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Effective metropolitan governance is not an outcome just from a law making process. The Italian case.

Maurizio Pioletti maurizio.pioletti@unive.it
Stefano Soriani soriani@unive.it

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Abstract

The Delrio law has been ruling in Italy since the beginning of 2015 and it defines as metropolitan perimeters, the boundaries of the ex Italian provinces. As a consequence, there have resulted numerous problems, related to the outcoming spatial configuration, both in terms of governance and metropolitan visioning, since only in very few cities the newly established metropolitan boundaries are coherent with urban systems' dynamics and changes. The analysis of the Italian case helps to demonstrate that effective metropolitan governance does not stem only from a Government-driven and top down provision, and confirms that metropolitan development and governance require the development and strengthening of no-statutory and voluntary approaches, with a strong involvement of the business community.

In order to illustrate and critically evaluate the recent Italian experience, this paper presents the results of a comparative analysis of a range of European polycentric metropolitan and industrial areas: Amsterdam (NL), Rotterdam-Den Haag (NL), Lille (FR), Barcelona (ES), Ruhrgebeit (DE). After a dramatic crisis caused by de-industrialisation and economic restructuring, they are all focusing on innovation, the establishment of new high-quality local services, and greater orientation to international competitiveness. These strategies do not stem directly from Government-driven regulation for local authorities, but are, to a large extent, dependent upon cooperative and no-statutory efforts. Moreover, the spatial scales involved by these initiatives are not always coincident with previous administrative boundaries.

As a result, both in case of institutionalized metropolitan authorities as formal level of government, and in case of the absence of formal metropolitan institutions, this paper demonstrates that territorial cooperation is the essential basis for any metropolitan process, that often imply associations of municipalities and other local actors, sharing a common vision, and implementing strategic development projects.

INTRODUCTION

Worldwide, the urban systems' efficiency represents a crucial element for the national economic performance (Veneri, 2014). In fact, in the OCSE countries, about two thirds of the national population reside in urban areas, where production, firms and workers are concentrated, and which are the places where the highest income and employment levels are ensured (OCSE, 2013). In a mere economic perspective, mid-sized cities can reach the efficiency and competitiveness thanks to different factors, or processes: by specialisation and labour division with other cities belonging to the same region (complementary networks); by network cooperation with equally specialized cities (sinergy network); by the proximity to larger cities, within wide metropolitan regions, borrowing population from them (Camagni, Lattarulo, 2014).

European urban regions are composed of diverse urban morphologies and spatial organizations, like the metropolitan areas, where different-sized urban centres are connected by various type of infrastructure and have become over time more and more functionally integrated. Each case reflects different institutional models and metropolitan planning tools, but in a more and more competitive and globalized economy, all of them need to assume an innovative approach in territorial marketing and strategic planning. In other words, today the promotion, even in territorial processes, of new entrepreneurial approaches is required, as much as a different spatial scale for the government action; the adoption of new governance approaches, oriented towards the private stakeholders' involvement; the active participation of civil society, as well as a more effective territorial cooperation (Soriani, 2015).

For what concerns Italy, functional metropolitan areas are determined by a territorial coalescence process (Calafati, 2009). Because of that, contiguous municipalities, since the broadening of daily individual commuting basin, have been integrating their functions. This is particularly the case of Central and Northern Italian Regions (such as Toscana, Emilia Romagna and Veneto), whose evolution has been strongly characterised by polycentrism.
Nevertheless, this phenomenon was not followed by a coherent administrative reorganization, able to respond to the changing local needs. On the contrary, the political and legislative debate that has lasted for about a quarter of century, resulted in the promulgation of the Delrio law, that was conceived in the context of the national spending review initiative. This initiative, which was also promoted by the National Government as an important step in the process of simplification of the Italian public administration system, simply converted a list of provinces into Metropolitan Cities, rather than strategically reorganizing the urban government.

