requests coming from the territory.

On the urban planning side, it is interesting to find stances from scholars more sensitive to the territorial problem than to the strictly urban problem. Among these, Pier Carlo Palermo (2004, pp. 13–40), who, retracing the history of planning in Italy, defines the ‘vast area’ as ‘one of the most innovative themes in the complex planning system foreseen by the National Urban Planning Law in 1942’, thus showing how territorial governance at that scale has always been a limitedly developed issue, and in recalling the topical occasion of Law 142/1990, he observes how the Territorial Coordination Plans, which this law afforded to the Province, preserved a traditional structure (spatial distribution of the functions; infrastructural localisation; lines of intervention on the environment and the landscape), depending on the level of regulatory flexibility/rigidity, risking being simple orientational documents or creating conflicts with the planning at a municipal level, in turn characterised by the duality between territorial organisation outline and urban design or, more strictly, between urban planning and architectural project. Even in structural planning, there is still a substantially unresolved problem: if the structure must constitute a system of invariant dimensions, thus prescriptive, or a pattern of potential transformations which are inherently dynamic.

Roberto Mascarucci, member of the National Directorate Council at the National Urban Planning Institute, proceeds in this last thesis and in heading his own recent book in purposefully provocative manner (*Serve ancora l'urbanistica?* / Is urban planning still useful?), departs from the assumption that urban planning is always about less urban design and more territorial governance: under this profile, in view of strategic planning, he identifies a new generation of ‘vast area’ plans (which he calls Inter-Municipal Spatial Plans), which promote aggregation of Municipalities in both metropolitan conurbations (to rationalise and regenerate) and territories rising out of the intermediary urban network (to design synergies and optimise the system offer), as well as minor urban centres in marginal areas (to favour complementarity and reach enough critical mass). Therefore, fundamental analytical categories of the plan will be typically geographical and those regarding geomorphology,

landscape and urban texture, correlating to the urban morphology and the design of the infrastructures, crossing the spatial approach with all the other technical approaches (socio-economic, transport, energy), searching for the functional links that relate them and working on these to maximise the positive effects of the project choices (Mascarucci 2014, pp. 46–48).

Another area of potential interdisciplinary convergence is the Territory Project. It is a new approach for planning of national and international spaces, encouraged by EU policies on economic, social and territorial cohesion, with inevitable reflections on regionalisation. The European policy on networks and infrastructural guidelines in Italy was particularly translated into forming the National Strategic Framework 2007–2013 by the Ministry for Infrastructure and Transport. Substituting the general planning, it identifies 16 Strategic Territorial Platforms, expressed at transnational, national and inter-regional levels, which cross the administrative-political boundaries at the different levels, risking however to find hurdles in the obsolete provincial and regional layout (see below).

About the implications linked to the origins and the intrinsic nature of the Territory Projects, Pierluigi Properzi, Vice President of the National Institute of Urban Planning in the early 2000s, gives a convincing interpretation: recognising that this experience has an innovative capacity of proposal and interaction with the European framework and regional activity, he however does not recognise the transition from the declaratory and proactive dimension to the operational one. Furthermore, the Territory Project, necessarily having to deal with the fundamental articulations of European territory policies (polycentrism and functional areas), ends by often coinciding with the infrastructure project. Ultimately its application is conditioned by the disciplinary approaches, which are still uncertain amidst a unitary conceptual dimension of territorial governance, where traditional urban planning is hard to accept, and a ‘dialectal separation’ of the different elements (legal, economic, project, evaluative) converging on the project (Properzi 2015, p. 21).

