

(RE/DE)GENERATION OF TERRITORIAL IDENTITY

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The issue of the (re/de)generation of the uniqueness of places and regions, recognizable as their territorial identity, in the globalized economy and culture has gained momentum on development research and policy agendas since the early nineties. However, there has been a growing gap between pro-identity/development quests and anti-identity/development realities. It is argued in this paper that the (re/de)generation of territorial identity can be transformed from currently ambiguous and controversial theoretical construct into a comprehensible analytical category.

“Territorial identity” is understood as a set of spatial fixes and flows that characterize a territorial unit. While spatial fixes correspond to the totality of anchored contents of natural and cultural landscapes, spatial flows correspond to activities, relations and meanings within horizontal and vertical networks and systems of Nature, Society, Economy and Culture that determine specific lifestyles in a territory. Consequently, territorial identities can be understood through the study of landscapes and lifestyles.

KEYWORDS

Territorial identity, Local/global nexus, Sustainable development

INTRODUCTION

The issue of the loss and affirmation of the identity of places and regions in the context of globalized economy and culture gained momentum on development research and policy agendas since the early nineties [2, 4, 10, 17, 19, 22, 26, 28, 34, 37]. In the European Union, a major argument has been that the (re)valorization and strengthening of the identity of the lagging rural regions is the key to their competitiveness on the global market of goods, services and ideas, and may be decisive for sustainable "local development engineering" [13, 14].

However, there has been a growing gap between the pro-identity/development quests and anti-identity/development realities of many places and regions: degradation of environmental, economic, cultural and other identity features have taken place more frequently and at a much larger scale than their effective enhancement. For example, in Portugal, most rural areas have suffered from the sharp decline of small-scale agriculture, the under-utilisation or abandonment of cultivable land, the lack of investments in alternative productive activities, as well as from the continuous weakening of demographic vitality and depletion of endogenous human resources, referred to as "human desertification" [31, 8, 12, 32]. All this has been accompanied by the fading cultural and economic traditions and arbitrary adoption of new identities. Quite symptomatically, the Portuguese vocabulary became enriched by the word *descaracterização* that perfectly defines what has become a notorious loss, defeat, abuse, waste, disregard, etc. of the authentic, typical, unique and recognisable identity features of places and regions across the country. And yet, the preoccupation with the (re)affirmation of territorial identities has been increasingly present in the academic, political and popular discourse about shortfalls of, and prospects for, globally dependent local, regional and national development.

In the above-mentioned context, the objective of this paper is twofold: first, to highlight and discuss salient conceptual-methodological questions that can explain the gap between the pro-identity discourse and anti-identity reality and, second, to propose a new conceptual-methodological framework for the study of the relationships between the (re/de)generation of territorial identities and globally conditioned local and regional development.

CONCEPTUAL LIMITATIONS AND CONTROVERSIES

Diversity of meanings attributable to the notion of territorial identity is very broad, ranging from the generic references about local “uniqueness”, “singularity”, “specificity” and “authenticity” of local/regional material and immaterial assets, systems and networks, to the more refined dichotomies suggesting, for example, “traditional vs. modern”, “extroverted vs. introverted”, “networked vs. isolated” places and regions, or geographical areas “endowed, or not”, with “capacities and potentials” and/or “comparative (dis)advantages” for gaining and/or loosing from local/global interdependencies. Important contributions to the clarification of the complexities inherent to the interpretation of the concept of territorial identity as a local and regional development issue were provided, for example, by Ilbery *at al.* [25], Rose [34], Agnew [1], Haartsen *et al.* [17] and Haesbaert [21].

