

PREFACE

In an increasingly urbanised but also more globalised European area in which problems multiply, there is still a wealth of potentialities, providing a highly diversified, inspiring and attractive territorial mosaic. However, despite constant references to the implementation of strategies targeting sustainable, inclusive development, the problems have aggravated, particularly those related with rural spaces. In fact, the rural spaces where tradition has persevered, including those with significant heritage, have been neglected, despite showing undeniable progress and investing strongly in multifunctional purposes in harmony with the environment and the landscape, as well as the social, economic and cultural framework. Even so, abandonment and depopulation are escalating in these spaces.

Measures must, however, be taken to reverse these situations. Structural strategies must be implemented that are both sustainable and inclusive, following new directives from the European Commission, through the Europe 2020 Strategy, that are able to foster a global, sustainable and intelligent approach. These should address also the social dimension and inclusion, as well as the digital society and education, knowledge and innovation, thus leading to a more efficient and competitive use of endogenous resources. These may serve as the basis for a more social, more inclusive European economy, with a view to effective territorial cohesion.

In this persistently problematic setting, there is an urgent need to pursue studies to raise awareness in society, particularly the scientific community, or civil society with the ability to intervene actively in spatial planning and management. Publications such as “The Overarching Issues of the European Space / Grandes Problemáticas do Espaço Europeu – The Territorial Diversity of Opportunities in a Scenario of Crisis / Diversidade Territorial e Oportunidades de Desenvolvimento num Cenário de Crise” intend to address these issues. There is an urgent need to reflect on recent development policies from multiple perspectives (geographical, historical, environmental, economic, social and cultural), exploring different themes, taking into consideration the diversity of scenarios, both European and beyond, particularly the Portuguese-speaking emerging countries.

Thus, this third publication gives continuity to these studies from a clearly multifaceted, multidisciplinary and interuniversity approach, as well as maintaining its international character. With the participation of specialists from several Portuguese, French, Bulgarian, Romanian, Galician and Brazilian universities, this edition explores highly differentiated territories, which illustrate the problems and dynamics selected. Notable comparative studies also have their place, highlighting especially development strategies in which innovation, complementarity and sustainability are the main focus. Thus, the endogenous resources and distinctive heritage of these regions can be boosted, through synergies conducive to environmental conservation, spatial planning, social cohesion and economic recovery, from an intelligent, inclusive and harmonious perspective, the only means to overcome this critical period stretching back to 2007/2008.

This edition is structured into four parts, covering themes that are more incisively related to SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT. Even though the European area is the main focus, the different approaches explored here are increasingly more globalised.

As a brief introduction, we will start with Part I, “Territorial Diversity and Regional Development”. Regional development is the publication’s central theme, but from a perspective that contemplates the diversity of endogenous attributes. If they are strategically conjugated, they may indeed serve to promote credible development strategies, capable of overcoming the more critical moments. Thus, the importance of immaterial heritage and the landscapes is highlighted, as well as the border regions with their specific dynamics, and tourism at its different levels, an effective means to boost and revitalise endogenous dynamics in which tradition and innovation can be pacifically combined. The opportunities and perspectives for regional development are thus increased, in a very diversified, territorialised and consistent palette, going beyond the European diversity to include other experiences such as the Brazilian.

Given that this development is anchored in fundamental aspects such as the social and economic framework, education and training, and the environmental and cultural setting, it comes as no surprise that Part II is called “The European Social Environment: Some Issues”. The studies here focus particularly on a question that has progressively and strategically come to the fore in the area of development: the social and cultural dimension, complemented by policy. Part II addresses, for example, the importance of national defence from a social and environmental perspective, and the influence of crime at regional level. Other studies focus on the much aspired-to sustainable development, exploring topics such as the social responsibility of tourism and, most particularly, the hospitality sector. The impact of immigration and other types of migrations are also addressed, subject to many differentiated approaches, and their effects on the different continents. Portuguese immigration stands out, as do the intercultural conflicts and new realities deriving from the existing challenges in health care, particularly in Portugal. There is indeed a wide range of approaches to this issue, as well as to their effects and the strategies developed.

Always present, the economic dimension is the focus of Part III, “The International Economic Framework: a Scenario of Opportunities and Obstacles”. Multiple scenarios, diversified but consistent and complementary, are again addressed, highlighting in this part the instruments that comprise obstacles to development, although in many cases they can be reverted and transformed into opportunities, especially when innovation, tradition and endogenous specificities are conjugated and boosted. Thus, success stories can be discovered. In this context, Part IV of this publication is entirely justified. It starts by taking a journey through the great European wines and their economic impact, in settings that are inseparable from their culture, history and environment; it then explores distinct strategies to overcome the current crisis, such as in the banking or administrative sector, here exemplified with the Romanian and Brazilian case, focusing in the latter case on the rural spaces, where policies and strategies have been implemented to foster territorial cohesion and sustainable development. Fortunately, there are new opportunities and policies targeted at development, economic and social cohesion, and sustainability, in which economic, social and environmental balance can be recognised.

Naturally, to achieve the goals set out, education and technical training play a central role, taking culture and tradition into account, as well as technology and innovation. In a globalised world with impressive levels of social and cultural mobility, Part IV, “Education and Training in a

Multicultural Setting”, also addresses these issues, from a comprehensive perspective, in which the combination of training and employability, teacher training and increasing the populations’ level of schooling, have impact on the conservation / enhancement of culture. The studies maintain a multidisciplinary approach to these topics and their effects, addressing different levels of education (basic, secondary and university). There are many cases illustrating these issues, territorially diversified, from Portugal, Bulgaria, Brazil and Romania, but which always represent the existing connection between technical and cultural training and employability, as well as the consequent opportunities that contribute to deepening territorial and social cohesion.

The endogenous potentialities do indeed exist, in settings where multifaceted, revitalising and innovative approaches stand out. There is however the need to frame them strategically, from a perspective in which the different components are complementary, neglecting none, developing them holistically and harmoniously, while mitigating the existing obstacles. In an innovative and responsible setting, the endogenous specificities are also preserved, the distinctive aspects of each culture, each social context, each territory, while implementing the directives of the Europe 2020 Strategy in the old continent. These approaches are also intended to overcome the crisis, indeed incisive at the global scale.

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