From Properzi’s review derives a further interdisciplinary reflection, linked to the issue of sustainability which must be read in terms of added value, not only as an outcome of the Territory Project but as a factor determining its success or failure. Sustainability in Europe is generally combined with the evaluation and a tradition that considers implicit the impartiality of the analyst either from the project or the cognitive frameworks and indicators used. Conversely, in Italy, both in the holistic tradition of the urban planning discipline and a utilitarian defence of the professional competencies, the project tends to prevail over the evaluation and, as a result, it faces lots of difficulties when establishing an evaluative practice referring to stable cognitive practices which are external to the project itself (Properzi 2015, p. 22), and exactly those where the geographers could fully express their own autonomous professionalism.

On the subject of the environment, another urban planner that could be considered unusual would be Giovanni Crocioni, who critically highlights the legal discrepancies within the triangle of sustainability-safeguarding-development. However, taking a look at the actual Country, he makes assessments on cities, territories and landscapes which are objectively not positive, yet without catastrophism: not all is lost and there are potential slow upgrading actions with strong commitment, which are certainly more complex against the prolonged stagnation and lack of resources,

both public and private, and perhaps affected in the extended suburban divestments, industrial species, in the North, and in the widespread illegal building, mainly in the South (Crocioni 2014, pp. 106–108). The strategic role of infrastructure and logistics for this purpose is indisputable.

Above everything is the need for an urban reform that must undergo territorial and institutional reorganisation, redefining and reassessing the competences between the Municipalities, provided that they are considered adequate from a dimensional point of view, the Regions, whose duty of landscape and territorial planning it is, and the State, which are entitled to the sheer priorities of the hydro-geological layout and the contrast to illegal building (Crocioni 2014, pp. 152 and seq.).

4.5 The Illusion of Administrative Reorganisation

The Italian governments have tried to deal with the problem of reviewing the territorial administrative framework in recent years, which is highly obsolete today regarding the transformation processes that took place mainly half-way through the last century: reform, as mentioned, substantially preliminary to the execution of new planning mediums. In the political and technical-scientific debate that ensued, the geographers have had an important role, via the oldest disciplinary research institution in the Country, the Italian Geographical Society (Società Geografica Italiana SGI).

Despite the criticism shown by the Regions' fulfilment of the competences given to them, attention was quickly focused on the 'vast area' intermediary body, the Province, probably because it is the weakest under a political profile and the one that had ended up flattened between Regions and Municipalities in the devolution of competences that were once State led.

Therefore, in 2011, Berlusconi's government, with a Constitutional Bill, proposed to abolish the territorial level of provincial government and to delegate to regional laws the institution of associative forms between the Municipalities for 'vast area' government functions, ensuring that the new sub-regional scopes would extend over no less than 3000 km² or would have a population of at least 300,000 citizens. The introduction of such thresholds was in contrast to the geographical territorial analysis approach, not taking into account position, morphology, population density, economic structure and territorial history. The outcome would have been to abolish 29⁷ of the 110 existing Provinces, with a completely random

⁷Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, Vercelli, Biella and Asti, in Piedmont; Imperia, Savona and La Spezia, in Liguria; Lodi, in Lombardy; Rovigo, in Veneto; Gorizia and Trieste, in Friuli Venezia Giulia; Piacenza, in Emilia-Romagna; Massa-Carrara, Pistoia and Prato, in Tuscany; Terni, in Umbria; Fermo and Ascoli Piceno, in Marche; Rieti in Lazio; Campobasso and Isernia, in Molise; Benevento, in Campania; Crotone and Vibo Valentia, in Calabria; Enna and Caltanissetta, in Sicily; Medio Campidano, Carbonia-Iglesias and Ogliastra, in Sardinia.

distribution. In short, generic conditions decided hastily would not have been ideal for ensuring if a provincial area was logical and functional rather than inappropriate, obsolete and useless.

From the identification of thresholds also moved the hypothesis of reorganisation advanced by Monti's government in 2012, characterised by a marginally redimensioning of the territorial threshold (2500 km²), an increase in the demographic threshold (350,000 people) with the initial addition of a third threshold, referring to the number of Municipalities (not less than 50), later abandoned. After an attempt to receive direction from the ordinary statute Regions, a Bill was reached that reduced the number of Provinces, in those Regions, from 86 to 51⁸ (including 10 Metropolitan Cities:⁹ Turin, Genoa, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, Reggio Calabria), leaving out the special-statute Regions where a deferred 6-month term was forecast.¹⁰ Even in this case, the territorial administrative structure was only mostly aggregated but not really transformed.

