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Territorial studies from a social network analysis perspective

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Territories, Governance, Innovation

This session is intended for all scholars who prefer the application of Social Network Analysis in territorial systems and dynamics studies. Territory is a complex and organized social system, in which individual and collective actors assume different centralities in directing and guiding social, political, economic, and cultural processes. Territory is configured as a dense network of interactions that unfold at various levels. Therefore, it is a field of study that naturally can be read through the theoretical-methodological approach of Social Network Analysis, especially from a multilevel perspective. SNA has now a long tradition of studying the dynamics of consent and conflict, participation and governance, processes of social inclusion and exclusion, politics, and policy-making, etc. (Cross, Borgatti, Parker, 2001; Salvini, 2020). As an effective heuristic tool, the network enters the public and political debate about the management and planning of territories, and more recently in the design and implementation of social innovation interventions (D'Esposito, Giordano, Vitale, 2011). The specific nature of the territorial perspective lies in locating systems and relationships flows in the spatial-temporal context of reference. At the same time, it allows us to understand the elastic and changing dimension of the relationship's boundaries. The evolution achieved in the methodological and applicative field of SNA has produced increasingly sophisticated tools for the collection, processing, and analysis of relational data. This has made it possible to work on complex network structures (multi-layer and multiplex networks) and to understand their deep dynamics, which are difficult to capture with traditional methodological approaches.

The aims of this session are: to discuss scientific contributions based on a methodology that combines the relational and territorial dimensions; to deepen processes, dynamics and governance of territorial innovation. Here are some possible areas of application, they should be considered only indicative and not exclusive:

- Urban and rural landscapes;
- Paths of social inclusion and/or integration;
- Social welfare and third sector;
- Enhancement of territories, tangible and intangible heritage;
- Social movements and civic participation;
- Governance and socio-economic innovation;
- Housing dynamics;
- Tourism;
- Urban mobility and accessibility;
- Socio-urban transformation and regeneration;
- Territorial government;
- Risk and emergency management.

