



**POLITECNICO**  
MILANO 1863

DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA  
E STUDI URBANI



LPS – Laboratorio di Politiche Sociali

## **A REVIEW OF ITALIAN ACADEMIC LITERATURE AND PUBLIC POLICIES ON TERRITORIAL COHESION**

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*This paper is based on research carried out within the EU-funded COHSMO (Inequality, Urbanization and Territorial COHesion: Developing the European Social Model of economic growth and democratic capacity) research project (<https://www.cohsmo.aau.dk>). The project is funded by the Horizon 2020 programme.*

DAStU  
Working Papers  
n. 01/2019 (LPS.03)  
ISSN 2281-6283

This working paper is hosted by DAStU, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani,  
[www.dastu.polimi.it/publicazioni/working\\_papers](http://www.dastu.polimi.it/publicazioni/working_papers)

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## Abstract

*This working paper analyses the studies carried out by the academic literature on territorial development in Italy. Specifically, particular attention will be paid to studies on territorial cohesion. This text is divided into three parts. The first part analyses the fundamental aspects of the literature concerning Italian territorial development, using as basis the seminal contribution of Arnaldo Bagnasco, *Tre Italie* (1977). The second part is focused on the role played by public policies aimed at fostering territorial development. Finally, the conclusions summarise the main results emerging from this review and highlights the connection between scholarly debate on territorial development and local development policy design.*

## Key-words

Cities, landscapes, territories; Territorial cohesion; Three Italies model; New Programming; Inner Areas.

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*How to cite this working paper:*

*Cerea, S., Pacchi, C., Ranci, C. (2019) A Review of Italian Academic Literature and Public Policies on Territorial Cohesion, in DAStU Working Paper Series, n. 01/2019 (LPS.03).*

## 1. Introduction

This working paper analyses the studies carried out by academic literature on territorial development in Italy. Specifically, particular attention will be paid to studies on territorial cohesion. However, most of the literature does not explicitly adopt the term territorial cohesion, but refers to one or more of its dimensions.

Since the concept of territorial cohesion has been used with various meanings, this contribution refers to the definition suggested by Medeiros, which seems to be the most complete of existing definitions: “Territorial Cohesion is the process of promoting a more cohesive and balanced territory, by: (i) supporting the reduction of socioeconomic territorial imbalances; (ii) promoting environmental sustainability; (iii) reinforcing and improving the territorial cooperation / governance processes; and (iv) reinforcing and establishing a more polycentric urban system” (Medeiros, 2016, p. 10).

This text is divided into three parts. The first part (section 2) analyses the fundamental aspects of forty years of literature - mainly sociological - concerning Italian territorial development, using as basis the seminal contribution of Arnaldo Bagnasco, *Tre Italie* (1977). The second part (section 3) is focused on the role played by public policies aimed at fostering territorial development. Finally, the conclusions (section 4) summarise the main results emerging from this review.

## 2. Territorial development models in Italy: a review of empirical studies

Our starting point is a volume considered a watershed between two different ways of representing territorial development. Published in 1977, Arnaldo Bagnasco’s *Tre Italie* is indeed a fundamental cornerstone for a series of analyses on the key local aspects at the basis of the mentioned developments. In fact, the volume overcame the dichotomy of Northern and Southern Italy, which, up to that moment, had been the basic framework for representing the country’s development. According to Bagnasco, Italy is the expression of three social-territorial systems (in Italian *formazioni sociali*): “Central Italy,” that is the Country’s North-Western regions characterized by the presence of large Fordist industrial enterprises; “Marginal Italy,” that is the South of the country marked by a long-lasting underdevelopment; “Peripheral Italy,” that is the Central and North-Eastern regions characterized by local productive systems made of small enterprises. The latter social-territorial system was defined by Bagnasco as the “Third Italy,” with the purpose to identify the most innovative element of his theory.