The problem with regional borders was still unresolved, upon which, in time, advanced aggregation hypotheses came about from geographers,¹¹ research

⁸The biggest cuts would have concerned regions in the North and Centre: Lombardy (from 12 to 7 Provinces, with the merging of Varese, Como and Lecco; Lodi, Cremona and Mantova; whilst Monza-Brianza would have been reincorporated into the Milan Metropolitan Area) and Tuscany (from 10 to 4, with the merging of Massa-Carrara, Lucca, Pisa and Livorno; Florence, Pistoia and Prato; Siena and Grosseto), followed by Emilia-Romagna (from 9 to 5, with the merging of Piacenza and Parma; Reggio Emilia and Modena; Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena and Rimini) and Piedmont (from 8 to 5, with the merging of Asti and Alexandria; Biella and Vercelli; Verbanico-Cusio-Ossola and Novara). Yet, in Veneto, Verona would have been unified with Rovigo and Treviso with Padua; in Liguria, Imperia with Savona; in Marche, Macerata with Fermo and Ascoli Piceno. Northern Lazio (Viterbo with Rieti) and Southern Lazio (Latina with Frosinone) would have surrounded the Metropolitan City of Rome, whilst in neighbouring Abruzzo, L'Aquila would have been reunited with Teramo and Pescara with Chieti. Conversely, in Campania, the only merging would have concerned Benevento and Avellino. Still in the South, in Puglia, Foggia would have been united with Barletta-Andria-Trani and Taranto with Brindisi; in Calabria, Crotona with Catanzaro and Vibo Valentia. Finally, Umbria (Perugia with Terni), Molise (Isernia with Campobasso) and Basilicata (Matera with Potenza) would have seen the provincial and regional areas combined.

⁹The Metropolitan Area had been governed for the first time by Law no. 142/1990, which identified it in the cases of Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Bari and Naples, and similarly reproduced by the Law Decree no. 267/2000 ([Consolidated Law of Local Authorities](#)), whilst the Metropolitan City was recognised in Constitutional Law no. 3/2001, where predetermining cases are not identified, and application in Law no. 56/2014 (see below).

¹⁰In the meantime, the Sardinia Region, with Regional Law 28 May 2012 (the effectiveness of which would be then delayed) had decreed the elimination of the four provinces activated in 2004 (see note 6). In turn, the Sicily Region, with a vote from the Regional Assembly on 20 March 2013, basing on the Bill submitted by the Council, would have eliminated the Provinces to replace them with Associations of Municipalities, to then restore them in 2017.

¹¹Francesco Compagna (1968) proposed the aggregation of parts of the Liguria territory, from west to east, respectively, to Piedmont, Lombardy and Emilia; parts of the Umbria territory to Tuscany, Lazio and Marche; the Province of L'Aquila to Lazio; Abruzzo and part of Molise to Marche; the remaining part of Molise and the Province of Potenza to Campania; the Province of Matera to Puglia.

institutions¹² and political parties.¹³ The premature conclusion of the national Legislature suspended the issue for the umpteenth time.¹⁴

At the beginning of 2013, the Italian Geographical Society, which had never been questioned on the matter, organised a workshop on territorial reorganisation¹⁵ during which it put forward its own proposal based on a single ‘vast area’ territorial level, moving away from consolidated studies on Italian urban framework in which it had participated, in agreement with the National Research Council (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche-Progetto Strategico Quadroter 1999). The methodological foundation was given from the identification of Urban Systems (called Regional Platforms), starting from the aggregation of Local Work Systems¹⁶ in Territorial Communities, based on the logic networks of gravitation → connection → relational capital. Meanwhile, the identification of the urban polarities was based on the political and socio-cultural roles exercised in the regional context, as well as on an appropriate demographic threshold and subsequent critical mass in terms of economic potential.

