

Territorial economic intelligence: concept, evolution and standing in communication studies.

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Abstract:

The convergence of communication advancements with the political and economic expansions of globalization has made information and knowledge key factors in organizational management. This development has led to the emergence of "economic intelligence" as a crucial tool for proactive organizational and strategic decision-making. The intense competitiveness driven by market liberalization has challenged national territories to enhance their competitiveness within clear legislative frameworks to ensure adequate development and improved visibility. These transformations have given rise to the concept of territorial economic intelligence, which functions as both a key process and a multidisciplinary notion. Despite its evident importance, this concept is still in the process of seeking legitimization, particularly within the field of communication studies.

Keywords: communication studies; economic intelligence; information; territory; territorial economic intelligence;

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I. INTRODUCTION

The increasing organizational reliance on information, driven by successive knowledge revolutions and rapid advancements in modern information and communication technologies, has led to the emergence of new concepts that have quickly become essential management tools. One such concept is economic intelligence, which has continuously evolved and adapted. From this theoretical development emerged the concept of territorial economic intelligence. However, a review of the literature on the subject reveals a weakness in the theorizing of these two concepts, with occasional confusion between them and other related concepts. The concept of territorial economic intelligence draws from multiple scientific and research fields, similar to economic intelligence. Nevertheless, the theorizing of these concepts within the fields of information and communication sciences remains underdeveloped.

This raises the following questions:

- What is territorial economic intelligence?
- How has it developed?
- What is its position within communication studies?

1. Economic Intelligence: Conceptual Issues:

The growing interest in economic intelligence at both professional and academic levels has coincided with the communication revolution and the significant advancements in communication tools and mechanisms. These developments have brought about profound changes in how information resources are managed across various stages, including collection, publishing, storage, and processing. These shifts have, in turn, impacted the forms of organizational communication at all dimensions and levels, including external communication with territorial elements and the organization's surrounding environment. These changes have introduced new epistemological challenges, where communication approaches, information management, and economic intelligence intersect.

1.1. Between the Information Revolution and Economic Intelligence:

Information has long been recognized as crucial, initially gaining importance within strategic military studies. However, its significance quickly extended to the economic realm due to the evolving nature of conflicts, which increasingly revolve around markets and financial resources. Information has become a fundamental component of many organizational practices and tools, such as environmental scanning, which is vital for monitoring various aspects of the organizational environment. The successive knowledge revolutions and the rapid pace of modern information and communication technologies, which facilitate the swift acquisition and application of information, have also contributed to the phenomenon of information overload. This has highlighted the need for more effective strategic utilization of organizational information to achieve desired objectives. It is within this context that the concept of intelligence emerged, becoming closely linked to the field of economics and leading to the development of the concept of economic intelligence. Understanding the relationship between information and intelligence is essential.

1.1.1. Information and Intelligence:

Researchers commonly define information as a refined extension of data, which is interpreted and applied within a specific context. In contrast, data is viewed as a raw component that has yet to undergo interpretation. Scholars have categorized information into several types—white, gray, and black—depending on its sources and intended uses. These distinctions have elevated the organizational importance of information. Information plays a critical role in shaping organizational decisions, serving both as a resource and as an investment activity. Consequently, the strength and efficiency of modern organizations are often measured by the volume of information they possess, the quality of its utilization, and the effectiveness of its exploitation in achieving strategic goals.

1.1.2. Benefits of Information:

Information offers several organizational benefits, with the literature identifying four key advantages across various research fields. The first is formal utility, where the value of information is linked to the form in which it is presented to the organizational decision-maker. This utility depends largely on the nature of the processing that the data has undergone, reflecting an organizational specificity that determines the form information takes based on objectives and potential uses. Temporal utility, the second benefit, emphasizes the importance of information being available to decision-makers at the right time; the value of information generally diminishes if it is not accessible when needed by the organization. Spatial utility, recognized by researchers, refers to the ease of accessing information, which enhances its value. Finally, internal control of information after it has been distributed among various organizational actors provides an additional benefit. However, these benefits are fully realized only when information is under complete control.

1.1.3. Conditions for Controlling Information:

Controlling organizational information requires meeting specific conditions. A group of researchers led by Coutenceau (Coutenceau et al., 2009) identifies two fundamental conditions: achieving the intended goal and linking information to operational decisions. The first condition is that information must achieve the desired goal as it is processed within the context defined by the organization's management, which is influenced by market developments and transformations. The organization is solely responsible for the format it assigns to the available data and for interpreting it in a way that aligns with the surrounding environment. The second condition is the necessity of connecting information to operational decisions that contribute to the institution's development. Effective control of information cannot be claimed unless it is applied in practice and leads to positive organizational outcomes. The process of interpreting information, a preliminary condition for effective employment, also highlights the role of intelligence as one of the key tools for information control.