With *formazione sociale* Bagnasco meant to identify the result of interactions between economic, social, cultural and political elements within a specific local area. According to his theory, each *formazione sociale* has its own economic features and specific social, cultural and political dimensions (Mutti, 2002). Moreover, each *formazione sociale* is characterized by a particular link between the mode of economic development and the mode of social integration (Medeiros, 2016). With “social integration” Bagnasco meant to define - following Lockwood (1992, 1999) - forms of citizenship and civic engagement (“civic integration”), as well as the strength of primary and secondary networks (“social cohesion”).

In the following paragraphs, individual descriptions are provided of the three *formazioni sociali* identified by Bagnasco and their evolution over the last forty years is being traced, as his model underwent deep economic and social transformations. Therefore, the aim is to establish what remains of the three *formazioni sociali*, and whether it is still possible to talk about “Three Italies” or if a new geography of Italy’s development has recently emerged.

## 2.1. “Central Italy”: crisis and transformation of the Fordist-Keynesian *formazione sociale*

“Central Italy” is the *formazione sociale* that involves Italy’s North-Western regions, that is Piemonte, Lombardia and Liguria, and in particular the so-called “industrial triangle” connecting the metropolitan areas of Torino, Milano and Genova (Bagnasco, 1977). In the years after the Second World War said area experienced a strong economic development owing to the presence of large Fordist enterprises, such as Fiat, Alfa Romeo, Pirelli and Breda.

The social stratification of the North-Western regions was characterized by the strong presence of industrial bourgeoisie and working class, as well as of a wide middle class composed of technicians, employees and urban petite bourgeoisie. Social integration was guaranteed by low unemployment rates, permanent work relationships, growing wages, relatively easy access to housing and key consumer goods (Bagnasco, 1977). The picture is completed by an employment-based welfare system, generous retirement schemes and a gender division of labour, in a context characterized by high birth rates and moderate ageing rates (Trigilia, 2009). Social conflicts were mediated by an institutionalized system of relationships between State, entrepreneurs’ organizations and workers’ trade unions, on the basis of collective agreements increasingly extended at larger territorial level (Mutti, 2002).

From a demographic viewpoint, the North-Western regions were characterized by a concentration of productive activities and population in metropolitan areas, a strong commuting toward the main urban centres, and high migratory flows coming from Italy’s Southern regions. In urban societies, these trends generated integration difficulties, forms of social exclusion and conflicts, marked territorial inequalities, widespread environmental pollution, limited connectivity to the main urban centres.

As in other Western Countries, the Fordist productive organization fell into crisis also in Italy during the second half of the Seventies. In order to react quickly to the changes occurring in the demand for goods, large enterprises developed a flexible specialization model (Piore, Sabel, 1984) based on a system of medium leader enterprises and small subcontractor enterprises (the so-called “networked enterprise”). The non-specialized subcontractors’ physical closeness to the leader company was not as important as the possibility to save on costs. Therefore, the networks were extended to enterprises located in poorer areas or countries that offered cost advantages (Trigilia, 2009).

At the same time, cognitive-cultural economy activities (Scott, 2008) expanded in the cities of the former industrial triangle, making an impact also at architectural and town planning level. Sometimes, these new activities were set up in dismantled industrial areas, as in the case of the former FIAT Lingotto factory in Torino, or the Bicocca district in Milano, where Pirelli’s and Breda’s headquarters were located and where today there are buildings with offices, a university and an exhibition centre. In this context, Milano was able to stand out as one of the main nodes of the global economic system, owing to its particular concentration of functions, among which: advanced business services, national and international banking and financial groups, headquarters of foreign multinationals (Friedman, 1986; Senn, 2005; GaWC, 2008; Cucca, 2010). Although the economic system of the North-Western regions had success in facing the challenges of the post-Fordist transition, many negative social consequences were nonetheless evident. In fact, the firms’ need to adapt to market changes led to a rise in unemployment rates. Moreover, the tertiarization of economy and the trade unions’ loss of power caused the diffusion of not much protected fixed-term jobs with low wages. At the same time, the welfare system fell into crisis as well, due to the fast rise of social expenditure at the country level and to the strong ageing of the population (Trigilia, 2009, 2012).