There was a tendency to rationalise the administrative division based on the actual social relations and the mid-range local activities, from which it seemed plausible to reconstruct the new overall layout of the territory, obviously by means of multi-sectorial reform processes. The proposal caught the interest of not only the media but also the Minister for Regional Affairs and Autonomies in Letta’s

¹²The Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli (1993) proposed the aggregation of Piedmont and Liguria; Trentino-Alto Adige, Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia; Tuscany and Umbria; Marche, Abruzzo and Molise; Puglia and Basilicata, for which the latter, as an alternative, followed the bipartition proposal between Campania and Puglia already proposed by Compagna.

¹³Still at the beginning of the 90s, the Lega Nord proposed a federal plan to aggregate Piedmont and Liguria; western Emilia and Tuscany; eastern Emilia, Romagna, Marche, Umbria and Lazio (excluding Rome, which would have become a District of the Capital); Abruzzo, Puglia and Basilicata (Buzzetti 1996).

¹⁴In the following legislature, the Constitutional Law proposal put forward (December 2014) by MP Roberto Morassut, from the Democratic Party, would have the same issue, which aimed to reduce the number of regions to the following 12: Alpina (Aosta Valley, Piedmont, Liguria); Lombardy (unaffected); Emilia-Romagna (now, including the Province of Pesaro); Triveneto (Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano); the Appennines (Tuscany, Umbria, the Province of Viterbo); the Adriatic (Abruzzo, the Provinces of Ancona, Macerata, Ascoli, Rieti and Isernia); Rome Capital (the Province of Roma); the Tyrrhenian (Campania, the Provinces of Latina and Frosinone); the Levante (Puglia, the Provinces of Campobasso and Matera); the Ponente (Calabria, the Province of Potenza); Sicily; Sardinia.

¹⁵*The territorial reorganisation of the State Reflections and proposals of Italian geography* held on 8 March 2013 in the Society’s headquarters, in the Palazzetto Mattei in Villa Celimontana, Rome.

¹⁶The Local Work Systems, according to the official definition from the National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT): ‘represent a territorial grid, the borders of which, regardless of the territory’s administrative structure, are defined using the flows of daily journeys from home to work (commutes) stated on the general Census of the population and homes’. This method of regionalising the Italian territory was proposed for the first time in 1986, by a work group from ISTAT, Tuscany Regional Economic Programming Institute (IRPET) and the English University of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, on 1981 Census data. Since 2001, ISTAT has pursued research on Local Work Systems in collaboration with the Economics Department at the University of Parma.



Fig. 4.1 Territorial reorganisation hypothesis on 31 areas. (Italian Geographical Society)

government, Graziano Delrio, who urged the Geographical Society to improve the proposal, for it then to be abandoned, maybe due to the regulatory impact that it would have involved.

The Geographical Society, still continuing to develop the project, reached a double hypothesis on the territorial organisation of 31 areas (Fig. 4.1) or alternatively of 36 areas¹⁷ (Fig. 4.2), which in turn became a subject of interest for local

¹⁷This second hypothesis leaves the current administrative spaces of linguistic minorities unaltered (Aosta Valley, the Province of Bolzano) and proposes a series of alternatives to regionalising the North-East and Centre. Moreover, it recovers the “Straight Conurbation” (Reggio Calabria-



Fig. 4.2 Territorial reorganisation hypothesis on 36 areas. (Italian Geographical Society)

parliamentarians and administrators, even in the event of ascribing these areas with the regional competences included in the Constitution.