1.2. Intelligence:

The concept of intelligence is both complex and widespread. There is no universally accepted definition of intelligence, particularly given its evolution over the past fifty years. In 1983, American psychologist Howard Gardner expanded the understanding of intelligence with his book *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* (GARDNER, 1997). Gardner introduced a broader perspective, questioning why various forms of intelligence—such as those seen in sports, music, and social interactions—were not previously recognized. His work marked a significant shift towards acknowledging diverse forms of intelligence, each contributing to the ability to understand and navigate the world and adapt to new situations through cognitive processes. Despite this expanded view, traditional types of intelligence with established interpretations and theories, such as collective intelligence, remain influential. Collective intelligence, in particular, is a prevalent and significant concept with substantial implications for organizational contexts.

1-2-1-Collective Intelligence:

Collective intelligence is a crucial concept for this research paper. Scholars and experts agree that collective cognitive abilities—defined as the shared and specific understanding and interpretation within a particular group—emerge from the diverse interactions among its members and the ongoing exchanges that occur within their shared physical space. This form of intelligence is built upon individual, limited, and fragmented knowledge of the environment, due to the inherent impossibility of any single individual comprehending all elements affecting the group. Collective intelligence arises from fostering interaction among individuals. One key characteristic of collective intelligence is its variability, which depends on the nature of the groups and their components. (HENRY, 2000) Like other collective systems, collective intelligence is both developed and complex.

1.2.2. Characteristics of collective intelligence:

There are several characteristics that distinguish collective intelligence. Researchers Chartier and Loarer (2008) summarize these characteristics as forming a useful apparent structure for the group. Each individual in the group finds value in their cooperation (often automatic) and the work they contribute, which they prefer over remaining alone. Collective intelligence is also characterized by a set of simple rules, -where each individual follows specific simple rules that contribute to the behavior of the overall system. Information within collective intelligence is local and limited, as each individual possesses only partial knowledge of the environment and lacks awareness of all elements affecting the group. Additionally, collective intelligence involves a set of diverse social interactions, with each individual being necessarily connected to others within the group. The characteristics of collective intelligence have contributed to the development of organizational tools, which, over time, have evolved beyond their initial functions towards applications at larger scales, taking the form of policies such as territorial intelligence.

1.3. Mutation from intelligence to territorial economic intelligence:

The association between intelligence and information is evident, primarily due to the cognitive advantages inherent in intelligence. Given the collective nature of organizations, it is essential to examine the flow of information from the perspective of collective intelligence. This perspective has led to the emergence of the concept of territorial economic intelligence, which, while derived from economic intelligence, represents an applied level of this broader concept, as will be demonstrated in this research paper.

Definitions of economic intelligence vary widely. Guilhon and Moinet (2016) define it as « a vital practice for institutions, government agencies, and, more broadly, countries seeking competitiveness and growth. Economic intelligence involves processing strategic information to reduce uncertainty and manage inherent risks in organizational or national environments. However, the goal of economic intelligence has often been unclear due to the lack of a definitive epistemological foundation, leading to its adaptation based on specific needs ». BAUMARD (1991) defines economic intelligence as "not merely the art of observation, but an offensive and defensive practice based on the use of information. Its goal is to integrate various domains to support the strategic and tactical objectives of an organization, serving as a tool for aligning organizational behaviour with its knowledge".

These definitions highlight that economic intelligence is a crucial tool for organizations, aiding in both defence and expansion through strategic policies. Despite its functionality and multiple levels of application, economic intelligence still lacks a robust cognitive foundation. Observing the historical development of this concept reveals significant changes and evolutions over time.

1.3.1. Conceptual transformation and applied embodiments of economic intelligence (historical process):

The concept of economic intelligence is not a recent development, nor has it maintained a consistent definition since its emergence or carried the same names. It has evolved through various stages, as indicated by researcher Nabil Al-Mabrouki (2011). The first stage, extending from 1960 to 1970, coincided historically with the beginning of modern globalization and the peak of European (before the oil shock) and American economic prosperity, along with major intellectual transformations. During this period, the term environmental scanning was prevalent. This stage was characterized by a focus on collecting information as a primary activity of surveillance. The term "surveillance" had military connotations, leading to a negative perception that prompted practitioners and institutional leaders to seek a more acceptable name and practice.

The second stage, spanning from 1980 to 1990, saw the emergence of the terms intelligence in English and *veille* in French. This stage was marked by a significant shift from merely collecting information (as in the first stage) to focusing on specialized information and transforming it into knowledge. This transformation was driven by economic, political, and cultural changes, such as the expansion of capitalism and globalization. The 1973 oil shock heightened uncertainty and competitiveness, prompting decision-makers to rely more precisely on information and adapt its use according to their needs.

