



**ANCI Lombardia**

**Targeted Analysis – ESPON IMAGINE  
Developing a metropolitan-regional imaginary in Milan-Bologna urban region**

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LA CASA DEI COMUNI

**1ST VIEWPOINT: ACTING LIKE A URBAN REGION: ACTORS AND POLICY NETWORKS**  
**QUESTION: HOW TO SUPPORT PLACES AND TERRITORIES?**

**1. Introduction**

ANCI Lombardia can contribute to this debate with some grassroots considerations, specifically giving the point of view of the Lombardy municipalities on what emerged from the ESPON Imagine research.

We agree with the research's exhortation for an expanded vision of an integrated and extended the territory all around the MI-BO line, furthermore we feel the need to think in terms of an open approach. The territories considered are administratively separate, but territorially close and characterized by similar dynamics.

The proposal of an overall, unified vision is a positive stimulus that ANCI Lombardia recognizes as starting point with enormous potential.

The research presents a substantial view, based on analysis and data. This is why it succeeds in giving an authentic picture of the current territorial situation. It goes beyond visions linked and limited to administrative borders.

It describes (The outcomes show) a polycentric territory, strongly developed and densely populated, also defined by significant (deep) differences between urban areas and the countryside, medium-sized cities and small towns. **A region 'of different territories' [characterized by different territories], still with an inadequate territorial integration.**

The comparison with the research [investigation] confirms the known territorial gaps and the need for implementation of broad and integrated strategies. This is an important aspect for ANCI Lombardia.

The recognition of similar phenomena (problems and opportunities) along the entire MI-BO line is an original result of this research, that catches our attention. Polycentrism, marginalities and therefore the gaps in the territories, are homogeneous throughout these two regions, even if these areas are administratively separated.

The existence of high levels of territorial and social distress in northern Italy, as proved by the research, for us it is a significant data. Until now these issue has been addressed only by the *Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne (SNAI*, the national strategy for “inner” decentralized areas), which, however, pays the price of using tight indicators applied from a national level to remote territories, without involving them. For example, they do not take into account the

specificities of the agri-environmental platforms that emerge in the research: in particular, those nearby the Po river, with its bio-socio-diversity and unique characteristics.

On this issue ANCI Lombardia subscribes the project *Manifesto del Po*, which in recent years has worked to achieve a unitary design of the Po territory in order to enhance it and consider it as a homogeneous territory, which needs common and coordinated policies.

## **2. Research and stakeholders: a necessary translation for small municipalities.**

Regardless the degree of applicability, whether it is on a national, regional or local degree, the considerations, data and analysis that emerge from the investigation are useful tools and sources to be used for the development of territorial policies. To this extent though, it is important to make a consideration: It is obvious that the actors who decide such policies are strongly different: the State, Regions, Provinces, the Metropolitan Cities and municipalities dispose of different and incomparable capabilities, resources and tools.

Imagining the influence that the research “ESPON Imagine” could (hopefully) have on the policies of these actors, it is evident the need to consider their diversities. And, in particular, those of the municipalities.

This is an implicit but significant assumption for understanding the impact of the urban region on territories. And it is linked to a question that [for us] arose naturally: **what are the actual capacities and competences in the hands of the territories [specifically the municipalities] to be able to process these data of this research? How could the municipalities make them their own and translate them into political decisions?**

It is clear to ANCI Lombardia that the municipalities in in our Region (even in their aggregated forms) do not have the same capacities to benefit from the data and analyses of this research. The information that emerges from this research is too complex for a local administration, it needs to be translated. It is essential to make it simple and understandable for every government plans.

This is the real challenge for us. And in our interpretation this is the point of this subject. It is necessary to get down at the level of the political, administrative and even bureaucratic of the municipalities

## **3. Policy involvement**

The topic of Municipality’s involvement is not only limited to accessibility of data, but moreover it is influenced by the lack of participation between the various actors involved. The

main problem is to guarantee an adequate involvement of the local institutions in the *decision-making* by the State or the regional government.

Talking about engagement, the municipalities often represent the most marginal actors involved: They are characterized by well-known difficulties too many functions and few resources of personnel and finance, too often oriented towards sectoral interventions that are in most cases "public works", not integrated in a global vision.

If the municipalities are not involved in the decision-making, in a structured way (that is a condition of effectiveness) or at least with a deep involvement about the territorial needs (environmental, social, economic), the policies will not succeed.

#### **4. How? Towards the Centri di competenza**

Looking for an answer to the topic of this session, we believe it is useful to mention a recent experience of ANCI Lombardia: the case of the *Centri di competenza* [Competence Centres] in the regional policies for urban and territorial regeneration.

This is a project of ANCI Lombardia developed in the last year, by the *Osservatorio urbanistico* [Urban Observatory] to support the regional policies on urban regeneration, not with a normative [and planning] approach but to provide providing a technical support to the municipalities.

The project focused on urban and territorial regeneration, with the aim of promoting a more effective and efficient use of the resources available to municipalities.

ANCI Lombardia acted through intervention in various forms and with different and specific tools to support them. In addition, instruments/practical tools have been put in place to ensure the link between local processes and public-private partnerships for territorial development and procedures to apply the funds for urban regeneration.

The process was carried out by introducing a "mission structure" – a team of experts – to coordinate the project able to provide knowledge, skills and experience – in support to those available at local level - able to guarantee the overall multidisciplinary contribution necessary to direct project and management efforts in the best possible way.

In fact, among the activities of the municipalities, there are regional, national and European policies which need an involvement beyond the essential and ordinary functions managed by the municipalities. For this reason, it pays the limits of technical capacities of the administrations and therefore require urgent and rapid interventions. These questions could be applied to a possible ITI project that require the involvement of municipalities.

The theme is highly topical in the case of national and European programmes: the Next Generation EU program. It is strongly connected to the Italian *Piano nazionale di ripresa e resilienza* [National Reconstruction and Resilience Plan] and with the perspective of the new cycle of the European Strategic Agency, 2021-2027. The capacity of local authorities to plan and act has taken on new relevance and call for swift measures.

In order to answer to these needs and, more generally, to the deficits and needs of Lombardy's local authorities, ANCI Lombardia's proposal is to set up *Centri di competenza* [Centres of Competence]: organisations set up by local authorities necessarily in associated form (which may have various legal forms) and equipped with a structure and skills that act by project. Such approach could make it possible to respond to the current needs of the municipalities, to provide support that they can hardly obtain in any other way today.

ANCI Lombardia is working on this project on two levels:

- 1) on calls for proposal for urban regeneration, providing not only technical and practical assistance but also contributing to the development of policies for the creation of Atlases of local planning.
- 2) ANCI Lombardia and the regional government share a common interest in supporting inner areas [“aree interne”] through these *Centri di competenza* [Competence Centres]. The purpose is to combine policies for inner areas with an integrated and open vision that also includes urban areas and the whole territory. Actions, investments, policies have reciprocal relations and influence the whole territory, from mountains to plains, not only portions of the territories.