



## **REASONS FOR A POLITICAL COMMITMENT AND SPECIFIC ACTION IN DISADVANTAGED AND DEPOPULATED AREAS.**

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The great economic transformations resulting from successive industrial revolutions, a deep progress of third sector in advanced economies, the process of globalization and the predominance of economic growth versus real developments, very close to policies that did not take into account territorial planning, have had important consequences. The achievements have been great and far-reaching social implications, but its impact has not been fair, being the socio-territorial inequality a characteristic that manifests at different scales.

Now it is no longer possible to speak, globally, about development and underdevelopment with different aspects, or North and South, since each of these concepts contains other, with more or less intensity; in brief, the North has its South and South has its North.

Europe, territory that must exercise global leadership, also stands out by its socio-economic inequalities caused in part by the strong regional imbalances, as result of the configuration of a model of concentration of investment, employment and of the population, whose largest exponent has been the creating processes of metropolitan systems.

The opposition concentration - desertification, congestion - depopulation is a territorial constant in many European countries, with important consequences both demographic and social, economic and environmental. The model is irreversible but can and should be corrected part of its effects, in some cases because the unlimited growth in a territory with boundaries and limitations is becoming unsustainable, along with strong mismatches between needs and resources; in others, the small population and the renounce of traditional activities, are having very negative consequences essentially by the loss of resources, both human and environmental. In this case, the process of abandonment is also unsustainable.

Acting on this model in order to reduce the current imbalances, it involves to specifically consider depopulated and disadvantaged areas, which generally coincide with the rural environment in the bottlenecks that have restrained their blockage or deterioration and potentialities that still maintain; at present, they are territories-problem, but also territories-resource.

To do this, and given their vulnerability is important that they have a political recognition and taking into account instruments, funds, strategies for action and appropriate management responsibilities to reverse current trends, derived from complex processes developed at significant times. The multi scale dimension of these public policies should be a fact, but in our case the European Union should play an important role.

To act with rigor and set effective and efficient actions for the future, we should start a series of the following principles:

1. Know in depth the nature of the depopulation process in the present moment - not all the territories are the same - in order to identify the consequences.
2. Determine the main problems that have undermined territorial competitiveness facing today's most innovative processes, together with their potential for development,





according to the changes in the demand for urban and metropolitan global society with purchasing power.

3. Know if they have been part of previous public policies, which have recognized them as less developed territories and how they have participated. In some cases it has internally produced the model of territorial concentration, again being marginalized rural development. The existence of many unpopulated and disadvantaged territories in Europe is an example.
4. Define the new public policies according to previous experiences, with finalist character, with specific recognition, legal instruments, funds and programs in the short, medium and long term, with more efficient governance systems, where local should play a greater role.
5. Set true rural development within a wide territorial planning, interconnected with the urban. The rural-urban dichotomy has disappeared in favor of the rural-urban relationship. We should find the functionality of a territory and the optimization and effectiveness of its services. In fact the territory should be seen as a system and at present, small and medium-sized cities should play an essential role in the next depopulated territories, but the metropolitan systems have also to apply a different leadership in their "rural" environments if still they remain.

The prevailing territorial model, being Europe a clear example, is unsustainable from an environmental point of view but also human, and correct it is the task of many. Political responsibility is important at very different levels, so that the international position of the representatives of local governments is an essential starting point. They should promote and lead the necessary change in order to achieve for all citizens a fairer, more equitable, more caring and more sustainable future.

Madrid, April 2016

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