Smart Region: Meanings, Governance, Policies and Projects

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Against the backdrop of the recurring rhetorics and the ongoing scientific debate about the diffusion of ICTs in the urban space, this issue aims at exploring risks and potentials of the smartness in regionalised cities through a collection of international and multidisciplinary research and case studies. Specifically, within the different articles, the issue deals with the regional size of contemporary urban phenomena at different scales: transboundary city-regions (as the international Øresund Region and the interregional Northern Italy's sector between Milan and Turin); big cities' metropolitan contexts (of Barcelona, Bilbao, Bristol, Glasgow and Seattle); small and medium towns' regional networks (in Castilla y Leon, Marche and Veneto)
Keywords: post-metropolitan spaces; city-regional smartness; urban agenda

Smart Region: significati, governance, politiche e progetti

Sullo sfondo delle frequenti retoriche e dell'attuale dibattito scientifico sulla diffusione delle ICT nelle città, questo servizio offre un contributo alla riflessione sui rischi e sulle potenzialità della smartness con riferimento alla dimensione regionale del fenomeno urbano contemporaneo attraverso la presentazione di ricerche e casi studio internazionali e multidisciplinari. In particolare, nei diversi articoli, il servizio affronta la dimensione regionale dell'urbano a diverse scale: city-region transfrontaliere (come quella internazionale dell'Øresund e quella interregionale del settore del Nord Italia tra Milano e Torino); contesti metropolitani di grandi città (come Barcellona, Bilbao, Bristol, Glasgow e Seattle); reti regionali di città piccole e medie (come in Castilla y Leon, nelle Marche e nel Veneto)
Parole chiave: territori post-metropolitani; city-regional smartness; agenda urbana

This issue – concerning the exploration of different meanings of smartness, and their potentials in terms of governance, policies and projects, from the urban scale to the regional one – aims at highlighting some research themes and challenges, which have been dealt with by two initiatives. On the one hand, the seminar *Digital services for an Internet of Places. Networks and nodes for a smart region between Milan and Turin* at the Politecnico di Milano (May 2016), organized at the Department of the Architecture and Urban Studies[1] in collaboration with the research partner TIM, Joint Open Lab (JOL) S-Cube. On the other, the special session *From smart city to smart region. Meanings, governance and policies* at the AISRe[2] Annual Conference *What borders? Between territorial identity and international integration* in Ancona (September 2016). Moreover, this special issue aims at giving evidence to part of an international debate that is going on within the Regional Studies Association Network *Smart city-regional governance for sustainability*[3].

Despite risks and criticalities of smart city policies and projects – from mere overlap of digital infrastructures and high fragmentation of ICTs, to indifference of provided services to specificities and sociability of places, often in the background of a simplistic (technocratic and market-oriented) approach to city management and planning – several are the potentialities expressed by this notion. This is, according not only to technological and economic issues, but also to environmental and social ones, even implying life-style changes.

However – whilst smart cities have not been codified yet, and their applications have been articulating into very different fields and forms – this concept is usually implemented in, and exploited by, traditionally dense urban cores, excluding the rest of wide post-metropolitan spaces, which sprawling contemporary cities also consist of. Referring to the regional scale of current urban phenomena, as well as to the related ongoing reforms of administrative borders and competences of local governments, this issue further aims at investigating the opportunities provided by a potential extension of smartness from a small scale (dense cities) to a broader one (large city-regions) through both theoretical references, and empirical case studies or experimental projects.

For instance, in terms of territorial rebalancing, regional smartness could be able to promote conditions of digital and economic innovation, spatial regeneration, social inclusion and cohesion, climate change resilience, or environmental sustainability: not only in main cities, but also in small towns,