The third stage, from 1990 to the present day, is characterized by the emergence of new concepts such as competitive intelligence, strategic vigilance, and economic intelligence. These concepts, derived from earlier ideas, reflect significant transformations in the perception and use of information. According to Guilhon and Moinet (2016), several factors contributed to the emergence of economic intelligence, including institutional strategies centered around management creativity, the complexity of management tools, and the central role of information systems in institutions seeking leadership through information and knowledge. This stage coincided with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the subsequent rise of capitalism led by the United States, leading to profound political and economic changes, including market openness, heightened competitiveness, and increased difficulty in prediction due to rapid developments.

Based on the above, two fundamental factors contributing to the emergence of economic intelligence as we know it today are proactivity and globalization. Proactivity reflects the strategic and forward-looking dimension of economic intelligence, involving the collection and processing of information for decision-making in the face of uncertainty and rapid changes. Globalization, a multifaceted phenomenon impacting all aspects of human life, has both driven and been driven by proactivity through cross-border investment opportunities. This interplay highlights the importance of economic intelligence in a world characterized by both limitless opportunities and significant challenges.

1.3.2. Elements of Economic Intelligence:

We have previously indicated that economic intelligence as a concept has undergone cognitive and functional development and transformation. In this context, researchers agree that modern economic intelligence systems are based on three basic components (AHMED BELBACHIR & BEKADDOUR, 2017). The first component is vigilance, which emerged during the second stage of the historical development of economic intelligence. Vigilance involves monitoring all developments in the external environment of the organization to gather information of any nature, including what are known as weak signals—indications of potentially minor information that could impact the organization. Generally, anticipation is considered the primary feature of vigilance, as its main goal is to predict threats and opportunities in the short and medium term. Effective vigilance requires a strong group spirit within the organization, optimal time management, and effective internal and interconnected communication to ensure that information can be easily accessed by relevant parties.

The second component of economic intelligence is protection, which involves safeguarding both tangible and intangible assets of the organization. Protection focuses on preserving the organization from dangers, valuing its information resources, and preventing leakage or illegal use of information.

The third component is influence, which refers to changing situations to benefit the organization. This can be achieved internally by leveraging vigilance efforts to make timely decisions, or externally by disseminating information and persuading others to influence competitors or shape public opinion in favor of the organization.

1.3.3. Principles of Economic Intelligence:

Researchers agree that economic intelligence is governed by a set of principles (Marcon & Moinet, 2011). The first principle is legitimacy, which emphasizes that economic intelligence must be practiced within legal and ethical frameworks. It is crucial to note that economic intelligence cannot be an individual endeavor; it relies on a robust collective culture of information. This entails dynamic information management, characterized by the comprehensive dissemination of information and the establishment of open relationships among actors, who should not treat information as personal property.

Continuity is another key principle. Economic intelligence is a continuous, ongoing process that contributes to the formation of an organizational knowledge base. This principle ensures that economic intelligence is integrated into the strategic management of the organization through a consistent policy of systematic information collection. It involves a rational response to the needs for information, thereby providing a stable foundation for organizational decision-making.

Synergy highlights the importance of collective intelligence among various organizational actors. Effective economic intelligence initiatives require rational and comprehensive management of decisions both within and outside the institution. This principle underscores the value of leveraging collective knowledge and decision-making capabilities to enhance the effectiveness of economic intelligence.

Proactivity indicates the necessity of considering all relevant indicators, regardless of the organization's form, level, or size (e.g., institution, territory, state). Proactive economic intelligence involves identifying potential threats and opportunities to reduce uncertainty and enhance organizational responsiveness. This principle shifts the focus from a reactive stance to a proactive one, enabling the development of solutions and influencing the broader social and competitive environment. It allows organizations to regulate markets and shape governance to position themselves as key players in their environment.

Continuous learning is a fundamental principle, as economic intelligence is grounded in ongoing interaction with new developments, continuous research, creativity, and cultural adaptation. This principle ensures that economic intelligence remains relevant and effective in a dynamic environment by promoting a culture of perpetual learning and adaptation.

Susceptibility to criticism emphasizes the need to maintain a critical distance from information. Information should be subjected to scepticism and systematic analysis to ensure its validity and accuracy before practical application. This principle helps prevent the misuse of information and ensures that decisions are based on reliable and accurate data.

Networking is another crucial principle related to the collective culture of information. Economic intelligence supports the development of information exchange networks and manages the cooperation-competition dynamic among diverse actors. Effective networking requires strategies that prioritize containment over confrontation, taking into account the varied visions and interests of different stakeholders.

These principles collectively outline the dimensions covered by the concept of economic intelligence, guiding its application and development.

1.3.4. Dimensions of economic intelligence:

Researchers have identified several key dimensions of economic intelligence (Marcon & Moinet, 2011).

The first of these dimensions is the ethical dimension. Economic intelligence often involves significant costs for gathering necessary information, which may be prohibitive for some organizations. This financial barrier can lead to unethical practices, such as theft or illegal intelligence gathering. Therefore, it is crucial to consider the dual issue of "legality and legitimacy" in the pursuit of economic intelligence.

