PARTICIPATORY GOVERNANCE FOR SUSTAINABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT: HOW MUCH DOES THE ‘GENIUS LOCI’ MATTER?

Mara Del Baldo *, Paola Demartini **

* Department of Economics, Society and Politics, University of Urbino Carlo Bo, Italy
** Department of Business Studies, University of Roma Tre, Italy


Abstract

There is a global urgency for territorial governance approaches based on multi-actor and multilevel policy coherence for sustainable development goals achievement (UN, 2015). The development of forms of participatory governance has been highly recommended stressing the importance of strengthening the cooperation and collaboration at regional, sub regional and local level between the different actors involved (UNGC, 2007). Sustainability effectiveness in society and economy requires institutional contexts that favour public and private actors to enact socially responsible principles as values in policy making, education, taxing, pricing, consumption and use of environmental assets, business, finance, investment and trade (Ashley, 2012a: 182; Ashley, 2012b,c; Wilson & Boyle, 2004; Winter, 2006; Romeiro & Costa, 2010; Bramwell, 2005).

Inter-firm relationships and collaborations between private and public entities represent the basis for the creation of clusters and micro-clusters of firms which are both socially and economically relevant (Hall, 1999 and 2005). Relationships of firms within regions has been explained through concepts such as industrial districts (Becattini, 1990) and clusters (Porter, 2003) positing social relations with a community and the
actors of the territory as a fundamental element of the birth and success of enterprises and a key driver for triggering entrepreneurship.

Recently, the entrepreneurial ecosystem has emerged as a popular concept to explain the birth of high-growth entrepreneurship within regions (Stoker 1988 and 2006; Spigel, 2017). In this regard, one aspect that needs particular attention is the link between ecosystems and the endowments distinguishing a territory, the so-called genius loci (Pellegrini et al., 2015; Del Baldo, 2010 and 2017; Demartini & Del Baldo, 2015; Del Baldo & Demartini, 2012, 2014 and 2016) which is tied to the concept of social capital (the set of personal relationships, trust and cultural, social, institutional and economic bonds) that allow entrepreneurs to benefit from positive externalities (Putnam et al., 1994; Helliwell & Putnam, 1995; Sobel, 2002).

Drawing from these perspectives, which have been nurtured by prior literature, the aim of our study is to investigate the pre-conditions that favour the development of local governance systems aimed at enhancing the regional/local development by leveraging on social capital.

The subject of our analysis – which is empirically based – are the experimental projects promoted by selected Italian Regions, where “hybrid” forms of governance nurtured by alliance among local public institutions, for profit and not-for profit organisations and civil society, are committed to voluntary partnerships which are reciprocally advantageous, and which pursue a common social objective.

The qualitative methodology adopted is the case study (Yin, 2013; Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Flick, 2009), which is a research strategy whose goal is to understand the dynamics characterising a specific phenomenon (multi-actor governance) and which uses the research findings both for knowledge and regulatory purposes.

References