Nonetheless, in spite of the miscellany of possible meanings, the issue of the (re)affirmation of territorial identity has been brought to the pedestal of a panacea for the promotion of local development sustainability in the era of the globalized economy and culture. However, how to determine which identity feature need to be “strengthened”, “preserved”, “diversified”, or made “more competitive”, so that it becomes “developmentally relevant”? Which quantiquitative benchmarks to use to monitor and/or evaluate changing territorial identity features in order to appreciate or predict “desirable” from “unwanted” ones in relation to local and/or regional development objectives? And last but not least, who are, or should be, the legitimate “guardians” of identity features, i.e., which institutions or individuals are entitled to cope locally with the (un)favourable global forces?

Such questions are at the core of the conceptual-methodological constraints to the bridging of the gap between the pro-identity rhetoric and reality. Difficulty in providing answers is best evidenced by the fact that the pro-identity arguments and claims remain, as a rule, confined exclusively to the preambles of development strategies, plans, programmes and projects and are seldom present in their operative sections. In Portugal, the pro-identity rhetoric has a very prominent place in the preamble of the National Regional Development Plan 2000-2006 with the argument that “harmony between modernity and tradition means, both territorially and geostrategically, combining the generalised cosmopolitan living patterns with the valorisation of collective identity” [30: Chapter III, 10].

As regards the controversy of the pro-identity rhetoric within the global-local nexus, at least two conceptual and analytical limitations need to be highlighted. First, the macroscopic, top-down perspective has prevailed in the interpretations of locally experienced conditions and consequences of globalisation, while there has been too little insight from the grassroots level, i.e., from the perspective of the qualities of the local natural environment, economy, culture, etc. True, geographers, sociologists, industrial economists and business analysts, political scientists and others have explored effects of globalisation on local cultural identities, local business strategies, local industrial agglomerations, local political struggles, etc., but such contributions have tended to cover only sporadic and isolated cases, mostly the “success-stories”, to rely on secondary sources of information and to suffer monodisciplinary interpretations [2, 4].

The second limitation largely stems from the first one and has to do with too little effort made to divert from a tendency to interpret economic growth and changes in social, cultural, political and other spheres of life primarily from the perspective of systems and institutions, and to ignore the fact that every institutional setting is being run and/or used by individual stakeholders and that, consequently, all perceptions, interpretations and activities affecting territorial identity are necessarily subjective. It must be borne in mind that development objectives and means to achieve them are highly subjective and, above all, that “development is more than economic growth: it is the realization of the full potential of a place’s resources, the most important of which are its people. For people to achieve their fullest potential, they must recognize who they are and envision possibilities for the future. They must have a strong identity with their community and with place” [22: 678]. In this context, more light needs to be brought to the issue of “whose identity or identities are we talking about, and who determines the regional identity of an area” [16: 2].

The true challenge, therefore, is to find ways and means for functional integration of territorial identity-related concerns with local and regional development options and initiatives, or, as Albino suggests, “local identity must be operationalized into a development resource. The strategy of local development

should be based on the appreciation of ancestral typicality as a means of encouraging further evolution of new local innovations" [3: 113]

A NEW CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK: THE IDENTERRA MODEL

Transforming the concept of territorial identity into an analytical category implies devising an appropriate conceptual model for the study of the (re/de)generation of uniqueness of places and regions in the light of power-relations amongst the local and global development stakeholders. An attempt in this direction is the IDENTERRA Model, proposed here as a new conceptual-methodological framework for the study of territorial identity as an issue of sustainable local and regional development.

The first step to be taken is to disaggregate the three key concepts, i.e., "territorial identity", "development stakeholders" and "local/global nexus", by decomposing them into their discernible and measurable dimensions and components. The next step is to functionally combine the top-down and bottom-up approaches to the issues of sustainable development on the basis of the complementarities between the macroscopic ("desk") and grassroots ("field") research methods and tools. While the term "development" is understood here as social, economic, cultural, political, environmental and other change that results in the improvement of the quality of life, the "sustainable development" takes place when it is based on a harmony and/or reconciliation of needs, interests and power relations between the Nature and the Humanity, as well as among individuals and societies at all spatial, temporal and functional levels.