The second dimension concerns the objectives of economic intelligence. Effective economic intelligence requires a well-defined strategic project that encompasses concepts like business, decision-making, exploitation, and activity.

The concept of economic intelligence also includes an impact dimension. This dimension relates to the exchange, interaction, and intervention necessary to anticipate changes and the capacity to respond effectively.

The network dimension highlights the importance of collective efforts among all actors involved in a specific project. From information gathering to exerting influence, economic intelligence requires coordinated network-based collaboration, ensuring that all stakeholders are working together.

The intelligence dimension underscores the need to seek out information wherever it may be found, while the ecological dimension recognizes that any practice within the realm of economic intelligence must be adopted with careful consideration of the competitive environment and in alignment with the organization's internal structure.

1.3.5. Objectives of Economic Intelligence:

Our discussion of the objectives of economic intelligence naturally leads to exploring the views of researchers on the topic, including those of Alice Guilhaon. Guilhaon asserts that each objective of economic intelligence is primarily designed to mitigate specific risks. Generally, economic intelligence aims to (Guilhaon & Moinet, 2016) identify competitors' competitive advantages and develop distinctive attributes by accurately assessing the strategic position of a country, territory, or organization within the competitive landscape. Additionally, it seeks to pinpoint the strategic activities of competitors and partners, anticipate legal and regulatory changes, and devise innovative strategies across various domains such as products, markets, and technology.

Another critical aim is the transformation of information into knowledge, which is essential for staying ahead of technological and commercial developments. Beyond these, economic intelligence also strives to foresee crises to better manage risks, including financial risks, as well as those that could affect an organization's image and reputation. Furthermore, it endeavors to foster an organizational culture grounded in listening, participation, and collaboration, which are crucial for countering the risk of stagnation.

Moreover, economic intelligence is employed to manage existing information and generate new knowledge through systematic information processing. This approach helps mitigate the risks associated with knowledge gaps, which can lead to decision-making challenges. Additionally, it focuses on recognizing the strengths of work teams within an organization and identifying informal networks with specific skills for a better management.

Ultimately, the objectives of economic intelligence guide the formulation of its overarching policies.

1.3.6. Economic Intelligence Policies:

Researchers agree that the application of economic intelligence is guided by policies that align with a strategic vision tailored to its objectives. French researcher Maud Pelissier (2009) categorizes these policies into two primary approaches.

The first approach is defensive in nature. Economic intelligence plays a critical role in countering both immediate and anticipated threats, such as Cybercrime, industrial espionage, media distortion, economic crimes, and investment surveillance. The importance of economic intelligence in defending against these threats is particularly emphasized in its capacity to protect national interests from the influence of foreign institutions that operate abroad and may affect the national economy.

The second approach focuses on an offensive strategy. This strategy involves utilizing economic intelligence to foster growth and enhance competitiveness, and at this level concepts such as influence and lobbying take shape. However, the successful execution of these strategies depends on a good understanding of the various functions of economic intelligence.

1.3.8. Functions of Economic Intelligence:

The above discussion underscores the significance of economic intelligence both as a concept and as a practical tool within organizational contexts. Researchers such as Levy and Paturel (1999) have identified four fundamental functions of economic intelligence that illustrate its diverse applications.

a- Managing Scientific and Technological Heritage and Practical Knowledge: Economic intelligence is crucial for identifying and safeguarding critical knowledge within an organization. This involves understanding and adhering to industrial and intellectual property standards, applying industrial security and safety regulations, and managing information technologies effectively. Additionally, this function encompasses evaluating the costs associated with acquiring and valuing information.

b- Identifying Opportunities and Threats: Another key function of economic intelligence is to help organizations identify and anticipate opportunities and threats. This involves mastering vigilance techniques, applying the inquiry cycle to gather relevant information, and understanding the dynamics of power and dominance within the market. By deploying offensive strategies, organizations can proactively address potential threats and capitalize on emerging opportunities.

c- Coordinating Activities Within the Organization: Effective coordination is essential for aligning various activities within an organization. Economic intelligence facilitates this by fostering dialogue, cultivating a culture of information awareness, and mobilizing networks at the right moments to achieve specific objectives. Moreover, this function includes engaging in influential practices such as mastering information warfare techniques, valuing information, and maintaining control over information networks.

1.3.8. Levels of Economic Intelligence:

Economic intelligence, as a practice, has evolved significantly with the exponential increase in information availability in recent decades. This evolution has resulted in the establishment of multiple levels of economic intelligence, categorized by researchers into national, local, territorial, and institutional levels (PELISSIER, 2009). The diversification of these levels is influenced by the varying economic risks involved, the numerous actors participating in the process—given the inherently collective nature of economic intelligence—and the different objectives it seeks to achieve. Economic intelligence can

therefore be utilized as a tool for public policies at the highest state levels, as a means to unite territorial actors around specific projects, or as a protective strategy for institutions.

