Foreword

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Faced with the progressive erosion of the political and economic role of the nation states, engulfed at the same time by the processes of globalisation and the concomitant re-emergence of the local dimension, the rhetorical quality of a great deal of the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy is particularly evident. Once more, the contrast between political unity and social and territorial disunity has been seen as the main problem of the Italian recent history. It is a vision in which the interlacing of professional historiography and political usage of the past is particularly evident. In opposition to the images of 'normal' and 'advanced' national territories of Europe, often presented as uniform repositories of cultures and lifestyles, the Italian exceptionalism is seen as a product of a territory impaired both by great dichotomies, primarily the *North-South* divide, and by micro-particularisms, by the resiliency of fragmented spaces, each capable of enkindling a stronger sense of belonging than that of the unified state. Italy as a nation state risks to be little more than an artificial construct that, according to the political stands of those who take part to the debate, have to be refunded culturally and sociologically (according to the old rallying cry "having done Italy we must do the Italians") or divided into more realistic political entities.

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A rapid look at the international literature on the construction and forms of nation states territoriality, included that of the most 'advanced' states, would show how exceptionalisms and complexities are the lot of the Europe of nations as a whole – from the German *Sonderweg*, to the France dualisms, to the artificiality of the geopolitical order in the Balkan-Danubian area. More generally, human spaces are historical structures characterised by complexities and instabilities well before globalisation violently uprooted most of the traditionally localised human communities, bringing these questions forcefully to the attention of scholars, interested parties and governments. A historiography equipped with to tools forged by the social sciences more akin to the territorial analysis is reconstructing the multifaceted forms and dimensions intrinsic to the territoriality even of the distant past. As a consequence, the transformations of recent decades cannot be presented as the transition from simple to complex, from static to dynamic, from cohesive societies rooted in micro-localities to spatially uprooted collections of individuals. Territorial change has undoubtedly been impressive in its scale, but it needs to be conceptualised and examined with less rudimentary analytical tools than those generally used in the public debate.

This scope and depth of the territoriality seem largely lost in the celebrations of the Italian unification. The reciprocal influence, from one hand, of journalistic and political revisionism, from the other hand of a historiographical *risorgimentismo* still oriented by a set of questions emerged in the first decades of the unified Italy, elicit a significant part of the cognitive innovations adopted by historians of other periods and subjects. The conceptions of human spatiality adopted to look at the Italian recent past have been too often objectivistic, areal, banal. We might ask ourselves how, through these poor interpretative tools, it would be

possible to account for several of the territorial constructs considered typical of the Italian space: for example the industrial districts, whose unique integration of economic, socio-cultural and territorial assets stratified in time has been analysed since the 1970s through an original reinterpretation of the Marshall theory.

This *Plurimondi* dossier, resulting from the Lecce CRIAT conference of the 19th- 21st December, 2011, obviously does not aim to review each kind of territory within the unified Italy. It aims rather, in accordance with the nature and objectives of CRIAT, at rallying various disciplinary expertise - from history to geography, anthropology and urban planning - whereby to gain knowledge and acting capability on the territory. Rather than yet again reassess the disparity between North and South or itemise the many 'Italies' nestling within the confines of one nation, the papers here published seek to explore the rich and complex tapestry of the many systems and subsystems that constitute a territory at the same time peculiar and globalised. Hence the insistence on complexity and multiscalarity, which in turn allow for a closer reading of the multiple rationalities etched upon spaces steeped so deeply in history. Following this path, we have tried to explore identities and memories, migrations and conflicts, forms of social and ethnical exclusions and the logic and aims of the social movements, the processes of construction and utilisations of the different technological and infrastructural endowments and of localised social and expert knowledge.

At the same time, we have tried to assess the difficulties of regulating these intertwined social and territorial phenomena within the framework of the rigid boundaries of Italian administrative districts and of their legislative profiles. In Italy, the legislative hypertrophy that since 1970 has followed the devolution of competences on territorial

planning to the regions has been accompanied by a lack of regulation befitting the new dimensions of ecological, infrastructural, economic, migrational phenomena, which invest spaces different from each other and, in any case, different from the administrative ones. In order to cope with this fundamental inadequacy between regulating agencies and problems to be regulated, various paths have been explored towards a territorial governance not constrained by *given* territorial boundaries: the proliferation of infra- or inter-regional strategic planning is a telling example in this direction. The outcomes are uncertain and the difficulties may well increase. In the taut civic and political climate of contemporary Italy, evoking them and placing them under scrutiny through an adequate analytical equipment may well constitute a not completely futile contribution. The papers published herewith seek to do just that, evoking an organisation of the professional expertise freed from the inertia of rigid inter-disciplinary divisions and consequently more open to the challenges facing us all.