



Introduction to the cluster: «Global challenges and local processes: towards strategies for sustainable development»

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■ Introduction

In September 2017, the Unesco Chair in Sustainable Development and Territory Management hosted at *Università di Torino* organized a special session on sustainability at the annual conference of the Italian Regional Science Association (Aisre) to be held at *Università di Cagliari*. The aim was to put together and try to build a bridge among different theoretical, methodological and disciplinary scientific traditions, ranging from sociology to forestry to regional science. Each from its own perspective, these disciplines have been addressing for years the challenge of linking sustainability and economic development. The objective was to offer an opportunity of discussion about the potential empowerment of the strategies adopted to face the persisting economic crisis that may be derived from a strong focus on the social, economic and environmental impacts (i.e the sustainability) of current models of production, distribution and consumption. The attention to be paid to the sustainability of these models in fact should be considered not only as the mere result of the grown awareness about the urgent risks for the environment connected to human activity, but as a crucial issue related to the scarcity of resources with a strong economic value in terms of costs and benefits. In other words, the idea was to propose a discussion about concepts and strategies for sustainability not (only) as an issue to deal with but as an opportunity to be exploited.

The Aisre annual conference seemed a proper framework to host this discussion, on the one hand because regional sciences may play a crucial role in linking the global dimension of economic, environmental and social phenomena with the processes developed at local level and on the other because many disciplines such as public policy, agronomy, geography and geology that provide important elements for designing strategies for sustainable development have a strong place-based profile.

Given this framework, our main concern as social scientists (behind the idea of proposing this session) was about the opportunity to overcome some

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limits that the current approach to sustainable development as “...development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987) may have in dealing with the complexity of sustainability process. In particular, the underestimation of the implicit materiality (i.e. the use and consumption of technologies, material and resources) of the human and social activity and the consequent need of providing governance tool able to put as much as possible individuals and society, more that technologies, at the center of the strategies for sustainability.