

Drivers of internationalization of territorial development. The case of Albania

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SCIENTIFIC INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

SCIENCE FOR YOUTH

May 2022
Tirana



Politecnico
di Bari



PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCE "SCIENCE FOR YOUTH"

Tirana, on 27-28 May 2022

This conference brought together Albanian and International researchers from different areas, such as: Psychology, Education, Sports and Wellbeing, Architecture, Creative Industries, Computer Science, Economy, Tourism, Law, and Political Science, focusing on applied research gravitating toward youth issues in the contemporary world. The postmodern world poses significant challenges to finding smart, rapid, and flexible solutions to complex problems. The Covid 19 pandemic was and still is, a critical global issue, affecting not only population health and wellbeing, but also education, economy, human rights, social policies etc. Youth represent the fraction of the population which will be particularly affected by challenges, changes, and innovation in the near future.

Keynote speakers of the conference were distinguished international professors and professionals in their fields who brought their knowledge and expertise from very diverse cultural contexts.

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DRIVERS OF INTERNATIONALIZATION OF TERRITORIAL DEVELOPMENT. THE CASE OF ALBANIA

Erblin Berisha Ph.D.

Politecnico di Torino, DIST - Interuniversity Department
of Regional and Urban Studies and Planning

E-mail: erblin.berisha@polito.it

Saimir Shtylla Ph.D.

Barleti University, Faculty of Applied Research and Creative Industries,
Department of Creative Industries

E-mail: s.shtylla@umb.edu.al

ABSTRACT

Mechanisms and trajectories triggered by globalization have largely influenced territorial development across the globe. Countries have tried to address territorial development with alternative fortunes due to the interlinked international and domestic economic, political, and social contingencies. In terms of sustainable land use, there have been enormous differences between the developed and under-developed countries. To overcome these territorial management imbalances, international actors have activated a number of initiatives aiming for a more coherent territorial development across the globe. Relevant actors like the United Nations Agencies, international development agencies, and the European Union EU have launched numerous territorial agendas aiming the assessment of the necessary actions to achieve a major balanced use of the territory. This paper explores the path of the drivers of a progressive internationalization of spatial planning practices. Its focus will be on Albania, which has recently introduced the reform of its national spatial development system, aiming at addressing its territorial challenges.

Keywords: *Spatial Planning, International Actors, Albania, Territorial Development, Multilevel Approach*

INTRODUCTION

In light of the multiple and complexities of the challenges at global level, the responses that public administrations have to give at local level must be immediate and efficient. For this purpose, involving various actors becomes very important to properly address the strategies and actions throughout the territory to achieve the expected outcomes. Besides the duration of the measures (short, medium or long term), attention towards sustainability in relation to the availability and exploitation of local resources is very important, too.

Important documents at global level such as the United Nations UN Urban Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals SDG represent important inputs for countries to properly address their territorial development and it is up to local administration to translate them into actions. But in the European Union (EU), where territorial development and sustainability are top priorities, important documents have been elaborated to contribute further to the achievement of these global goals. Even though it is not an EU member state, Albania is concentrating lots of efforts to efficiently control its territory and contribute as a Western Balkan country to the achievement of these common goals.

The paper is structured around three sections. After this brief introduction, a literature review has been examined to motivate the importance of the multi-level territorial development approach from an international perspective. Next, there will be described the developed methodological approach to systematically describe the relation between of the interlink between external and internal logics of development. There will be paid particular attention to the territorial development in Albania describing the current institutional framework and the path it should take to structure its multi-level territorial development in relation to such analysis. Finally, a concluding section, reflecting on the impact of the progressive internationalization of planning practices.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Territorial development is becoming more and more complex nowadays because of the variety of issues and actors involved, including various levels of interactions mobilizing interlinked economic and power relations. Since the end of World War II, urbanization processes have grown simultaneously with market interests and speculations (Berisha, Cotella, Janin Rivolin, & Solly, 2021). With the growing impact of globalisation, countries have tried on one hand to become players in the 'globalisation game' (Nayyar, 1997) and on the other to attract more and more international investments (Fischer, 1998). Furthermore, globalisation has been the driver of change for those 'transition countries' that since the beginning of the 90s have moved from top-down centered to market economy (Dawson, 2003; Berisha and Cotella, 2021). Indeed, transition countries have been required to adopt a series of reforms in order to adapt their institutional framework in relation to their new socio-economic reality (Berisha, Colic, Cotella, & Nedović-Budić, 2018) (Berisha, Cotella, & Solly, 2021a), (2021b), somehow influencing on their territorial development, as well. Although path-dependent, territorial development is based on complex issues and conditions that often cannot be explained referring exclusively to a specific context (Berisha, 2018). Usually, it is linked with the combination of endogenous (local) and exogenous (global) factors (Berisha, 2018). In this perspective, endogenous factors are referred to the complex of: (i) socio-economic and political environment; (ii) legal and administrative structures and institutions; (iii) cultural tradition; (iv) historical legacy and; (v) actors' interests. On the other hand, exogenous factors might be seen as: (i) introduction of disruptive new technologies and concepts; (ii) global economic crises; (iii) international military conflict; (iv) regime collapse; (v) change of the economy's environment (new-liberal perspective and free market) or other kinds of external shock. Returning again to territorial development, it can be stated that at some extent the process of progressive internationalization of territorial development, has interested all countries around the world. The well-known statement "think globally and act locally" is very actual because unconsciously everyone is involved to achieve global goals even though the range of action is local.