Meanwhile, Renzi's government initiated a Constitutional Bill (no. 1429/2014) which envisaged the abolition of the Provinces and the institution of the Metropolitan Cities (see note 9), emphasising the tools of the agreement, union and merging of the Municipalities already included in the Consolidated Law on Local Authorities

Messina) previously proposed by Gambi (1965b, p. 513), which would provide substance to the metropolitan qualification of the two cities envisaged by the recent regional and national legislation (see above).

(Legislative Decree no. 267/2000) with the purpose of streamlining and making administrative and governance duties more efficient. The division of competences between the State and the Regions was also revisited, with a clear tendency to recentralise many of them, amongst which was territorial governance.

The provisions of the constitutional reform on the territorial reorganisation were anticipated by the Law no. 56/2014 (*Provisions for Metropolitan Cities, Provinces, Municipality merging and unions*), which regulated the Metropolitan Cities of Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Bari, Naples and Reggio Calabria in compliance with what was set out in the 2001 constitutional reform, to be also valid as adoptable principles by the Regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sicily and Sardinia in line with the corresponding special statutes. The territories of the Metropolitan Cities were identified as coinciding with those from the respective Provinces, without prejudice to the potential adhesion initiative to them on behalf of the Municipalities located in the adjacent Provinces.

The parliamentary process for the reform was concluded and approved on 12 April 2016, but the Referendum which it was subjected to, on 4 December of the same year, recorded a majority (almost 60%) of votes against.

The studies conducted by the Geographical Society, which have dedicated the 2014 Annual Report to administrative layout, have however left their mark, showing the ability to design response that could be successfully implemented for the territorial structure of the Country with the purpose of promoting the meeting between public administration, social demand, job and value creation (Società Geografica Italiana 2015).

4.6 The Geographers Have Worked on Planning Nonetheless

Despite all of the aforementioned limitations, the geographers worked on territorial planning, though in a non-organic way.

According to this essay, the author has encouraged data collection on this activity since the 1990s, via the Italian Geographers Association (AGeI), providing a survey where the requesting institution, type of plan or programme and the subject of the contribution provided by the geographer can be declared. The response rate was quite low: around 20 (less than 5% of the geographers registered to the AGeI), for a total of 54 works; even by direct knowledge, it can be argued that not all those that carried out this professional activity have answered.

On the one hand, however, the marginal role of geographers in planning is confirmed, but, on the other, the content is interesting, mainly due to the trans-scaling (from regional level, and in some cases national or transnational, to local) and the wide diversification type of the plans or programmes which the geographers themselves were called upon for contributions, sometimes too abroad (see Table 4.1). The Regions (11 works) and local bodies predominate all the commissioning institutions, but not only administrative bodies (Municipalities, 14 works, and Provinces, 7 works) but also technical bodies ('vast area' and water management Consortiums);

Table 4.1 Italian Geographers' planning activity (Own elaboration)

Geographer	Client institution	Year	Type of plan/Programme	Area	Aim of the activity
Massimiliano Bencardino	Municipality of Casalbore (Avellino)	2004–05	Municipal Urban Planning	Municipal	Strategic Environmental Assessment
	Municipality of San Marco dei Cavoti (Benevento)	2004–05	Municipal Urban Planning	Municipal	Strategic Environmental Assessment
	Municipality of Morigerati (Salerno)	2006	Productive Settlement Planning	Municipal	Strategic Environmental Assessment
	Ingegneria e Sistemi S.r.l. (Naples)	2007	<i>Municipal Urban Planning/Implementing Urban Planning</i>	Municipal	Strategic Environmental Assessment
	Applied research in agriculture consortium	2008–09	Integrated Rural Planning (Campania Region)	Regional	Impact analysis
	Sonted S.r.l. (Telese – Benevento)	2009	Strategic planning (Benevento City)	Municipal/ town	Territorial analysis/ thematic maps
	Municipality of San Mauro la Bruca (Salerno)	2017	Strategic planning	Local	Territorial analysis
	Solofrana vast area (Avellino)	2017	Strategic planning	Vast area	Territorial analysis
Marina Bertoncin	Enel S.p.A.	2017	Power Station reconversion (Polesine Camerini)	Economic/ energy	Project assessment
Marina Bertoncin, Andrea Pasc	Po-Adige Delta consortium	2016	Foce contract and internal areas	Vast area	Territorial planning
Sergio Conti	European Union Piedmont Region	2000 2009–10	<i>Régionspériphériquesmaritimes</i> Programme Identification of project territories	Regional Regional	Project structuring Economic-territorial analysis
Fabio Faticenti, Alberto Meelli	Province of Perugia	2003	Territorial coordination plan	Vast area	Landscape analysis