In Italy, Metropolitan Cities were planned for the first time by the Full reform of municipalities and provinces (Legge 142, 8 giugno 1990), that identified 9 urban areas (Torino, Milano, Venezia, Genova, Bologna, Firenze, Roma, Bari, Napoli) which should have become Metropolitan Cities. They could have been composed of the head municipality and the surrounding municipalities, or a wider space, including other areas functionally integrated. Besides, regional governments could define new metropolitan boundaries, different from those originally established by the law, after consulting involved municipalities and provinces. Moreover, the 1990 law provided for the establishment of new provinces if the metropolitan boundaries resulting from the government reorganisation did not coincide with the already existing provincial ones. Bureaucracy, political fragmentation and a very poor experience in the field of strategic planning have prevented the legislative provisions to became effective, and the Italian metropolitan cities have just remained “metropolis on the paper” (or “paper-metropolis”) up to 2014.

In fact, more than two decades later, the Delrio law[1] was introduced and it converted the 9 divested provinces (that are listed above) into Metropolitan Cities. This choice reaffirmed the role that provincial boundaries have always played in the Italian administrative system. However, this logic has not been considering extra-provincial metropolitan relationships, nor cases where the metropolitan functional integration area is smaller than the existing provincial area. This point prevents the adoption of an effective strategic approach to metropolitan development, although this is considered as the main purpose of the new legislative provision.

As the Italian metropolitan constitution is based on the "government of perimeters" (Benvenuti, 2013), the role of territorial cooperation and no-statutory approaches, as shown in many European experiences, would be fundamental to sustain metropolitan development and governance, and is clearly underestimated. As a consequence, the Italian approach fails to acknowledge the importance of social, economic, political and spatial relationships that would fuel a metropolitan process. As a point of fact, an effective metropolitan governance cannot be properly supported just by the "government of perimeters".

In this discussion, the starting point is the distinction between the territorial and the institutional organization. Calafati, in fact, suggests to consider urban systems as analytic and operative units, just to focus on real territorial organization, and do not on the institutional one. As a result, it emerges that social and economic processes are concentrated in a complex of inter-communal systems that have an urban dimension, and that are related to a series of polarities. This is a phenomenon, even according to Calafati, that is typical in the most of Italian regions. Because of the absence of an institutional reform that considered the new relational densities, the gap that can be observed in Italy between the "legal city" and the "actual city" is very large. This causes a problem in identifying urban systems, as it happens, for instance, in Venice and Milan, where the Metropolitan City is smaller than the effective metropolitan area, as much as in Turin, where the Metropolitan City is larger than the effective metropolitan area.

As we have mentioned above, this can be explained by the fact that the Delrio law was designed in the Spending Review perspective, set by the Monti government. The absence of reorganization of boundaries and the absence of new mechanism for promoting cooperation and the business communities' activation, prevent the new Metropolitan authorities to fulfil such important tasks assigned by the law, as thepolicy agenda setting; the adoption and updating of the triennial territorial strategic plan; the general territorial planning including ICT and physical infrastructures; the coordination and the management of public services and the organization of general public services organization; the promotion and coordination of economical and social development, supporting innovative economical and research activities.

One of the main purpose of the Delrio law is to reduce the public budget, in deed very few financial resources have been allocated to the establishment of metropolitan authorities. As a consequence, strategic planning is quite the unique governmental instrument, that was already available in the past, but that has never been able to achieve development goals, if not combined with public investments. Moreover, there is no transfer of functions and competencies from the municipal government, nor from the regional one, to the new metropolitan authority, opposite to the French law (Camagni, Lattarulo, 2014).

[1] 7 aprile 2014, n. 56. Regulation on metropolitan cities, provinces, associations and unification of municipalities

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METHODOLOGY

This study consists in a comparative analysis of government and governance of European polycentric and industrial metropolitan areas, that provided effective approaches to the economic development.

