

PREFACE

Tomasz Domański*

The idea of this special issue of “International Studies. Interdisciplinary Political and Cultural Studies Journal” devoted to innovations in the sustainable development of cities and regions took shape during my meetings at Roma Tre University in Rome. It was also the effect of in-depth international discussions on development models for European cities and regions. An interdisciplinary perspective on the process from the viewpoint of experiences of various countries and a range of disciplines of science has always provided a source of inspiration. Challenges connected with urban development call for an innovative approach to possible solutions to city planning and social, economic, or cultural problems.

This issue presents the experiences of a team of Italian researchers from Roma Tre University, who specialise in spatial planning, urban development policy, architecture, city planning, regional economics, and urban governance. Side by side we offer the Polish perspective presented in papers by Polish researchers from the Department of International Marketing and Retailing at the University of Lodz, who pioneer studies in territorial marketing, the promotion of cities and regions, and building recognisable brands at the national and international level in Poland.

The encounter of the two teams has produced an original view on the role of innovation in the development of cities and regions. Seeking a model of sustainable development for cities opens up a huge space for interdisciplinary projects developed by

* Department of International Marketing and Retailing, Faculty of International and Political Studies, University of Lodz, Poland; Narutowicza 59a, 90-131 Lodz. E-mail: tomdom@uni.lodz.pl.

teams originating from different universities and different fields of science, who collaborate with urban and regional authorities. The comparison of Polish and Italian experiences in this area seems to be very inspiring.

Italian experience

Looking at the Italian experience, it is worth highlighting after Anna Laura Palazzo that in many urban centres we are witnessing a shift from the “Factory City” to the “Knowledge City” model. In this new model the key role should be played by universities and the cultural heritage of cities. Systemic thinking of a city and its regeneration – in close symbiosis with culture and education – started already in the early 1990s. At that time, many cities had to cope with post-industrial areas in their centres or immediate suburbs. In Rome, the problem concerned, *inter alia*, old post-industrial areas that were allocated to a public university, Roma Tre. Besides taking care of post-industrial areas, this ambitious urban project was designed to improve the quality of space and environment (“Progetto urbano Ostiense-Marconi”). It is also an excellent example of private and public partnership, indispensable for such projects, and a paragon of complementary thinking about the city development model in relation to its historic tissue and cultural heritage concentrated in the centre of Rome.

The case of Rome – the key Italian metropolis – is particularly valid for researchers from Roma Tre University. It excellently reflects changes taking place in the outskirts of the largest metropolies. Biancamaria Rizzo analyses the development of green infrastructure between Rome and Tivoli with the example of the Aniene River. It is part of European policies focused on developing green infrastructure in cities and in their outskirts. Tivoli is a good example of a consistent protection of a historic legacy that includes mineral water springs, the beautiful gardens of Villa Adriana and Villa d’Este listed by UNESCO on the list of World Heritage Sites. It is a perfect symbiosis of nature, historic heritage, and multifunctional agriculture. Due to their historic and environmental merits, as well as traditional crops, many Italian regions can be European models of building a sustainable development model. They excellently combine the merits of individual places and the harmonious use of their original resources. For Rome, the region of the Aniene River

provides a natural counterbalance to the scarcity of open space in the city.

Keti Lelo explores the development of creative industries in the strip of land stretching between Rome and the coast. Over the last 30 years metropolitan areas of the largest cities in the world and Europe witnessed intensive development of the creative sector. The processes relate to the development of a knowledge-based economy and seeking a higher quality of life. The development of such a hybrid and multifunctional suburban space is also observed in Rome. This new, important component of growth should be considered when planning local economic, cultural and urban planning policies. The creative sector covers a wide range of small and medium-sized enterprises operating in new media, fashion and design industries, institutions of culture or independent professionals. It is also an increasingly more important source of jobs with a tendency to focus on selected suburban areas. The strip between Rome and the coast offers favourable conditions for the introduction of residential, service and leisure functions. These conditions are available to non-profit organisations and commercial firms from the creative sector (film, photography, publishing, recording studios, fashion, architecture, design, video games, marketing agencies, IT firms, etc.). All of these entities, which operate in the fields of knowledge, in a broad sense, intellectual property and creativity, already represent almost 10% of all businesses in the Rome metropolitan area. Small and medium-sized enterprises dealing with design, IT software and the production of video games have been brought together in a cluster of new media and IT technology.

Federica Benelli and Stefano Magaudda perceive the city from the perspective of local and city planning. They discuss a range of regeneration programmes that have been implemented in the Italian region of Lazio over the period 2011–2016 using funds available under the cohesion policy. Their background in architecture and city planning allows the authors to critically consider opportunities and limitations of these programmes. Pilot programmes of urban regeneration, which link the renovation of architecture with an attempt to solve concrete social problems (unemployment, poverty, neglect, lack of specific services – “Contratti di quartiere” – Neighbourhood Contracts), are crucial in this sense. The case of Aprilia, a town with 70 k inhabitants located 50 km South of Rome, is examined in detail. The proposed programme “Aprilia Innova” involves a complex

regeneration of a post-industrial town with efforts undertaken for the sake of “environmental regeneration: sustainable mobility and energy efficiency; social inclusion and employment; as well as improvement of governance.” These programmes are very much inspiring for Polish cities, in particular for Lodz, where regeneration should be approached in an integrated and comprehensive way. Such an approach delivers goals connected with public space, social innovation, stimulating local entrepreneurship, creating new services and jobs.