A. National Level:

At the national level, economic intelligence encompasses various strategic programs implemented by governments at the highest levels of the state. These programs are designed and managed by government authorities, ensuring they align with national interests. This dimension of economic intelligence, often termed "macroeconomic intelligence," is characterized by its broad, nationwide application, covering all territories of the country uniformly. It manifests through public policies, regulations, and institutional lobbying efforts, with official state bodies such as ministries, senior officials, and ministerial advisors responsible for their formulation and oversight.

Maud Pelissier refers to this form of economic intelligence as "descending economic intelligence." In this context, it reaffirms the state's authority to intervene in and influence international economic relations. Economic intelligence at this level serves as a tool to expand and reinforce the nation-state's concept in response to the increasing influence of foreign direct investments and multinational corporations. A defining feature of this approach is its application within a geo-economic framework, aimed at strengthening national security, addressing threats such as terrorism, banking and legal issues, and economic challenges posed by other countries. Additionally, it seeks to bolster the nation's industrial strength, enhance the dominance of key sectors, and identify creativity skills across various fields.

B. Local and Territorial Level:

At the local and territorial levels, often referred to as "territorial economic intelligence" or "territorial intelligence" the focus shifts to applying the full range of economic intelligence processes within a specific territory or locality. Two primary models are generally considered at this level:

- **Descending Model:** In this scenario, territorial economic intelligence is designed at the national or governmental level and then implemented locally. The territory acts as a crucible for economic activities, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- **Locally Developed Model:** Alternatively, territorial economic intelligence may emerge from the ground up, driven exclusively by local actors who collaborate to address specific territorial needs. This model operates at the mesoeconomics level, where economic intelligence is tailored to territorial or industrial development policies and directed territorial plans.

At the mesoeconomics level, economic intelligence involves activities such as sectoral reclassification, establishing competitive clusters, developing sensitive sectors, and fostering university-led innovation. Public and private actors collaborate in networks to achieve these objectives, while territorial councils, chambers of commerce and industry, business clubs, unions, and other local entities play a significant role in drafting and implementing strategies.

Decision-making at this level typically requires extended timelines and consensus among territorial public and private actors. The key challenge lies in stimulating sectoral economic dynamics that can lead to the formation of competitive territorial areas and clusters. The ultimate goal of territorial economic intelligence is to address technological, sectoral, and

territorial risks, combat economic desertification and poverty, and drive local economic development. The territory thus becomes a space for enhancing locally developed resources, where information sharing for cooperation is vital. The success of institutions at the local level is closely tied to the existence of a robust territorial economic intelligence policy that ensures their competitiveness.

C. Organizational Level:

The organizational level, also known as the microeconomic intelligence level, is the most commonly discussed aspect of economic intelligence in the literature. This level refers to the processes of acquiring, exploiting, and influencing information within an organization. It involves a comprehensive approach to understanding and managing the organization's information needs, protecting its intellectual assets, fostering creativity and knowledge creation, and supporting strategic planning and structural adaptation.

Economic intelligence at the micro level is a daily operational task that functions as a facilitator or mediator within the organization. It requires a concerted effort from various stakeholders, including managers, boards of directors, information systems managers, economic intelligence officers, knowledge managers, human resources managers, quality managers, executives, and workers.

This level of economic intelligence is tasked with addressing a wide array of challenges, including technical and technological issues, cultural and managerial risks, competitive and commercial threats, as well as strategic, financial, and informational risks.

2. Territorial Economic Intelligence: Between Theory and Practice:

2.1. The Territory as a System:

In various literature, the territory is regarded as a system that extends beyond its geographical definition. This perspective arises from the multitude of actors active within it, the complexity of their relationships, the diversity of their interests, and their capacity for collective action. Researchers broadly agree that a territory is more than just a geographical area; it is an extension of the Earth's surface where a specific human group resides. Di Méo (1998) defines a territory as an economic, ideological, and political (and therefore social) appropriation of space by human groups that have their own perceptions of themselves and their history. This definition highlights the consolidation of the concept of the territory over the last thirty years, driven by significant transformations in the global economy and the accompanying emergence of concepts like sustainable development, governance, and partnership.

Mandinaud (2005) identifies four dimensions of the concept of proximity that characterize a territory, emphasizing their interconnection and integration to build a common political will. These dimensions include:

a- Geographical Proximity: The obvious small distance that separates actors within a territory.

b- Organizational Proximity: The close relationship between the branches of institutions and their central administrations.

c- Institutional and Administrative Proximity: Linked primarily to the bodies and administrations that represent central authority within the territory.

d- Social Networks Proximity: Involves chambers of commerce, business clubs, human resources clubs, associations, and other networks.