In the selection of study-cases, we overall considered different declinations of polycentrism. As suggested by Giffinger and Suitner (2015), it is morphological, designed by urban hierarchy based on dimensions; functional, in terms of infrastructure building, flows and interactions among urban nodes, representing indicators of inter-urban relationships; strategic, that is founded on political and institutional relationship, depending on politics, and development strategies, on the cognitive vision of the polycentric metropolitan development, from the urban stakeholders' point of view, on the intermunicipal cooperation, on building strategic networks among municipalities, on planning agreements.

Within the European Union there are different shapes of metropolitan governance of the polycentric areas and different economic development metropolitan strategies. They focus on some common issues, like brownfield redevelopment, ecological conversion of the economy and the territory, revalorisation of tourism and cultural offer, development of high specialized education, and development of high added value productions. With respect to these issues, we carried on a literature review and selected the following metropolitan areas, as they appeared especially relevant:

- The Netherlands: Amsterdam, and Rotterdam – Den haag, in the Randstad;
- France: Lille European Metropolis and Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, in the Nord pas-de-Calais;
- Spain: Área Metropolitana de Barcelona, in the Comunidad Autónoma de Cataluña;
- Germany: Ruhrgebeit (metropolitan area), Rhein-Rurh (metropolitan region), in the Nordrhein-Westfalen.

For each case, we considered the process of metropolitan institutionalisation, modalities of territorial cooperation and business community participation into the metropolitan development process. The construction of this analytic framework was possible thanks to the comprehension of which are the areas and the regions involved by metropolitan processes, which are the types of metropolitan government and which are governance's configurations. Besides, we verified if an agency for the economic development had been established, how the strategic planning process had taken place, which was the role of the business community in metropolitan processes, and which were the most relevant and attractive fields, plans, and projects at the metropolitan level..

MAIN RESULTS FROM STUDY CASES' ANALYSIS

The influence of State and Regions in the metropolitan institution process

In each case, the metropolitan issue is managed differently by the respective national government. In the Netherlands, governmental policies do not orient the metropolitan organization, entrusting municipalities to account for that. Enabling municipalities can imply more local stakeholders' involvement, but spatially and economically connected cities might prefer autonomous solutions, avoiding cooperative efforts with the other centres.

Indeed, in the Netherlands, Amsterdam did not organize its own metropolitan space with other functionally integrated cities, but, it was neither able to find a definitive solution, following the model of the monocentric metropolis, because of conflicts with surrounding municipalities. As a matter of fact, the variable geometry is a common feature of the metropolitan space organization in many cases. As a consequence, on their own, Rotterdam – Den Haag, excluded from the possibility to network with Amsterdam, found their own cooperation agreement, based on common strategic projects, thanks to their mayors, without transferring competencies, nor reorganizing the local government.

In Germany and in the Netherlands, the national law does not envisage the institution of metropolitan cities. Nevertheless, in Germany, like in Spain, the metropolitan issue is a regional competence, but according to very different modalities. In Germany, there are some important metropolitan regions, such as the Rhein – Ruhr metropolitan region, that are officially recognized, but that are not a level of territorial government, while in Cataluna, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, established by the regional law, is a new level of government, that is combined with the existing ones. Therefore, in Ruhr, both at regional and local scale, territorial development processes are leaded by a communal association, that is the type of organization, that is able to ensure the territorial cooperation. While in Germany and in France, inter communal cooperation has been active for long, in Cataluna, the metropolitan scale was selected to improve the efficiency of public services' management. In France, the national law defines the metropolitan cities, that consequently results a new level of government, included in the public administration regulation.

These cases show different solutions and processes of metropolitan government. Certainly, the Italian case, in a legislative perspective, is closer to the French model, even if the Catalan case should inspire the Italian Regions to promote metropolitan government, even because in some cases the relationship between regional and metropolitan authorities can result competitive.