Italian perspective of a region

Policies connected with sustainable territorial development that support innovation feature increasingly more prominently in development scenarios of cities and regions. This subject has been taken up by Elena Battaglini with the example of the Italian region of Lazio. Her paper is another analysis of the policy of the Italian government and the EU policy focused on innovation in the so-called less developed regions (“inland areas”). This policy is supposed to offer equal opportunities and improve the quality of life of residents in these regions. The slower pace of development may sometimes be advantageous for them as it helps preserve certain values decisive for a better quality of life. Nevertheless, the precondition is always to guarantee the inhabitants access to specific services decisive for the quality of life. These regions often have unique natural and cultural resources, which gives them an advantage when it comes to the standard of living and environmental assets. Perceiving them as “peripheries” undermines their real assets connected with the quality of the environment, values of the eco-system, landscape or cultural heritage, which stimulate tourism. Similarly to the Europe 2020 programme, the idea of innovation in regard to the sustainable development model assumes: taking advantage of the knowledge-based economy; an integrated approach to managing regional development; the use of regional natural resources, specific landscape, multifunctional agriculture, and sustainable tourism. The example of Lazio demonstrates how innovative clusters connected with tourism, agriculture, production of healthy food or new technologies may become valid vectors in regional development.

Polish experience

Due to their marketing orientation, the Polish authors focus on marketing communication with residents and building a clear brand of a city and region. Tomasz Domański analyses the role of universities in city regeneration and in building its recognisable international brand. He analyses Lodz, a city, which at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries was called the “Paris of the North.” Lodz has an impressive cultural heritage composed of unique industrial buildings, which in the past housed the largest and the most modern textile factories in Europe. Examples of red brick industrial architecture preserved until the present times with industrialists’ villas and mansions (more than 300 scattered across the city) in their immediate neighbourhood are the symbols of that period. Many of these historic premises in the city centre are administered by universities. The latter renovated these historic buildings and equipped them with new functions, open to both local and international environments. Such programmes became feasible as EU funds have been made available to central, regional, and local authorities for orchestrated projects. Universities co-financed these projects. Lodz is a candidate for the host city of the International Specialised Expo 2022. Its proposed theme is urban regeneration and sustainable development that takes care of cultural heritage. The case of Lodz confirms that a well-planned strategy of using EU funds for sustainable city development with the engagement of universities may bear interesting fruit. The strategy serves the continuity of city identity while opening up new development opportunities. The international and recognisable city brand of Lodz links its cultural heritage enriched with new, innovative functions open to interactions with the environment.

The essay by Marta Hereźniak discusses the role of residents in city branding. New technologies have largely facilitated social consultations and an interactive dialogue with the environment. By the same token, new media create new communication possibilities between authorities of the city and its inhabitants. The author provides an overview of various approaches to the analyses of place-based marketing. She accentuates the need of an interdisciplinary view that combines elements of marketing strategy with regional policies and the analysis of development of the service sector. The success of a variety of forms and strategies of communication with local communities always depends on building good relationships

between urban authorities and the citizens. The key challenge for self-governments remains how to stimulate residents' engagement in city branding. The overview of experiences of other cities in the world shows the potential of new media for the ever growing involvement of local communities in city branding.

Michał Sędkowski explores the presence of Polish cities in social media. Their actions in this communication channel are crucial for city branding, communication with residents, and encouraging them to actively participate in city life. Social media are widely used in Poland, which gives self-governments in cities and other entities opportunities to broadly communicate with citizens. This channel is mainly used to inform about what the city offers or as a vehicle for social consultations on new development proposals. However, when analysing the presence of the largest cities in Poland on Facebook, we notice that they focus on presenting their service offer, communication with users, and on promotional activities. City officials communicate with residents on Facebook in a rather static way, meaning they are very cautious. The scope of communication is limited to providing concrete information. At the same time, this channel is not used to study residents' opinions on city projects. The impression is that the authorities of Polish cities and regions have not grasped the opportunity to stimulate inhabitants to express their opinions more openly and to generate specific innovation projects.

Justyna Anders-Morawska, similarly to our Italian colleagues, deals with cultural ecosystems developed around creative places. They include new categories of creative entrepreneurs and partnership networks, which generate new forms of participation in culture. Contemporary cities must redefine their identities by referring to a range of values that they offer to their residents. They also need to consider such notions as: creativity, sustainable development, or creativity vital for urban development. Industrial cities make room for knowledge-based cities. As a result we observe the emergence of the global network of Creative Cities (UNESCO). It already brings together 116 cities and it continues to grow. Justyna Anders-Morawska analyses the new phenomenon of creative cities and creative businesses. She studies the participation of residents in selected Polish regions in different forms of cultural activities. Residents' participation in culture calls for efficient communication developed by institutions of culture as the providers of specific cultural services. From an inhabitants point-of-view the scale of involvement in cultural activities depends directly on income, the

environment in which they live, and the attractiveness of cultural infrastructure. The efficiency of the cultural effort depends on the budgets of institutions of culture, their partnership networks, and the quality of their own infrastructure. She observes various attitudes of regional authorities *vis-à-vis* the development of culture ranging from sceptical to enthusiastic. Apparently, nowadays, Polish regions and cities, thanks to European programmes, have acquired high quality cultural infrastructure but the participation of residents in culture is still unsatisfactory.

Aleksandra Olejnik provides insight into Polish cities through the lens of new projects and European programmes. The EU Urban Agenda and other European initiatives create an opportunity for Polish cities to prepare regeneration projects and promote sustainable development in social, economic and city planning aspects. Polish cities, including Lodz, need to renovate large districts that have been neglected for years and have become centres of poverty. These activities will be central for improving the quality of life in regenerated urban space. However, they must be undertaken with a long-term time frame in mind. The participation of Lodz in the EU pilot programme will help benefit from one of the 12 priorities included in the Urban Agenda for the European Union, such as: regeneration and major repairs of buildings; eliminating neglected districts in the city; the development of social innovations; and urban mobility or more sustainable use of urban areas also in environmental contexts.