Disaggregating "Territorial Identity"

According to the IDENTERRA Model, territorial identity should be conceived as a set of spatial fixes and flows that mark a geographical unit such as a place, or a region. "Spatial fixes" (Figure 1) are defined as the totality of permanently or temporarily rooted and anchored elements of the natural heritage, population and human-made economic and cultural heritage in a geographical area, where:

- "natural heritage" involves all elements and objects that constitute natural environment (atmosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and biosphere) of a territory,
- "population" involves spatial distribution patterns and structural (i.e., biological, social, economic, cultural) features of the people who are permanently and/or temporarily present in a territory,
- "human-made economic heritage" are all objects of the created environment (i.e., modified nature, and built environment) intended for production, distribution and/or consumption of tangible goods and services (i.e. those related to the satisfaction of physical human needs) in a territory,
- "human-made cultural heritage" are all objects of the created environment (i.e., modified nature, and built environment) related to production, distribution and/or consumption of intangible goods and services (i.e. those related to the satisfaction of spiritual human needs) in a territory.

As shown in Figure 1, sets of spatial fixes constitute natural (primary or modified, preserved or degraded, etc.) and cultural (agricultural, industrial, rural, urban, mixed, etc.) landscapes.



Figure 1: Spatial fixes constitute landscapes

By providing support to the spatial fixes and by integrating them with spatial flows, landscapes can be considered as the "custodians and witnesses" of the local/global (re)production and/or consumption of material and immaterial territorial identities.

“Spatial flows” (Figure 2) are defined as activities, relations and meanings within horizontal (territorial) and vertical (functional) networks and systems, which determine Nature, Society, Economy and Culture. Sets of spatial flows determine specific lifestyles, understood here as patterns of use and management of spatial fixes within horizontal and vertical networks and systems within Nature, Society, Economy and Culture.



Figure 2: Spatial flows constitute lifestyles

Consequently, as shown in Figure 3, territorial identities are determined by the uniqueness of a geographic area in terms of its landscape- and lifestyle-related features.

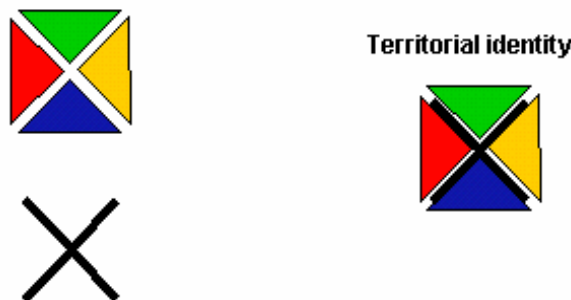


Figure 3: Landscapes and lifestyles constitute territorial identities

Another important dimension of the territorial identity is its image and interpretation, given that “landscape is both the representation and reality, both symbol and form, both image and actual lived conditions. The representation of landscape – the ideal that seeks to naturalize power relations – confronts the reality of the material world in specific place” [22: 663]. The same landscape- and lifestyle-related identity features have different meanings to different people, and their changes reflect diversity of their representations and of power-relations among their consumers and (re)producers, both local and global.

Thus, at least two basic dimensions of territorial identity should be distinguished in development research, policies and interventions: first, the objective, factual, undisputable and/or certifiable identity and, second, the subjective, perceived, interpreted and/or imagined identity.

The objective territorial identity is made of visible and hidden spatial fixes and flows, both material and immaterial ones. They are recordable and verifiable through data on and images of natural and cultural landscape features, including records of geo-symbols, metonymic symbols and mnemonic signs in the case of fixes, and, in the case of flows, of bio-geo-physical, socio-economic, cultural, technological, political and other activities, relations and meanings that determine people’s lifestyles.

The subjective territorial identity can be studied from the point of view of two basic sets of spatial fixes and flows: first, those that practiced and/or experienced (in the real life) and, second, those that are

claimed and/or pretended (in the mind). The experienced and pretended fixes and flows of the subjective territorial identity can be identified and assessed from the point of view of differences in the sense of place and power-relations among different development stakeholders [18, 20, 22].