For a deeper analysis on how the internationalization of territorial development (and spatial planning) is occurring, the following section will introduce the methodological framework to describe the possible influence modalities.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

From a methodological perspective, it is interesting to observe how the international context can affect the territorial development in a specific country. As previously mentioned, territorial development is a combination of endogenous and exogenous factors (Figure 1). From a last decades' literature review emerged various analyses regarding the impact of the international context. According to (Knill & Lehmkuhl, 2012), international context can mobilize various types of conditionalities such as: (i) legislative, resulting with adoption of new legislations or improvement of the existing ones; (ii) political, where actors may influence political orientation of the domestic political arena by imposing external political models; (iii) economic, by altering the possibilities of domestic actors through the redistribution of resources and powers; (iv) cognitive, by influencing on the public debate through the introduction of new hegemonic concepts (Servillo & Van Den Broeck, 2012). Looking at the exogenous and endogenous dichotomy from the territorial development perspective, exogenous factors can later affect: (i) political orientation - the international political predisposition (and will) to address the issue of territorial development in a more sustainable way; (ii) geo-economic interest - the interest of international actors and players towards a specific context by moving investments; (iii) hegemonic concepts - diffusion of international concepts and the predisposition of local context to be influenced from them. Among the endogenous factors that facilitate or hamper territorial development there may emerge: (i) the division of administrative power, affecting the nature and structure of the administrative arrangement and how power (and responsibilities) is shared among the various level; (ii) the spatial planning system, hence, its various levels, authorities and documents, and; (iii) local contingencies, hence, at the level of economic development and the ability to mobilize investments; including the social predisposition towards a more balanced

territorial development and the political will towards a sustainable territorial development perspective.

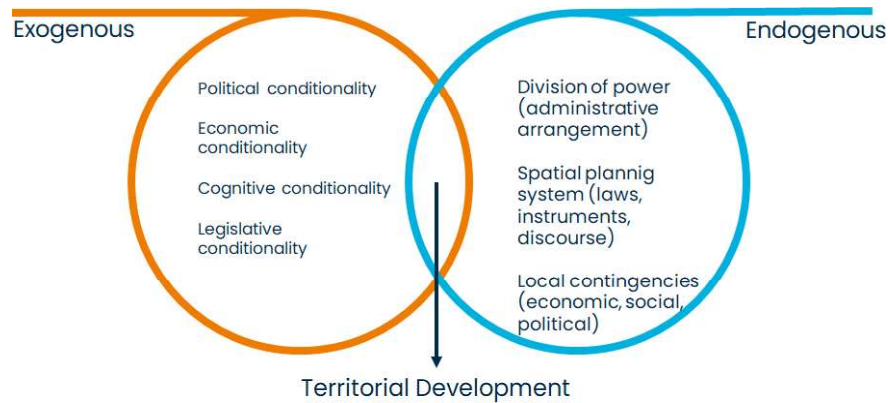


Figure 1. Combination of endogenous and exogenous factors as drivers of territorial development
- source: the authors

For European countries (see Figure 2), the internationalization of territorial development can be seen from three interlinked levels: (i) global level – intended as “global influence” where hegemonic concepts, programmes, political agendas are framed; (ii) EU level - intended as influence from the European Union; (iii) Country level - intended as a “recipient” where external notions are, translated, adopted and implemented.