Fiorenzo Ferlaino	Piedmont region	2016	Regional territorial plan	Regional	Territorial analysis
Viviana Ferrario	Piedmont region	2017	Extractive activity regional plan	Regional	Implementation study
	Veneto region	2007–13	Regional territorial coordination plan	Regional	Landscape analysis
Dino Gavinelli	Municipality of Sesto San Giovanni (Milan)	2016–17	Urban regeneration project	Municipal/ town	Selection committee
	Municipality of Montesilvano (Pescara)	1996–97	Variant of master plan	Municipal	Territorial analysis
Piergiorgio Landini	Autonomous Institute of Public Housing in Ascoli Piceno	1999	Urban requalification and sustainable territory development Programme (Valle del Tronto)	Vast area	Territorial analysis
	Province of Chieti	2001	Territorial coordination plan	Vast area	Scientific-technical coordination
	Municipality of Lanciano (Chieti)	2000–01	Urban traffic plan	Municipal/ town	Territorial analysis
	Abruzzo region	2001–03	Regional urban planning bill	Regional	Coordination
	Province of Chieti	2002–03	Productive activity territorial plan	Vast area	Economic-territorial analysis
	Province of Teramo	2007–09	Area plan (lower and middle Tordino Valley)	Vast area	Economic-territorial analysis
	Municipality of san Giovanni Teatino (Chieti)	2008	Urban traffic and mobility plan	Municipal/ town	Territorial analysis
	Province of Pescara	2008–09	Integrated territorial project	Vast area	Territorial analysis
	Province of Teramo	2011	Territorial coordination plan	Vast area	Territorial analysis

Table 4.1 (continued)

Geographer	Client institution	Year	Type of plan/Programme	Area	Aim of the activity
Mirella Loda	Municipality of Florence	2005	Strategic plan	Municipal/ town	Territorial analysis
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	2011	Strategic master plan (Herat – Afghanistan)	Urban	Territorial analysis
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	2013	Sustainable urban mobility plan (Herat – Afghanistan)	Urban	Project
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	2013	Development plan (Herat – Afghanistan)	Urban	Planning/coordination/ territorial analysis
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	2015	Sustainable destination plan of historical cities (Myanmar)	Urban/ regional	Coordination/territorial analysis
	Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation	2016	Strategic plan (Bamiyan Valley – Afghanistan)	Regional	Coordination/territorial analysis
Lucia Masotti	River Po inter-regional agency	2005– 07	Long-term framework agreement	Regional	Geo-historical analysis
	River Po inter-regional agency	2008– 10	Long-term framework agreement	Regional	Geo-historical analysis
	Veneto Region	2011	Long-term framework agreement	Regional	Geo-historical analysis
Maria Mautone, Maria Ronza	Province of Naples	2005– 06	Territorial coordination plan	Vast area	Territorial analysis
Mario Neve	Nomisima S.p.A.	2002	Urban requalification projects	Urban	Assessment
	Nomisima S.p.A.	2006	Provincial strategic plan (Ferrara)	Vast area	Assessment
	Nomisima S.p.A.	2006	Development plan (Mantova)	Vast area	Assessment
Marco Picone	Sicily Region	2001	Regional landscape territorial plan	Regional	Territorial analysis
	Municipality of Palermo	2016– 17	Requalification of green urban areas project	Municipal/ town	Organisation of participatory processes
Andrea Riggio	Municipality of Sora (Frosinone)	2013	Sustainable energy action plan	Municipal	Territorial analysis

