



Emerging spatialities and eu policy instruments: cases and perspectives

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The European Union discourse on cities has started in the 1980s and since then it has constantly evolved. In particular, in the last decades it has pressed the need for reflecting on what is meant by the notion of 'a city' in itself, considering the peculiarities and internal differentiation of a European urban system in transition.

In an epoch of regional urbanization, there is an increasing intermix of urban and regional concepts and forms. Europe doesn't have any kind of giant mega-cities, instead it shows a combination of some large city regions, dispersed urbanization and a dense network of medium-sized cities, which forms its bulk. Within this pattern the boundaries between urban and rural are often blurred, new spatial forms arises, and challenges typically considered as "urban" (e.g. immigration, gentrification, information technology) invest increasingly also small settlements.

The EU has acknowledged that in both its Urban Agenda and Cohesion Policy: placing urban development within a wider regional context, recognizing the importance of cities of various sizes, the emergence of rescaling processes and the formation of new types of agglomerations. This situation is well reflected in the urban and territorial strategies supported by EU Cohesion Policy (Sustainable Urban Development, Integrated Territorial Investment, Community Led Local Development), with many of them targeting small and medium-sized towns in rural areas, functional urban areas, urban settlements in polycentric networks and urbanised areas.

The question at the heart of this special session is how EU policy instruments conceived in the realm of urban development deal with such intermix of urban and regional concepts and forms, including the growing mismatch between administrative boundaries, urban structures and territorial and urban issues. We are looking for contributions that reflect on that through cases studies, qualitative and quantitative analysis able to shed light on EU supported instruments for emerging spatialities.