In the Netherlands, that is the only study case where there are no regional levels of government, historically opted for the power decentralization, giving municipalities wide autonomy. Instead, in the other cases, the regional government level, is present, but in the French case national decisions prevail, while in the German and Catalan cases, the regional power is dominant. In deed, on the one side Germany is a federal republic, and on the other, Cataluna is autonomous with respect to central government.
While in the Ruhr basin area, the Land just financially supported metropolitan development process giving wide autonomy to association of municipalities, in the Spanish case there was an higher influence of the regional government on the metropolitan decision making process, as metropolitan Barcelona is also one of the outcome of the Catalan process, in terms of affirming the Catalan capital as one of the most important metropolitan areas in Spain.

As a result, in case the approach in metropolitan government, regulation, and development strategies is top-down, the metropolitan development resultsinto being strongly conditioned by the national, or regional politics. But, the metropolitan development is not just government-driven, but also a bottom process activated by metropolitan stakeholders.

From the "government of perimeters" to the "government of relationships": the experience of territorial cooperation and the role of business community.

With respect to the inadequate drawing of metropolitan cities on the basis of provincial boundaries, the German and the Dutch cases show that metropolitan cooperation does not require the establishment of fixed perimeters:the activation of local stakeholders, the promotion of local development and identification of common fields and projects, are the basis for local strategic and operative agreements. In this perspective, the Italian experience of local development programme agreements[2] is certainly significant.

In the Dutch case, we studied also Amsterdam, that is the only capital in our set of cities, where it was not possible to set a formal regional metropolitan government for the above mentioned opposition of many surrounding municipalities. Nevertheless, this gave the opportunity to develop a more inclusive metropolitan governance and more representativeness of civil society and business community than a formal level of government. The lack of a formal institution implied the production of creative metropolitan planning, pushing a metropolitan story telling that influenced stakeholders, and stimulated more informal cooperation.
The Dutch territorial cooperation is mainly based on development projects shared through specific agreements, (memorandum of understanding and programme agreements), or eventually, on sharing a policy agenda. On the contrary, in other European cases, the local cooperation is supported by no-local level policies and combined with large scale strategic planning. In this context, a direct connection was established between central national government and municipal authorities for the allocation of financial resources to metropolitan areas, and the informal cooperation set by the mayors of Rotterdam and Den Haag evolved into the institution of Metropoolregio Rotterdam-Den Haag, that includes about 20 municipalities.

For what concerns metropolitan business community's involvement, the Dutch case presents the experience of the Amsterdam Economic Board, a network aimed at strengthening the fragmented and scarce strategic vision capacity of individual stakeholders. While the metropolitan area set its economic strategy on the idea of specialisation in the knowledge economy and on the cluster organization, the board aims at coordinate strategic projects for the regional development. Besides, the role of the BC is associated with the implementation of the triangular model, or triple helix, where each Delta association has a specific cluster focus. The German case presents public-private partnerships, like the World Business Rhine-Ruhr, or Rhine-Ruhr Economic Alliance, that represent important stakeholders' involvement occasions. This kind of partnership could be even created by national and private financial support, or increasing the current Technologie-Allianz-Ruhr to cover the whole Rhine-Ruhr region.

In France, metropolis are set by the national law, that introduced the leading partner principle, to be applied by the local authorities engaged in a common action. The current French metropolitan cities were anticipated by the urban communities and the related EPCI (Établissement public de

[2] Intese programmatiche d'area (I.P.A.)

coopération intercommunal) tool, to define strategic policies at metropolitan level. At the beginning, in France the process was mainly sustained by forms of voluntary functional cooperation, on the basis of project-led voluntary agreements, and only later, particularly since the 2010, metropolitan cities were set by the law, with municipalities being obliged to take part to their communal institutions. Lille is leader in the process of definition of the Economic Development Metropolitan Plan, including contributions from both public and private actors. At the same time, for the trans-borders region, the key element for the comprehension of the business community's role is the Economic Development Agency, that is engaged in facilitating enterprises to relocate in the metropolitan area.

