Urban systems are the physical expression of the economic and political organization of society (Weber, 1921). Like most dynamic systems, urban and regional systems they are highly complex and susceptible to structural and organizational shifts derived from systemic rearrangements in policy making and the emergence of new parametric variables to their constitutive behavior. Similarly, as in all organic systems, there are ecological, physical and institutional constraints that affect the behavior of internal economic relations to well-defined trends and interactions. In this sense, the compatibility between urban systems and ecologically sustainable systems (limited by definition by their own systemic capacities and organizational arrangements) is not necessarily guaranteed by the sole maxims of economic growth, technological innovation or any of the contemporary paradigms that have defined public policy in the last thirty years.
From an institutional perspective, the problem of adaptation to a new parametric production infrastructures and technologies seems to be determined by economic geography, linked necessarily to the political and socioeconomic dynamics of the nation-state which, through the management of labor capital relations, production and public policy, seeks to ensure institutional consensus and achieve practical goals of sustained, but not necessarily sustainable economic growth.

As demonstrated by the deep economic crisis in Europe, the design and implementation of integrative decision-making mechanisms and methodologies for territorial cohesion and management of resources within the framework European Union cohesion policies, has consistently deepened the structural differences between territorial states, profoundly changing their domestic markets (particularly in those in the so called “periphery”, Southern Mediterranean and Central Europe), and largely cementing the main causalities for the present financial crisis. Prospective change for the current European urban and regional reality (greatly transformed by the implementation of this specific model of growth and spatial development) requires a profound reorganization of institutional dynamics and the structuring of effective, democratic models of territorial cohesion and sustainability.

The thesis presented in this research proposes a decision-making architecture and methodology for Carema, in the northwestern Piedmont province, as a technical alternative to European Union mechanisms for integrated planning and financing. This specific application, restrained by a particular territorial scale and special market and spatial conditions, develops from a comprehensive analysis of overall socioeconomic trends and regional particularities and the definition of multiple solution scenarios, including a desirable scenario where economic and ecological sustainability is achievable.

Certainly this assessment is constrained by contemporary economic and urban theory and the particular structure of local and regional markets. Nevertheless the decisional optimization structure and Multicriteria Decision Analysis/Method (MCDA/MCDM) framework proposed takes into account this morphological and institutional constraints and structures an action program for the development of sustainable growth conditions and the overall recovery of natural, physical and intangible heritage.

The proposed decisional architecture also defines a system of strategic actions for development in a specific physical heritage territorial asset, with very specific economic, morphological and organizational characteristics. Similarly, this system adds specific functionality information to each systemic component of the system, by adding individual social economic and technical assessments for each specific action, including those directly related to the sustainability issues.
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