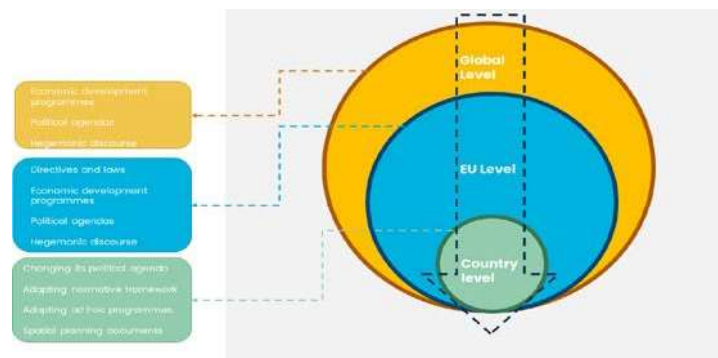


Figure 2. Methodological framework of the drivers of internationalization of territorial development practices - source: the authors

Each planning level can mobilize various channels to promote territorial development. More precisely, at the global level it is possible to identify several channels of influence defining: (i) the global political agenda on sustainable development; (i) economic development programmes, that support the implementation of specific political agendas, and; (iii) hegemonic discourse where is based their action and political decision. At the EU level, due to the prerogatives that the EU offers as a regional (and global) player, beside setting economic programmers, political agenda and promotion of hegemonic discourse, it has also the discretionarily to establish EU directives in several sectors that must be transposed to each member or candidate country's legislation. In response to that, each domestic context can then translate this external influences by: (i) changing its political agenda; (ii) adapting normative framework; (iii) adopting *ad hoc* programmes and; (iv) introducing new spatial planning documents. Based on this methodological framework, the following section will briefly present the main channels of influence by taking into account: the global context, the EU impacts and how Albania has translated these external stimuli.

DISCUSSION

Since their establishment, the role of international organizations in the definition of domestic territorial development policies has been growing progressively. Based on the methodology, in Figure 3, are illustrated the channels of influence from the exogenous context that may influence the Albanian territorial development.

At the global level, the most recent global documents, the UN Urban Agenda 2030 and the SDG remind us that current urbanization rates need to be seriously taken into consideration to not endanger the resources available. The New Urban Agenda incorporates a new recognition of the correlation between good urbanization and development. In light of the growing urbanization trend that will lead urban population to double (UN, 2017), the risk of inefficient and improper use of the resources available will not lead to a safe and sustainable future. On the other hand, the SDG document with its 17 goals, represents a further reminder to the possible threats in case of poor prevention and attention towards the

related risks. By showing a specific interest in it, Albania was among the first countries to translate in local language the Urban Agenda's guidelines with the scope to support local practitioners and civil servants to be closer on the agenda content and challenges.

At the community level, the EU is making a significant contribution in the elaboration of common territorial development logics. Since the late 90s, among the important documents developed is the European Spatial Development Perspective ESDP, an informal document adopted with the purpose to define principles and guidelines of territorial development at European level. Another important document is the Territorial Agenda starting from the first version in 2007 and followed by "Territorial Agenda 2020" and "Territorial Agenda 2030" elaborated respectively in 2011 and 2020. There are marked concepts of equity - "A fair Europe" - and preserving the environment in the meantime - "A greener Europe". In coherence with the ESDP, the territorial agendas outline the development guidelines defined over time by the European Council in a spatial perspective. Along with the development of spatial visions, the ministers of the EU member countries have also focused on the adoption of planning documents and agendas of a purely urban nature capable of addressing the development conditions of European urban areas. It includes "The Green Book on the Urban Environment" (1990) which recognizes the problem of seamless urban development; the document "Towards an urban agenda in the European Union" (1997) which emphasizes the importance of the European citizens' participation in the future development of their cities and inviting to reflect on the necessity for new mechanisms that improve access and interaction with the decision-making process. The "Framework for action for sustainable urban development in the European Union" (1998) invites for a reflection on the aspects of local governance and the necessity for its horizontal and vertical coordination. They are flanked by more strategic documents such as "The Leipzig Charter (2007) on sustainable city development, the Amsterdam Pact (2016) as a European urban agenda and, last but not least, the" New Leipzig Charter "(2020).