As shown in Figure 4, the IDENTERRA Model distinguishes the experienced from the pretended subjective territorial identity.

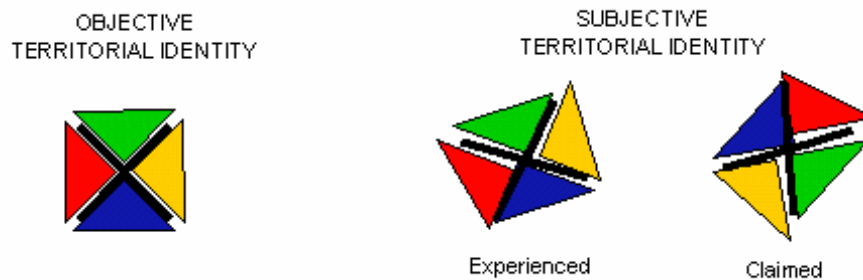


Figure 4: The objective and subjective territorial identities

Clearly, the materialization of the pretended identity usually results in consumption and/or (re)production, thus in (re/de)generation, of the objective territorial identity features.

Disaggregating “Development Stakeholders”

The IDENTERRA Model envisages the identification of a wide range of development stakeholders - defined as individuals or groups of people and institutions that directly or indirectly stand to gain or lose given a particular development course or activity - and their categorisation on the basis of their knowledge, attitudes and practice (KAP) with regard to landscape- and lifestyle-related identity features, both objective and subjective ones. The KAP studies should bring about distinctions among stakeholders in terms of their sense of place and relation to changes in landscapes and lifestyles in a given territory. For example, they could be categorised as “concerned” or “unaware”, as “consumes” or “producers”, as “protectors” or “destructors”, as “conservative” or “innovating” etc. in relation to the specific landscape- and lifestyle-related territorial identity features.

Furthermore, stakeholders should be stratified according to several spatial and temporal criteria, such as, for example: by the duration of their presence in a given territory (“old” vs. “new”, permanent vs. temporary, disappeared vs. emerging, etc.), by the geographical area of their origin, i.e., if they are endogenous (local and regional), exogenous (national, international), or mixed, and by the geographical scope of their operations (local, regional, national, international, mixed).

Another important distinction among the stakeholders needs to be made in terms of identifying development actors and agents. Development actors are all stakeholders who directly or indirectly contribute to the improvement of the quality of life in a given territory. Stakeholders who, on the basis of qualified knowledge (scientifically based diagnoses) of development issues and problems, prioritise and deliberately act towards their solutions by valorising local/regional potentials in harmony with global forces and whose role in (re)valorising territorial identity features may be decisive for a desirable social change, are regarded as agents of development [33].

Disaggregating “Local/Global Nexus”

The IDENTERRA Model is intended for the study of the role of development stakeholders in relation to the natural, social, economic, cultural and other processes that occur within the local/global nexus and have impacts on local landscapes and lifestyles. To this end, as shown in Figure 5, the local/global nexus is disaggregated into globalized spatial fixes and flows and their impacts on the territorial identity components, specifically in terms of

- effects on local natural environment, such as: destruction *versus* conservation of natural resources and landscapes, degradation *versus* recovery of natural resources and landscapes, loss

of *versus* revalorisation of natural resources and/or landscapes, conflicts *versus* synergies between the economy and natural resources management, lack *versus* increase of the competitiveness of natural resources and landscapes), etc.;