The crisis reflected, however, the territorial differentiation of the North-West area, and studies highlighted the various paths of post-industrial transition followed by the main cities included in the area. For example, the metropolitan area of Torino was affected by the industrial crisis more

than other areas. In fact, the strong economic dependence on a single large enterprise (FIAT), the scarcity of small firms capable of absorbing industrial unemployment, the lack of connections among local social and political actors, led to strong contrasts between Fiat, entrepreneurs' organizations and centre/right-wing political parties on the one hand, and trade unions and left-wing parties on the other. Only in the Nineties the metropolitan area was able to break the deadlock giving life to a series of strategic initiatives, among which: the entering into territorial agreements among local actors that produced urban requalification and the reconversion of several industries; the formulation of a strategic plan for the city; the organization of the Winter Olympics. The impact of the Fordist crisis in Milano was not as strong, owing to a much less specialized productive structure, to a set of small enterprises operating in the Made in Italy industry, to the development of tertiary activities owing to Milano's role as global city and to the local actors' ability to enter into agreements despite diverging interests (Barbera, 2008). Even the clear expansion of fixed-term jobs generated shorter periods of unemployment and a not so sharp reduction of wages.

However, some authors underline that Milano is the metropolitan area of the North-West where social inequalities have grown the most. In the Nineties, Gini Index rose from 0.20 to 0.35 (Bono, Checchi, 2001). In 2005, Milano resulted to be the most unequal among the 13 most important Italian cities: the lowest and the highest decile of the population amounted respectively to 1.8% and 41.1% of the overall income, while in Torino the two values were equal to 2.4% and 33% (D'Ovidio, 2009). The mechanism that caused the increase of inequalities is not yet clear. According to several researches (Vicari Haddock, 2004; Barbagli, Pisati, 2013), Milano - similarly to other European cities - was experiencing a process of professionalization, that is an increase of those with a professional position characterized by a medium-high qualification, together with a decrease of those with low qualification jobs (Hamnett, 2004). However, other researches highlight a widespread presence of professional groups with low specializations (Cucca, 2010). Moreover, the strong rise of housing prices contributed to create phenomena of spatial polarization, as highlighted by studies on gentrification processes involving Milano as well as Torino and Genova (Curto, Brondino, Coscia, Fregonara, Grella, 2009; Diappi, Bolchi, Gaeta, 2009; Gastaldi, 2009; Torri, 2010).

## 2.2. "Marginal Italy": the reasons of a long-lasting underdevelopment

"Marginal Italy" is the *formazione sociale* that characterizes Southern Italy. This area of the country is characterized by economic underdevelopment and a widespread presence of a submerged and/or criminal economy. Social integration is fostered primarily by the state, through aids provided to large enterprises, as well as the distribution of financing and support to employment. The social stratification of the area is characterized by a wide underclass, made up of the unemployed, temporary underpaid workers, and by a middle class of dealers and state employees (Bagnasco, 1977).

The current underdevelopment and low social integration in Southern Italy date back to the period prior to Italy's unification (Felice, 2016). However, from the end of the Second World War to date, the State's intervention in the South - inaugurated with the establishment of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (1950), a public structure whose purpose is to provide financial support to Southern Italy - has experienced four phases.

1. In the Fifties, public interventions (land reclamation and the construction of water distribution systems) were aimed at setting the grounds for the growth of modern farming. Subsequently, works were carried out (such as railways, roads, schools, hospitals) which were supposed to constitute the basis for an autonomous industrial development (De Vivo, 2009; Trigilia, 2012).
2. In the Sixties, the State put aside the objective to create a favourable environment for industrial development and implemented policies aimed at attracting large enterprises

and establishing new ones in sectors with a high availability of capital and technology. However, non-Southern subcontractors and workers were mainly used, benefitting only the surrounding local areas (De Vivo, 2009; Trigilia, 2012). The migration of a consistent part of the labour force toward Europe and the industrial cities of the North-West, the attraction of the new large enterprises for the workers remained, and a scarce territorial presence of infrastructures and services, strongly limited the growth of small enterprises in traditional sectors. Hence, entrepreneurial energies ended up channeling especially in commerce. In parallel, the State supported employment by developing a hypertrophic public sector (Trigilia, 2012).