Maria Luisa Ronconi	Calabria Region	2000	GIS for urban requalification (Cosenza)	Urban	Territorial analysis/ thematic maps
	Calabria Region	2001–04	Regional civil protection Programme	Regional	Territorial analysis/ thematic maps
	Ministry of Environment, Safeguarding for Territory and Sea / CNLSD	2004–06	Planning of areas at risk of droughts and desertification	Regional/ national	Territorial analysis
Emilia Samo	Calabria Region	2007	Integrated strategic project – regional ecological network	Regional	Thematic maps
	Ministry of Environment, Safeguarding for Territory and Sea/CNLSD	2007–13	Mitigation of the desertification processes (Calabria)	Regional	Scientific responsibility/territorial analysis
	Calabria Region	2013–17	Integrated management system for coastal erosion	Regional	Socio-economic analysis
	Municipality of Campobasso	2007	Territorial strategic plan	Municipal/ town	Demographic analysis
	University Delegate	2013	Technical round table for metropolitan cities	Regional	Functional analysis
	Municipality of Catania	2017	Permanent technical round table for urban planning	Municipal/ town	Economic-territorial analysis
	Municipality of Catania	2002–04	Master plan	Municipal/ town	Methodology
Mauro Spotorno	Beigua Park Institution (Genoa-Savona)	2000	Park plan	Vast area	Territorial analysis/ thematic maps

thus there are some State Ministries (Foreign Affairs, Environment), companies (amongst which is Enel, the biggest electric company in the Country) and private research centres (Nomisma, amongst the most recognised in the economic field).

The distribution over time almost completely falls in the 2000s. This seems to be regular and, as a result, decline or development of the geographers' professional activity in this field cannot be spoken about.

As for the types of plans and programmes, and therefore the respective spatial areas, more than half of the cases concern Territorial Coordination Plans and Sector Plans (agriculture, extractive activities and industrial activities) or Thematic Plans (hydrography, desertification, coastal erosion, landscape, urban systems) on a regional scale or even 'vast area', provincial and district level. The plans on a municipal scale are also multiple: urban planning, productive settling, urban regeneration, traffic and mobility.

Some interesting planning cases are highlighted commissioned abroad, in critical Countries such as Afghanistan and Myanmar, by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and the EU *Régions périphériques maritimes* programme. The lack of plans in protected areas, in the environmental field, is however surprising (only one, of the answers received), whilst there is a case of energy reconversion.

The geographer's role, as stated at the beginning, is predominantly that of a territorial analyst. From the details in the responses and those which are not reported on the table, it is inferred, however, as such a role is variably interpreted, relating to either the type of instrument or the scientific specialisation of the individual geographers whose the institution has wanted to use. What we simply define as territorial analysis generally comprises the physical features (geomorphological, hydrographical), demographic performance and settlement patterns, but often economic resources and localisation of productive activities are added; in some cases the analysis is geo-historical, whilst in others it is focused on cultural heritage and particularly the landscape.

There are some cases in which the geographer has had coordination and planning roles and was surely valued for their wide territorial knowledge and abilities.

Finally, thematic mapping is often produced, another tool that belongs to geography, and in particular for the developments linked to automatic mapping and the specialisation in managing the Geographical Information Systems (GIS).

4.7 Potential Convergences for the Future

In conclusion, it can be said that the relationship between geography and territorial planning in Italy is currently in a developmental phase, to the extent that the latter is going through a radical redesigning. In the past, despite integrated, systematic and strategic planning concepts introduced at the end of the 1960s, with the aim of strengthening its unitary and interdisciplinary character (Archibugi 2007), planning

has from time to time remained environmental, landscape, economical and above all, urban, emphasising the disciplinary separation rather than resolving it.