- effects on local society, such as: social innovation *versus* stagnation, segregation, marginalisation, and/or exclusion *versus* cohesion, integration and/or inclusion, lack *versus* promotion of knowledge and qualifications, spirit of dependency *versus* entrepreneurial spirit, population aging *versus* rejuvenation, consumerism *versus* environmental conscience, social crises *versus* synergies, etc.;
- effects on local economy, such as: stagnation *versus* growth, traditional *versus* modern means of production, lack *versus* diversification of activities and products, lack *versus* adoption of innovations and entrepreneurship, lack *versus* access to external markets, lack *versus* access to external investments, external dependence *versus* self-sufficiency, etc.; and
- effects on local culture, such as: loss of *versus* preservation and/or recuperation of urban, rural and other cultural landscapes, homogenisation and standardization *versus* diversification and revitalization, xenophobia *versus* multiculturalism, traditionalism *versus* modernism, localism *versus* cosmopolitanism, imitation *versus* creativity, isolation *versus* networking in cultural diasporas, etc.

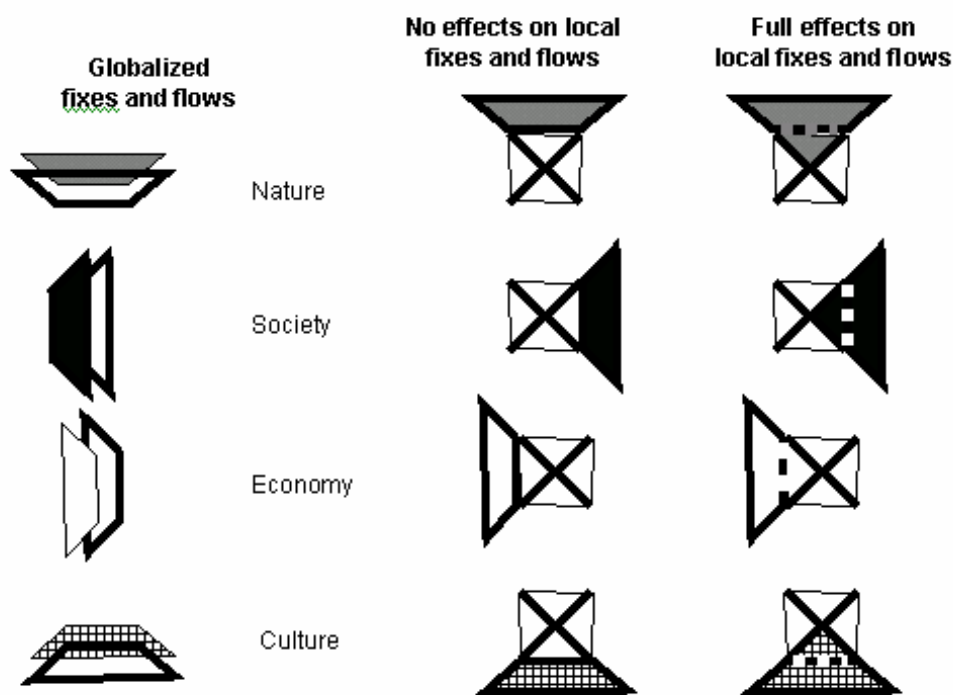
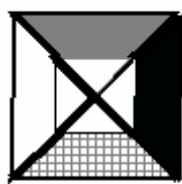


Figure 5: Local/global nexus and local territorial identity

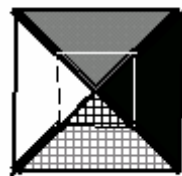
Besides the aforementioned effects of globalisation on local natural environment, economy, society and culture, the IDENTERRA Model is open to the study of other processes that mark the local/global nexus. For example, in the Portuguese context, it is important to explore globalisation effects on local politics and governance, such as, centralization *versus* decentralization, authoritarianism *versus* participation, isolation versus inter and intra-regional integration, individualism *versus* civil society, spirit of local and regional dependency *versus* empowerment, etc.

Disaggregating the “global/local nexus” should facilitate the assessment of the change from the traditional to the modern (or, post- and neo-modern) landscapes and lifestyles, that is, the transition from the isolated pockets of endogenously controlled and externally impermeable natural, social, economic and cultural territorial identity features to their increasing permeability and integration or, in other words, the growing similarities and/or homogeneities between local territorial identity features and those emanating from global economic and cultural hierarchies [20: 42].

