

Scienze del Territorio / Territorial Sciences

Vol. 13, no. 1: “The territory as a living being: beyond the nature/culture dichotomy”

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Call for papers – deadline: 31 May, 2025

In recent years, with a significant acceleration during the pandemic period, a new conception of “nature” and of the interdependent and interconnected relationships between human and non-human intra-agents has emerged, in response to the threats and effects of the current ecological crisis. The emerging conception goes beyond the dichotomising nature/culture view, in which the representations are rooted that not only support and justify current planning models, but also the legal, economic, political and social systems of Western culture. It is not merely a matter of recognizing the *agency* of the non-human but of rethinking both nature and ourselves as humans – profoundly and responsibly interconnected with the non-human – within a network of horizontal, subject-to-subject, life-affirming relationships. While this perspective challenges the binary ontology of anthropocentrism, which is based on the notion of humanity as external and separate from the ecologies in which it exists, it also adds complexity to the theoretical and practical field of territorial sciences.

It is a paradigm shift – not without aporias and contradictions – that deserves to be explored and deeply analyzed, moving beyond mere fascination and uncritical acceptance, placing under tension the theoretical premises and operational practices of the various disciplines of territorial sciences¹. Volume 13 n.1 of *Scienze del Territorio* invites to propose theoretical and practical contributions to initiate a critical reflection on the heuristic perspective of the *territory of the living* and the *territory as a living being*. The volume will gather contributions that particularly address experiences and theoretical reflections around the issues summarised below.

1. How, and to what extent, does this perspective challenge and decolonize the human/nature dichotomy that permeates Western ways of knowing and acting? What are its limits and contradictions? What new and complex practices of coexistence does it define? Within the broader theoretical debate on the concepts of nature and resource, one perspective highlights

¹ The topic is at the centre of the PRIN BioCoDe project “Bioregional planning tools to co-design life places. Empowering local communities to manage and protect natural resources”, coordinated by the University of Florence (P.I. Daniela Poli), with the participation of the research units of the Universities of Cagliari (resp. Anna Maria Colavitti), Molise (resp. Luciano De Bonis), Palermo (resp. Filippo Schilleci), Genova (resp. Giampiero Lombardini) and in collaboration with the “Sapienza” University of Rome (resp. Alberto Budoni).

the importance of preserving the recognition of *otherness*, as its denial risks reinforcing dominant positions that may undermine equity and sustainability in territorial action. Other viewpoints emphasize the specificities and intrinsic value of nature, proposing it as the foundation for a balanced and conscious relationship with the territory, thus challenging the dominant growth model based on consumption and well-being objectives. In this direction, discussions focus on redefining the principles and action models related to territorial sustainability and natural resource management, with particular attention to new relational categories that frame nature as territorial heritage, a living subject, and the outcome of a long-term dialogue between nature and culture throughout history. Within this framework, the issue also addresses the theme of *biocultural rights*, which are linked to the relationships between communities and their territories and play a fundamental role in nature conservation.

2. The *territory of the living / territory as a living being* defines new territorial ecologies, marking a radical shift in the way we think about and design territory. How can we rethink planning beyond the purely technical and regulatory dimension, as a relational act that acknowledges the interdependencies and shared vulnerabilities among all forms of life? How does the dimension of interdependence between humans and non-humans relate to the vision of territory as the co-evolution of nature and culture? What role do memory, knowledge, and long-term history play in this process? Embracing this working hypothesis means focusing our efforts on the *nature of processes* – understanding them as political and policy processes – in order to develop collective, generative, and regenerative solutions built through multiple perspectives and forms of knowledge that enhance the deeper dimensions of territory.
3. The debate on territorial governance must address the challenge of balancing democratic participation with coercive regulation, proposing a revision of governance structures to respond effectively to environmental and social challenges. One of the main difficulties is to reconcile private and collective interests, while strengthening democratic participation and ensuring that communities have real decision-making power in the management of natural resources and territorial heritage. The “ecological transition” requires inclusive, bottom-up pathways that involve communities in sharing values, knowledge and common visions. This approach seeks to strike a better balance between representation and direct participation, drawing inspiration from best practices such as bio-districts, rural districts and participatory governance models, such as negotiated territorial management tools, which aim to promote local self-governance to foster shared and responsible management of natural resources, strengthen the role of communities in co-designing living spaces, and reinforce both local

autonomy in territorial management and shared regulatory frameworks that go beyond market-driven logics and recognise nature as a central element of governance.

Submission deadline and procedure

Articles – written and to be published, in case of acceptance, in Italian, English, French or Spanish – must be delivered via e-mail only, as attachments to a message addressed to scienzedelterritorio@gmail.com. This variation, with respect to the usual online submission procedure, is required by the transfer in progress to a new telematic platform and refers only to the issue covered by this Call.

Submission deadline: Saturday, 31 May, 2025.

Articles should strictly comply with the submission guidelines downloadable (in English or Italian) from https://bit.ly/SdT_submission-guidelines, with a special attention to the part concerning darkening of authors' personal data, and contain any additional elements required therein. Since the first submission, an English version of abstract and keywords is required.

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