3. From mid-Seventies, the industrial poles supported by the State experienced a phase of decline which ended, in many cases, with their shutting down. Public expenditure became more and more relevant, with increasing welfare and patronage features. In addition to the State distributing funds and the marginal social classes to which the transfers were addressed, a group of political “mediators” and a series of political-economic lobbies emerged using to their advantage the backwardness of the South, developing a patronage system for distributing public funds (De Vivo, 2009; Trigilia, 2012). In this phase, the distribution of the increasingly substantial public financial resources to Southern regions met no obstacles either from the political parties or public opinion. In fact, the main governing political parties, Democrazia Cristiana and Partito Socialista, obtained strong electoral benefits from the Southern regions, distributing economic benefits in exchange for votes (Trigilia, 2012).
4. Starting from the Nineties, a series of events disrupted the balance between Northern and Southern Italy. The 1992 economic crisis and the sharp rise of fiscal and contribution pressure, fuelled in the North an increasing and widespread discontent over the aids distributed to the South. Lega Nord, the new political party supporting regional independence, collected and represented said wide discontent, promoting the North’s “secession” from the Italian State (Trigilia, 2012). On the other hand, restrictions on public expenditure in the South, financial obligations established after Italy’s entering the Euro, and the following international economic crisis, increased the economic and social hardships of the Southern regions. In the same period, the State and police intensified their activity against the mafia which extended its field of action to formal sectors (construction, public works, health-care services, energy production, waste management). In part, this process was actually fuelled by entrepreneurs and professionals who, in an increasingly difficult context, started to enter into agreements with mafia organizations, with the complicity of bureaucrats and politicians (Trigilia, 2012).

Still today Southern Italy is the most underdeveloped area of the Country. From the years after the Second World War to date, the GDP per inhabitant in the South has never exceeded 60% of the corresponding value in the Centre-North (Trigilia, 2012). The employment rate is about 20% lower than that of the Centre-North, while the unemployment rate is almost double compared to the Centre and almost triple compared to the North (database I.Stat, data of 2016). The irregular employment rate amounts to 18%, that is double compared to the Centre-North (Istat, 2010). Though several virtuous examples of local development highlight the existence of endogenous resources in the South, they have been found to be still insufficient to guarantee an autonomous development of the area. At the same time, scholars have noticed an increase in the territorial differences within the South, as well as the gap with other European regions suffering from a late development (Trigilia, 2012). In addition, the lack of infrastructures and services continues: the presence of infrastructures in the South is lower than in the rest of the Country, especially in terms of roads, railways and airports; services such as water distribution, waste collection, children and elderly care, healthcare, school, university, justice, are less widespread and of lower quality, but

often more expensive and with a longer supply timeframe compared to the Centre-North (Trigilia, 2012; Pavolini, 2015).

The academic literature ascribes Southern Italy's long-lasting underdevelopment to several factors. The most dated interpretation imputes it to the lack of capital, competences, infrastructures and services: an aspect that characterizes the area, and for which the State has not been able to find a remedy up to now due to an insufficient financial engagement. In the last twenty years, the expenditure per capita in investments has decreased, contrarily to what has happened in the Centre-North. This explanation is the most widespread, as it is shared by differently oriented politicians, by the local ruling classes, the Southern media, the representatives of the entrepreneurial and labour sectors, and also by Svimez, the most authoritative research centre analysing Southern Italy's economy (see annual reports on *Mezzogiorno* published by Svimez). This interpretation often goes along with the idea that the North has exploited the South. Bagnasco (1977) interpreted the Southern underdevelopment as functional for the development of the North-Western regions, since the South was the labour force reservoir for enterprises belonging to the industrial triangle, and the outlet market of manufacture produced by those same enterprises.