These four dimensions of proximity enhance territorial coherence, making the territory more effective as a system.

2.2. Territorial Economic Intelligence:

Building on the concept of the territory as a system, territorial economic intelligence (TEI) emerges as a specialized form of economic intelligence tailored to a specific territorial context. Although definitions of TEI vary, there is not a unified definition for it.

The French Territorial Intelligence Portal defines territorial economic intelligence as "the application of the principles of economic intelligence within the framework of a public activity, serving the economic and industrial development of a given territory. It is a tool to assist local communities" (Roman & Abdou Moussa, 2019). This definition links territorial economic intelligence with vigilance and public activity and places it at the service of the economic and industrial development of a specific region within the framework of competitive polarity or poles of excellence.

On the other hand, the Coordination of the Activity of the European Network for Territorial Intelligence (CORDIS) defines TEI as a science that focuses on the sustainable development of territories, with the local community as its subject. TEI involves activities such as linking diverse and complex knowledge and dynamics to increase the capacities of territorial communities, making them more effective in achieving fair and sustainable development. This definition stresses the importance of information sharing, the dissemination of analytical methods using information and communication technologies (ICT), and the promotion of good governance through participatory and partnership-based decision-making processes.

In essence, territorial economic intelligence is about acquiring the necessary tools to develop, manage, and evaluate the sustainable development of territories through partnerships and participatory projects involving various territorial actors. It also includes designing strategies to market existing resources while preserving and even enhancing historical and environmental heritage. Additionally, TEI aims to cultivate a culture that raises public awareness of transnational immaterial needs.

2.3. Three visions of territorial intelligence:

Despite the many years that have passed since the emergence of the concept of economic intelligence, including its territorial variant, the concept of territorial economic intelligence still embraces several distinct forms of practice. These are summarized by the French Portal for Economic Intelligence in three primary visions (French Portal for Economic Intelligence, n.d.):

a- The first vision focuses on sensitizing institutions to the tools and processes of economic intelligence, such as clusters and economic poles. It involves equipping these institutions with the capabilities necessary to implement the principles of economic intelligence within their operations.

b- The second vision involves the application of economic intelligence techniques by a territory or local groups. This includes internal and external vigilance, territorial marketing, and adopting a modern perspective on economic development.

c- The third vision positions territorial economic intelligence as an effective tool for the intelligent development of a specific territory, considering its social and geographical context, resources, and organization. This approach aligns closely with the concept of sustainable economic development.

2.4. Comparison between territorial economic intelligence and economic intelligence:

Through all the elements mentioned above, a comparison can be made between economic intelligence and territorial economic intelligence by identifying the similarities and differences, which can be summarized in the following points:

- a. Relationship: Territorial economic intelligence is inspired by economic intelligence and represents an attempt to extend its principles from the organizational field to the territorial context, encompassing its various components and actors. Thus, territorial economic intelligence is an adaptation of the rules of economic intelligence according to territorial specificities.
- b. Objective: Economic intelligence aims to identify the characteristics of the organization, which allows for the search for appropriate information to meet its various decision-making needs. In contrast, the goal of territorial economic intelligence is to support territorial institutions and groups with the aim of enhancing territorial attraction.
- c. Legal Framework: Both economic intelligence and territorial economic intelligence operate within legal frameworks that differ according to the countries that apply them and the approaches they adopt. This is especially relevant given their adjacency to sensitive concepts such as economic secrecy, intelligence, and economic warfare.
- d. Area of Intervention: Economic intelligence intervenes in creating defensive and offensive policies for institutions. Territorial economic intelligence, on the other hand, focuses on financing social policies to integrate marginalized groups and help unproductive individuals, aiming for greater social cohesion within the framework of sustainable development policies.
- e. Quality of Information: For economic intelligence, information must be accurate, useful, and reliable to enable optimal decision-making. In the case of territorial economic intelligence, the necessary information is diverse, serving multiple sectors by strengthening legal and financial frameworks that support institutions.

2.5. Dimensions of territorial economic intelligence:

Any territorial economic intelligence strategy must account for several dimensions in its development and implementation: social, technological, economic, political, and ethical.

A. Social Dimension: Although territorial economic intelligence primarily serves as a tool for economic development, aimed at enhancing competitiveness and visibility at both national and international levels, its social dimension is equally crucial. This dimension focuses on addressing social inequities through the fair distribution of wealth and balanced local development across territories and provinces within a country. It involves central support for locally developed policies, ensuring equitable development by considering local specifics such as population size, culture, and professional practices. This approach aims to optimize the use of human resources and encourages local communities to engage in local decision-making and project development.

B. Technological Dimension: Economic intelligence inherently involves technological advancements. As a process for collecting, evaluating, and protecting information, economic intelligence relies heavily on information and communication technologies (ICT). This includes the use of electronic portals, websites, and data analysis tools. Therefore, incorporating and effectively utilizing ICT is essential in territorial economic intelligence to enhance the collection, processing, and dissemination of relevant information.