Theoretically, the globalization could have no effects on any aspect of territorial identity (thus reflecting a total isolation of such places or regions from the rest of the world) on one side and, on the other, all territorial identity features could be totally absorbed (eliminated) by the homogenising affects in all areas of globalization (Figure 6). This conceptual framework could serve as basis for empirical studies at the grassroots level about the changing role (i.e., interests, power-relations, practice) of individual and institutional stakeholders in (re/de)generating of territorial identities along the scale from the “situation 0” (i.e., total isolation, no change) to the “situation 1” (full integration, utmost alteration) of places and regions in terms of environmental, economic, societal and/or cultural processes within the local/global nexus.



“Situation 0” – Total isolation of local identities from globalized spatial fixes and flows.



“Situation 1” – Full integration of local identities with globalized spatial fixes and flows.

Figure 6: From total isolation to full integration of territorial identities within the local/global nexus

Combining Macroscopic and Grassroots Methods

The IDENTERRA Model aims to promote the idea of territorial identity as a development issue marked by a multitude of cross-cuttings between endogenous and exogenous, local and global, individual and collective, natural, social, economic and cultural phenomena and processes. Therefore, research on such complex issues must face the challenge of selecting, testing and adapting the existing analytical methods and instruments and devising new ones, while, at the same time, detecting and/or creating complementarities in their use. As shown in Figure 6, a balanced integration should be sought between the “top-down” approach, based on indirect, macroscopic and/or remote sensing methods, realized as desk-studies of secondary sources of data and images on one side, and, on the other, the “bottom-up” approach, based on direct, participatory and grassroots methods, realized through field-studies of primary sources of data and images, collected *in situ* and/or *ad hoc*.

MACROSCOPIC METHODS

Secondary and remote sources of data and images

Deskwork

PARTICIPATORY METHODS

Primary and *in loco* sources of data and images

Fieldwork

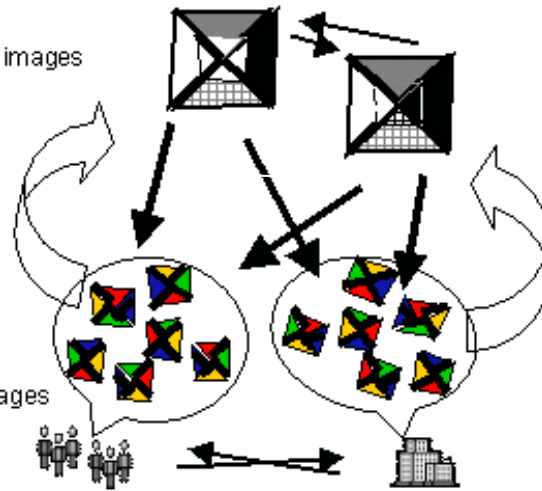


Figure 6: Combining “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches

As part of the top-down approach, diagnostic studies of changing objective identity features, materialized in natural and cultural landscapes and specific lifestyles are to be elaborated in order to (i) explore the scope and intensity of changes in local spatial fixes (natural, human and material resources and heritage) and flows (bio-geo-physical, and socio-economic systems and networks) and their linkages with global physical and human conditions, and (ii) identify probable development stakeholders (local and global, old and new, consumers and producers, etc.) and their power-relations.