In Barcelona area, inter-municipal coordination for local public service management, like water, waste, and transportation was already active when the Catalan law established the Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB). This new institution embodied competences, that were managed separately before The integration of local public services at metropolitan scale with strategic planning represents the main mission of AMB. Furthermore, in Barcelona sustaining economic development represents an important goal shared by the different levels of governments, and metropolitan efforts for sustaining and promoting economic development adopt a very wide perspective, ranging from the brownfield regeneration for new industrial activities to the attraction of new high-quality service and cultural activities.
Besides, Barcelona has an important experience in supporting local development trough the municipal agency Barcelona Activa, and pushed the economic development in urban regeneration, like in the Distrito@22. The metropolitan authority is supporting the economic development through the Friendly for business programme, that promotes the usage of available industrial and brownfield areas, and involve the business community in strategic planning. This should give raise to the Metropolitan Agency for the Economic Promotion, already introduced by the31/2010 law.

CONCLUSIONS

According to Paolo Costa (1991), legal provisions on metropolitan government is not enough to govern a metropolitan area, although the law is useful and essential, i.e. metropolis cannot be just a result of a top down legislative and administrative apparatus. There are other relevant dimensions: functional performance and integration, types and quality of entrepreneurial and management processes, typology of urban and industrial regeneration projects, the existence of wide and well-rooted social networks, the level and extent of the BC's participation to the phases of envisioning and agenda-setting. In other words, metropolitan development and governance are outcomes from interactions of social and economical actors. Therefore, the process of metropolitan constitution is not given just by the legal and political institutionalisation of the metropolitan government, but is the result of stakeholders' (inter-) actions.

After that, it is possible to investigate which are the metropolitan spatial organization better able to coordinate actors, and consequently network their actions, i.e. making them working in a synergic way. The participation of both citizens and organized groups to the decision-making process, as well as a flexible and proactive political will are fundamental for an inclusive and productive metropolitan space, where the social and economical development is composed of common projects, included in a shared agenda.

To conclude legal provisions can better define functions and competences, plan and facilitate participation, involvement, effective round tables; they can also better shape the role of business community in decision-making process and better ensure representative democracy (Soriani, 2015). Nevertheless, in Italian cities metropolitan agenda would be the apparatus that strengthens the territorial development and that promotes shared actions. It can sustain the adoption of more effective territorial marketing approaches and doing so, it can contribute to make the metropolitan branding more performative, to attract new foreign investors, as well as to promote the urban products and services abroad. In addition to that, it is essential to set project-based initiatives, like regeneration of brownfield areas, even in terms of equal distribution on the large spatial scale; the integration of the tourist mobility with the ordinary mobility; the promotion of the metropolitan cultural/tourist offer; the activation of a metropolitan cooperation networks among universities; the creation of metropolitan desk for creative entrepreneurship, companies' networks, and innovative districts for high added value productions.

With respect to the Italy, and on the basis of our study- cases, we can argue that the difficult phase that most of the newly established metropolitan cities are currently experiencing, as result of the Government-driven approach, can be partly overcome by the establishment of metropolitan agencies, with a no-statutory role. They should design and promote voluntary and cooperative initiatives on the basis of functional integration, without being constrained by the "government of perimeters" approach. These agencies could help bottom up initiaves to raise stakeholders' participation.

As regards stakeholders' involvement, the Delrio law provided that the metropolitan city's Statute (that is, the legal chart that defines the metropolitan city's functions and internal organisation) can regulate business community's participation into metropolitan policy design and implementation . In this perspective, setting an Economic Advisory Board (or a Metropolitan conference on economy and labour), that includes the participation of the main business associations, and main metropolitan actors, would be essential to increase the effectiveness of the metropolitan action and its capacity of understanding local needs. However, as in many international experiences, effective participation requires also the organization and promotion of other communication channel, like networks, forum, public< consultation, between the new authority and the business community (Soriani, 2015).

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