At the country level, since the end of the communist regime, Albania has made a series of reforms to regulate its spatial planning policy in relation

to its new territorial configuration. Unfortunately, the transition from the socialist to the pluralist system in early 90s has not been easy to handle because the necessary transformations at institutional level revealed serious problems in terms of territorial planning and governance. Indeed, the lack of attention towards the public interest for a larger private initiative, resulted with the widespread informality, in particular nearby the most important cities of the country. The intention to gain control of the territory through the latest territorial division and necessary framework to regulate planning activity is facing other important barriers when it comes to translate these policies into concrete actions at local level. The gaps between the planning activity and their implementation are linked to the limited financial and human resources. Despite the will to stimulate various sectors of the economy, sectoral policy orientation, often promoted by the central government as strategically-important investments have brought unbalanced territorial development and evident regional disparities. At the local level, poor cooperation and absence of a place-based governance, results in major conflicts and marking of centralization trends. The unstable governance, intended as a sum of various problems (informality, corruption, and unstable fiscal policy) deepened this crisis further (Shtylla & Berisha, 2019). Despite reforms of 1993, 1998 and 2009, only the last adopted in 2014 was able to trigger an effective change in the planning system from the ground up. Among the novelties introduced, the law establishes two comprehensive plans at national and local level.

At the national level, the law foresees as main document the General National Plan GNP whose purposes are: (i) definition of principles and guidelines for a sustainable and balanced territorial development in coherence to the preservation of the ecosystems, biodiversity, natural and cultural heritage; (i) orientation of the objectives of national, regional and local planning trajectory; (ii) coordination, harmonization and orientation of the sectoral development objectives with spatial planning evidences and effects on the territory and; (iii) making territorial development more coherent with the guidelines and principles of ESDP. The plan has thus the objectives to: (i) balance national and local interests with the territorial development's necessities; (ii) define the intensity of land use

and the extent of natural systems, construction, agricultural and urban areas; (iii) define programs and measures to ensure urban regeneration, environmental protection, sustainable development of natural resources, rural land and landscape; (iv) define public infrastructures and utilities and; (v) protect and use natural and historical areas. While at the local level, the law establishes the Local General Plan (LGP) as a tool that every municipality on the national territory should approve to regulate its spatial planning activity. Nowadays only 51 municipalities have their LGPs approved (AKPT, 2022). The importance of these plans is to guide toward a sustainable and long-term development in relation to resources available in the territory in conformity with the GNP's principle where the territory is the most important asset.

As described, the recent planning documents are fully aligned, at least on paper, with the logics of international territorial agenda where notions like sustainability, coordination, integration, environmental protection are well incorporated. Like in other contexts worldwide, the biggest challenge is their translation into concrete actions in line with the sustainable development trajectories.

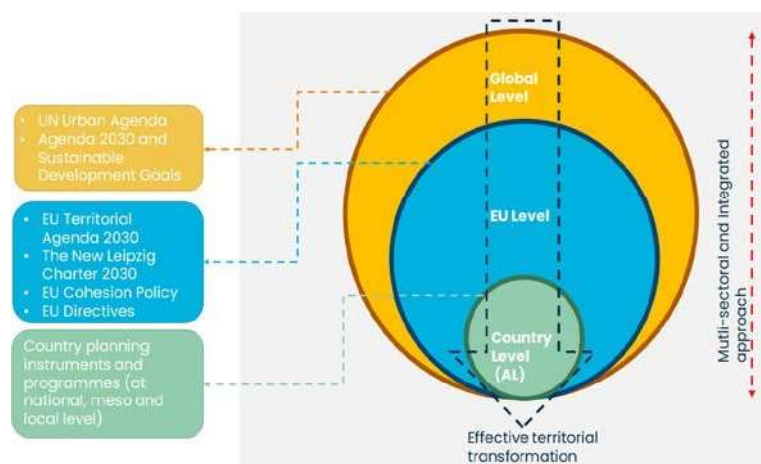


Figure 3. Methodological framework of the drivers of internationalization of territorial development in the case of Albania- - source: the authors

CONCLUSIONS

It is undeniable that globalization has influenced land use rates and territorial development trajectories across the world (Lambin & Meyfroidt, 2011) (Solly, Berisha, Cotella, & Janin-Rivolin, 2020) (Solly, Berisha, & Cotella, 2021). The impact of the international context depends in relation to the conditionality's. Albania, as a country in transition, the international context has played a pivotal role in the address of the main economic and social reforms as well influencing at some extent the modalities of land use management. By adopting a number of territorial and urban agendas, international actors have been influential to some extent both in the normative dimension as well as to what is concerned with spatial planning documents. Although the process of internationalization of territorial development practices in Albania has registered some progress, there is a need for a further and more structural integration of notions and practices at each territorial level. Albania, as other Western Balkans countries, can benefit from the application of a more integrated approach where global concepts can be digested and translated locally (Berisha & Cotella, 2021), (Berisha, Cotella, & Solly, 2021a), (2021b). However, the process of transposing should be carefully followed with a comprehensive understanding and contextualisation in relation to the local needs and priorities, otherwise the “copy and past” approach can hamper and limit the sustainable use of land.

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