The secondary and remote sources include a wide range of data such as, for example, those from satellite images, aerial photographs and thematic cartography related to fixes of the objective territorial identity, as well as those from national and international statistics related to both fixes e flows of the objective territorial identity. Data collected from public opinion polls and surveys related to fixes and flows of the subjective (both, the experienced and pretended) territorial identity, can also be considered as part of the macroscopic approach. Primary and *in situ* sources of data and images can be obtained directly from different development stakeholders by means of KAP-interviews, focus group discussions and other participatory methods. Also, photographic and audiovisual records can be collected in the field, as well as other primary data and information through direct observation methods, drawings, mapping, gathering of “informal documentation”, such as unpublished technical reports, local monographic and diagnostic studies, carrying out discourse analyses based on public speeches and policy statements, local written and oral literature, folk and pop-culture products, etc.

The bottom-up approach should be applied mostly to assess the subjective identity features on the basis of field-surveys of the stakeholders’ KAP in relation to the objective spatial fixes and flows (landscapes and lifestyles) and to their relations with other stakeholders. The KAP case-studies, both exploratory and in-depth, and comparative analyses should be carried out at different territorial levels (i.e., local community, municipal or inter-municipal) and functional contexts (social, economic, cultural, environmental systems and networks). The KAP surveys can turn precious in detecting complementarities and disparities between cognitive and behavioural spheres among specific stakeholders, as well as in comparative analyses of different stakeholders, both individual and institutional ones. Policy-related analyses of specific landscape and lifestyle issues can also be made by contrasting results obtained from the KAP surveys on these issues with the objective (factual) data on same issues, obtainable from secondary sources of information.

The functional combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches, methods and instruments could enable detection and assessment of existing and potential conflicts and synergies (e.g., rural-urban, entrepreneurial-social, economic-environmental) among local and global development stakeholders in consuming and (re)producing landscape- and lifestyle-related territorial identity features. Such cross-cutting of macroscopic and grassroots sources of data could help explaining how exactly “landscapes become materialized discourse of different social interests [36: 1997] so they are always a

compromise" [22: 663], or how to achieve the "recreation of local identities in all of its dimensions ... (in order to) ... combat exclusion and massification generated by globalisation" [5].

CONCLUSION

Better understanding of the (re/de)generation of territorial identities is possible through the study of changing landscape- and lifestyle-related features from the perspective of spatial fixes and flows that determine territorial identity/development interface within the local/global nexus. As suggested by the IDENTERRA Model, this implies, first, transforming the concept of territorial identity into an analytical category and, second, laying grounds for new synergies between the landscape- and lifestyle-related research on one side and, on the other, the territorial development policy concerns. In turn, this should help bridging the gap between the pro-identity/development rhetoric and anti-identity/development reality.

The application of the IDENTERRA conceptual-methodological framework could enable for new, empirically based verifications and interpretations of relevant theoretical constructs and/or conceptual proposals such as those about "landscapes as parts of hegemonic culture" [14], "deterritorialisation" [7], "detraditionalization" [24], regions "on the mind" and "of the mind" [1], "end of territories" [6], "reterritorialisation" [20], "glocalization" [9], "coherent identity and equilibrium between landscape reality and representation" [22], "annihilation of space by time" [23] and "shifting identities of economic actors" [39], or about "construction of local identities when the world is too big to be controlled and social actors make it return to graspable size" [11].

The potential practical relevance of the IDENTERRA model is in the possibility of operationalizing the concept of territorial identity in development policies, programmers and projects. For example, search for empirical evidence of changing landscape- and lifestyle-related identity features can reveal different levels of topophilia, or "the affective bond between people and place or setting" [38: 4], among different development stakeholders. Certain types of topophilia can be strategically important in encouraging/discouraging cohesion and/or divergence among the existing and potential endogenous and exogenous forces in the economic and cultural valorisation of natural and created heritage in a territory. Furthermore, through confronting the objective with subjective (experienced and pretended) territorial identities more light can be shed to the issue of the "attractiveness" places and regions. The promotion of territorial attractiveness could prove essential in local and regional development planning, programming and project formulation, especially in the peripheral and/or lagging rural areas that struggle for the fixation of economic activities, social innovation and, in fact, the (re)valorization of identity-based strategically important ingredients for a globally competitive development.

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