C. Political Dimension: The political dimension is fundamental to territorial economic intelligence. Successful initiatives depend on the application of political tools such as territorial governance, participation, and partnerships. Effective territorial economic intelligence policies require transparent governance mechanisms, strategic vision, accountability, law enforcement, and anti-corruption measures. Participation from all territorial stakeholders in formulating intelligence strategies, gathering, evaluating, and using information collectively is critical for making informed territorial decisions. Territorial economic intelligence thrives on diverse partnerships among government bodies, civil society institutions, and economic organizations to build a robust territorial economy capable of addressing challenges and seizing opportunities.

D. Ethical Dimension: The ethical dimension of territorial economic intelligence is vital, though it is sometimes overlooked. Ethical considerations are crucial in ensuring that the process of acquiring and using information adheres to legal and moral standards. Issues related to the legality of accessing information, its legitimacy, and the nature of the information itself are significant. The concept of economic intelligence must navigate these ethical challenges, including the probable use of different types of information—white, gray, and black.

2.6. Objectives of Territorial Economic Intelligence:

Like any regulatory tool guided by policies and strategies, territorial economic intelligence aims to achieve several objectives, as outlined by many researchers. These objectives include anticipating potential changes in market dynamics, territorial conditions, and shifts in laws, technologies, and other components of the territorial environment. A primary goal is to assist decision-makers at both national and territorial levels, facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of various issues and enabling optimal collective decision-making.

Territorial economic intelligence strategies seek to leverage diverse, multidisciplinary knowledge from various cultural backgrounds. This involves comparing insights and relating them to territorial structures and dynamics. Additionally, these strategies aim to adapt economic intelligence tools—such as territorial vigilance—for more effective analysis of territorial information. They also focus on developing methods and practices among territorial actors that promote territorial development while adhering to ethical standards.

Moreover, territorial economic intelligence plays a crucial role in enhancing the effectiveness of influence activities essential for territorial development. It involves anticipating and addressing potential crises, improving infrastructure management (e.g., roads, networks), and accurately identifying and applying methods of territorial economic intelligence. Collectively, these efforts contribute to increased competitiveness.

3. Territorial economic intelligence and communication studies:

The concept of complexity has long been associated with phenomena that challenge human cognition, thus highlighting the increasing importance of intelligence, as previously

discussed. This importance is evident in the concept of economic intelligence, which necessitates the coordinated efforts of all members of an organization to make optimal decisions aligned with its strategy and medium- to long-term goals. Researchers Nicolas MOINET and Franck BULINGE emphasize that “economic intelligence, driven by analysis and constant evolution, must rely on strategic knowledge groups, with communication playing a central role” (MOINET & BULINGE)

In today’s context, characterized by an unprecedented surge in information, the sheer volume of data can impede decision-making and the production of knowledge. Effective knowledge cannot emerge in isolation; it requires communication processes that facilitate the creation, valuation, and direction of organizational meaning through the engagement of various stakeholders. In this regard, researcher Dominic Walton (2005) argues that the maturation of a concept such as economic intelligence necessitates a shift from information—merely strategic—to knowledge, which in turn demands a deeper understanding and application of communication.

Observations of the development of economic intelligence research reveal its relatively recent incorporation into communication studies. This delay has led many researchers to describe communication as the “absent parent” of economic intelligence, highlighting its crucial yet often overlooked role.

3.1. Between two philosophies of communication:

The field of information and communication sciences, while relatively new, has sparked ongoing debate about its effectiveness and its unique role in analysing phenomena alongside other scientific disciplines. Research into complex concepts such as economic intelligence, including its territorial variant, intersects with a variety of precise scientific fields, including computer science, mathematics, and the broad domains of economic, human, and social sciences, extending from management sciences to sociology.

In exploring economic intelligence, scholars encounter two distinct interpretative philosophies within communication studies: the "functional philosophy" and the "normative philosophy."

The functional philosophy emphasizes the role of economic intelligence as an organizational tool that necessitates structured interaction and exchange using specific techniques and tools. This approach aims to achieve clear goals, enhance capabilities, and ensure continuous development, especially in response to increasing organizational complexity driven by technological and political advancements. For instance, communication intelligence—defined as "the ability of an intelligent institution to collectively mobilize its diverse capabilities to build a cohesive internal communication system" (Ely, 2012)—illustrates this concept. It aims to transform data into strategic information and subsequently into effective internal communication.

The functional philosophy underscores the challenge of balancing the human aspects of communication with information technology. The process of communication is inherently complex compared to the relatively straightforward transfer of information facilitated by technological means. It raises issues related to the interpretation of information among various actors and highlights the necessity of intercommunication for effective processes.