In this context, as was said, geography was left out of policies and planning practices and the wide geographical knowledge has scarcely been applied in them. The dichotomy between Social Sciences and Design Sciences, typical in the Anglo-Saxon area, has seen geographers more restricted to distributive and cartographic analysis prior to the plan. So, in the structuralist phase that has covered a great part of the twentieth century, geographical analysis has provided a functional support to the hierarchy of plans, adapting the regional concepts arising from the urban and industrial polarisation theories, whilst the planning was tighter in the legal restrictions, adapting the territory according to a logic of zoning responding more to the interests of strong powers than to the processes that were really under way.

At the end of the century, when the revolutionary geo-political changes and the subsequent transformation of inter-regional relations in the framework of global expansion orientated planning towards a substantial reassessment of the territorial knowledge, opportunities for a renewed contribution from geography emerged, the wide disciplinary spectrum of which is extended from the physical and environmental invariants to the economic activities and relations, with an interpretation of the differential and interactive dynamics that connected the subjects to the characteristics of the individual spatial contexts. In that way, a point of view that is internal to those contexts has been progressively adopted, proving the importance of the relations that link the actors to the territory and assessing the capacity of orientating the development processes.

The idea of territory as a cultural affiliation product and project created from the collective action of the subjects that work within it highlights the public support function for decisions, which finds expression in the trend for decentralisation of the competences of State powers, with the overcoming of the traditional planning styles from the top and the consolidation of new concerted planning styles inspired by the principles of subsidiarity, territorial equalisation and co-planning.

The geographical theory, in close inter-relation with other social disciplines, has refined models that, revisiting and innovating the classic definition of humanised region, propose the analysis of the relations between social interaction, territorial potential, governance and development in local systems. The latter are defined as a network of subjects which, due to the specific relationships that they maintain amongst themselves and with the environment in which they work (the so-called *milieu* of French geographical tradition), actually act as a collective subject. This is the condition for identifying the extension and the limits of the corresponding regional group, such as to respect 'the conditions of necessary geographical proximity so that the local networks of subjects capable of collective action are formed based on relations that implicate direct reciprocal knowledge, trust, sharing of contextual knowledge, interests and projects linked to a territorial, common capital and that guarantee a large participation' (Dematteis and Governa 2005, p. 32).

As a result, bottom-up planning is favoured, without having to completely reject the use of methods and tools of a functionalist extension: the conceptual progress is in the transition from a hierarchal point of view, which subjected the local planning

choices to those assumed by higher-level institutions, to the reticular approach, which favours the complementarity and the integration of the territorial transformation and development actions via scale crossing, until a global scale (Landini 2015, pp. 40–41).

In the Italian political framework, which is unfortunately characterised by a long inertia, in 2013, the National Urban Planning Institute addressed a plea to the political and parliamentary forces, holding that the territorial and urban plan must be the one to drive the transformation processes. It is a plan, however, reformed in a decidedly structural programmatic sense, and not in conformation with building rights, which will guarantee the necessary vision to the future of territorial layouts and which will constitute, for public projects, the institutional tool for counteracting the urban sprawl and the growing land consumption: a plan based on sustainable mobility systems that interconnect the new urban nodes, centres of excellence functions, of essential services and of public space, as well as on a territorial ecological network that will connect the areas with greater environmental potential, maximising the effects of regeneration of reproducible resources and the safeguarding of non-reproducible ones. The institute therefore asks for a national law on the fundamental principles of territorial governance, which will reform the obsolete current urban planning legislation (see above).

The geographers have expressed their full agreement on these principles. Is it not yet the time for a real convergence of the two disciplines, and of the major scientific institutions that represent them, to attain the attention and those specific measures deemed urgent from the ever clearer collapse of the Italian territory, both natural and constructed, which is inexorably reached?

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