

Med in the world: global short overview for a Euro Mediterranean vision



Med In the World, published in 2010 by PLURAL European Study Centre in the framework of Medgovernance project, represents a short but significant attempt to consider the Euro Mediterranean Basin in a global overview, comparing the Med area with other relevant basins in different continents. In fact, the risk of a Eurocentric vision of problems is a traditional tendency to overestimate the European qualitative issues, with a lack of comprehension of the overall world dimension.

Conceived as a follow up to the 2000 larger survey “Europe in the world”, the analysis starts from the dimension of EU territorial cooperation, making a brief catalogue of the Basin macro region concerned by transnational and cross border instruments: i.e., the first comparison is between the Mediterranean and Baltic and North Sea Programmes, also referring to ENPI instruments in the Black sea and transnational initiatives as Interreg IVB Caribbean and Indian Ocean Programme. This section reflects, for the most part, the EU indication about the efficiency and the concrete approach to cohesion and support to competitiveness given by Lisbon and Gothenburg goals and agenda.

Regionalisation and spatial integration

Individuating comparable basin Areas in a global context could appear just more than exercise; nevertheless some processes developed in the different histories of coordinated initiatives might show some key elements of reflection. Anyway, the geopolitical representation of each Area must take into account some crucial dimensions. The first dimension is the regionalization, intended as “regional economic integration” at macro or regional levels, within the globalization process. This level of survey puts the stress on the increase of trade and financial flows between States all situated in the same region (clusters of States). This process can develop itself on a legal basis (free trade agreements, customs unions, common markets...), or without any legal basis, as it is the case in Eastern Asia, where there is no such agreement at macro regional level yet (between Japan and China for instance).

A second dimension is defined within cases of spatial integration, where places are connected by functional economic, demographical, informational, cultural links, eventually without any institutional support. This kind of integration involves contiguous portions of space belonging to different countries. An example of this approach is given by P. Mehlbye (2000) with the definition of European Global Integration Zones (GIZs). The GIZs are clusters of metropolitan urban Areas linked by strategic cooperation programs. This kind of zone offers “high quality global economic functions and services, which enable a high-income level and a well-developed infrastructure”. The core Area is characterized by “a denser and more dynamic territorial structure both in terms of its node (metropolitan regions, cities and towns) and links (external and internal communication network)”.

Territorial integration and structural polycentrism

A third dimension, strictly linked to the second one (for some aspects, on the opposite point of view) is given by territorial integration, which implies several countries in a project set up in order to face the process of globalization. In other words, the necessity to face globalization and, consequently, to reach a relevant size (for example, United States or China) encourages numerous countries to be part of regional integration zones. As institutional infrastructure, the European Union may constitute an appropriate model.



The process of integration could also be based on lighter ties and fewer cooperation programs, involving only a few key sectors, economic and financial for instance, like trade agreements or customs unions, or in an EU cooperation framework, Medgovernance project is intended as a pilot experimentation. Territorial cooperation is supposed to contribute to balanced regional development, European competitiveness and sustainable development, and to facilitate new urban-rural partnerships.

A fourth dimension is represented by urban relations of polycentric systems. These relations can be identified as a) institutional or b) based on voluntary co-operation; Institutional polycentricism relies on political co-operation, and on the willingness of territorial agencies to work together on joint projects and strategies.

The cities may, or may not, be complementary with regard to urban functions. The Union of the Baltic Cities represents one of the most advantaged models of this approach. The key aspect is given by the fact that two or more cities develop common projects in order to build thematic and joint projects, actions and strategies, to exchange knowledge, best practices etc. and to share equipment and upgrade infrastructure (cultural, social, transport, etc.). Within 2007-2013 Italy France Maritime Program, the Union of Tyrrhenian Cities (UCAT) project follows the same logical framework. On the other hand, the b) structural polycentricism is related to the organization of a territory via spatial patterns of economic or functional relations and flows. Structural relations and flows are not necessarily nested in urban strategies. Rather, they are “spontaneous” products of overlapping housing or labor markets, of specialized networking between urban located actors or simply historically established cultural, economic or social relations. Thus, structural polycentricism may be identified as road, rail and air traffic, financial flows, information flows, etc. The fifth dimension is neighborhood, defined as designating places which are next to each other and eventually form a contiguous ensemble, that is adjoining regions or also territories that are close to each other, but which are not necessarily adjoining, if interactions exist between them.

In the second and the third section of survey the vision becomes wider, taking in consideration the Association Of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the South Asian Association For Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and finally the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

A wider vision

Some key elements of the potentials of the initiatives are given by several factual examples described in the survey. In particular, an example may be the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme (CREDP), devoted to reduce barriers to the increased use of renewable energy, thus reducing the dependence on fossil fuels while contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, or the Immigration and residency Programs in Mercosur. In conclusion, MED IN THE WORLD's attempt is to go beyond the traditional approaches focused on the risks that the Mediterranean area represents for the European countries, trying to transfer the inter-regional cooperation approach based on the individuation and exchange of best practices as opportunity for Euromediterranean of a cultural and economical regeneration, activating dialogue and promoting collaboration with its own neighbours. *Have been is a condition to be, as Braudel said, but also: will be is the destination to be.*

(MED IN THE WORLD is currently available on medgov.net)

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