Conversely, the "normative philosophy" pertains to ideal communication practices based on the principle of sharing. It addresses the challenge posed by the diverse range of organizational actors and stakeholders, both internal and external, and their varied

information needs. This philosophy recognizes the influence of national policies and strategic visions, as well as the impact of international and territorial projects, on information possession and utilization.

3.2. Territorial economic intelligence as a communication problematic:

Researcher Yann Bertacchini (2010) indicates that territorial economic intelligence has increasingly become a focus within communication studies. Modern information and communication technologies have significantly impacted the field of territorial research, as territorial intelligence systems now utilize both traditional information transfer methods and contemporary technologies such as internal networks, the Internet, geographic information systems, data analysis, and territorial collective media systems. These tools are essential and cannot function effectively without integrated communication processes.

Building on Walton's (2005) divisions regarding the philosophy of communication in economic intelligence research, territorial economic intelligence presents two primary communication challenges. On one hand, it follows the framework of economic intelligence as an organizational tool with defined stages and objectives. On the other hand, the collective nature of territorial economic intelligence necessitates the involvement of territorial actors in collaborative projects. These projects may involve either top-down or bottom-up policies, which can shift the focus of economic intelligence from immediate economic outcomes to broader, strategic social and political goals.

3.3. Communication Processes for Territorial Economic Intelligence Systems:

Comparative studies conducted across several European countries reveal that communication processes within territorial economic intelligence are generally categorized into two primary stages (Massetot, 2008):

A. The Stage of Producing Meaning :

This stage involves transforming data into information for both the team responsible for the territorial project and the operational team executing it. This internal communication process resembles the concept of communication intelligence but operates at a broader organizational level—that of the territory. However, the production of meaning extends beyond internal communication. It also encompasses external communication directed towards stakeholders who are less directly involved in the implementation of the territorial project but have a vested interest in its outcomes, such as funders.

B. Producing the Relationship:

This stage pertains to linking the produced information (i.e., the meaning established in the first stage) with its recipients. Effective territorial communication operations from an economic intelligence perspective require analyzing the nature of the recipients and ensuring that communication efforts align with territorial contexts, including needs, cultural and social characteristics, and structural elements.

In summary, the significance and necessity of territorial economic intelligence as a territorial governance tool are evident. It supports territorial participation and enables nations and organizations to protect themselves and enhance their effectiveness in an increasingly complex, interconnected world. Achieving this requires a thorough analysis and emphasis on the communication dimensions of economic intelligence, with a particular focus on territorial economic intelligence.

II. Results and discussion :

One of the key findings of this theoretical study is that the concept of territorial intelligence emerged in the context of the increasing use of knowledge as a fundamental tool for strategic decision-making. This development is closely linked to the growing importance of information and the consequences of information explosion. The concept of intelligence itself has undergone significant theoretical and practical developments, as documented in various studies and research. The historical, economic, and political context has contributed to the emergence of more adaptable regulatory tools capable of anticipating and responding to rapid changes in global markets, with economic intelligence becoming a major multi-level regulatory instrument. The practical application of economic intelligence has demonstrated its effectiveness, which has, in turn, led to the maturation and crystallization of the concept of territorial intelligence. Over time, territorial economic intelligence has distinguished itself from economic intelligence in terms of practice, objectives, legislation, areas of intervention, and other characteristics. The multifaceted nature of this concept and its practical significance necessitate more precise theorizing, especially considering its interdisciplinary roots, which draw from various scientific and research fields, including communication studies. Economic intelligence, in general, and territorial intelligence, in particular, rely heavily on coordination, exchange, and interaction among territorial actors, alongside a growing dependence on modern information and communication technologies. This integration brings together two distinct communication perspectives that are essential for understanding the concept. However, despite its importance, communication studies dedicated to territorial intelligence remain scarce, a gap that researchers have noted. This theoretical study, therefore, underscores the need for increased scholarly communication studies of territorial intelligence.

III. Methods and Materials:

This theoretical study aims to comprehensively address the conceptual aspects of territorial economic intelligence, its development, and the various interpretations that have been proposed. Additionally, the study seeks to highlight the importance of territorial economic intelligence, its various levels, the policies associated with it, and its position within communication studies, utilizing a research methodology based on deduction and inference.

IV. Conclusion:

The convergence of communication advancements with the political and economic expansions of globalization has made information and knowledge key factors in organizational management. This development has led to the emergence of "economic intelligence" as a crucial tool for proactive organizational and strategic decision-making. The intense competitiveness driven by market liberalization has challenged national territories to enhance their competitiveness within clear legislative frameworks to ensure adequate development and improved visibility. These transformations have given rise to the concept of territorial economic intelligence, which functions as both a key process and a multidisciplinary notion. Despite its evident importance, this concept is still in the process of seeking legitimization, particularly within the field of communication studies.

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