More recently, another explanation for the South's permanent underdevelopment has been formulated referring to the cultural characteristics of Southern Italy, and in particular to the population's scarce civic culture. Said civic culture was measured using indicators related to interpersonal and institutional trust, social networks characteristics, the forming of associations, political engagement. Such lack limits citizens' ability to cooperate and fosters opportunistic or deviant behaviours. This explains the high level of absenteeism at work and firms' low productivity, as well as the difficulty to access bank credit, the scarce entrepreneurship, the difficulty to develop networked enterprises, the exchange of votes with public benefits, the diffusion of corruption, the inefficiency of the local ruling classes, the inability to develop infrastructures and efficient services. Already in the Fifties, Banfield (1958) formulated the concept of "amoral familism" to indicate a clear social pre-eminence of family bonds hindering collective actions and cooperation. Also Bagnasco (1977) indicated, among the distinctive traits of the marginal *formazione sociale*, a form of social cohesion characterized by very strong family bonds accompanied by the lack of intermediate associations. This pattern fostered the diffusion of patronage and corruption in the relationship between the State and citizens, and hindered the establishment and development of competitive firms. At the beginning of the Nineties, Putnam (1993) based the low levels of economic development and public efficiency in the Southern regions on the limited civic culture. In more recent years, a research promoted by Banca d'Italia (2010) drew the same conclusions.

According to one last interpretation, the underdevelopment is caused by the way public financing is being used and by the modalities of intervention of national and local policies. Since Southern Italy has always represented an important reservoir for consent, central governments transferred responsibilities and financial resources to the regional and municipal governments without imposing restrictions concerning destination and efficiency objectives. Consequently, the local governments often made a welfare and patronage use of the financial resources received from the State. Hence, public expenditure aimed at fostering economic development has always represented a very reduced share of the overall public expenditure in the South. Indeed, local development policies have been mainly aimed at distributing incentives to private subjects and not at implementing the infrastructures and services necessary to support the development of competitive firms (Trigilia, 1992, 2012).

### **2.3. "Peripheral Italy": "discovery," crisis and transformation of industrial districts**

"Peripheral Italy" represents the true novelty in the model of the "Three Italies". Bagnasco carried out various studies on the "Third Italy" with the aim to investigate its characteristics, identify its

historical genesis, and outline the role of politics in the *formazione sociale* of this area (Bagnasco, 1988; Bagnasco, Pini, 1981; Bagnasco, Trigilia, 1984, 1985). Further analysis of these aspects has been carried out by economists and regional economists, interested in understanding the main social, political, demographic and economic drivers of the great economic international success of the “Third Italy”<sup>1</sup>.

The “Third Italy” consists of the country’s North-Eastern and Central regions (Trentino Alto-Adige, Veneto, Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Emilia-Romagna, Toscana, Marche, Umbria). These territories are characterised by the so-called industrial districts, that is local systems of small firms active in traditional manufacturing sectors (textile and clothing, footwear, furniture, etc.). Said districts combine the advantages of competition - which keeps the system dynamic and innovative - with the advantages related to productive flexibility, an extremely relevant factor in a context of growing demand differentiation and instability that gained ground in the 1970s (v. supra).

The main distinguishing feature of this development model is its ability to “keep together” satisfying levels of economic growth and social integration. So much so that Bagnasco defined the industrial district as a local society based on a “peculiar form of production which is returned on the territory by a congruent reproduction of the conditions of its existence” (Bagnasco, 2003, p. 104, Author’s translation). The combination between economic growth and social integration arouses special interest because it is the result of two regulatory mechanisms, the market and social reciprocity; whereas, it is only limitedly the result of public intervention, whose main aim is to build a favourable environment for firms and the local society, rather than directing the development process. The role of the socialist political subculture, prevalent in Italy’s Central regions, is evident in the realisation of infrastructures, professional schools, public social housing, extensive high-standard welfare programmes. On the other hand, the role of the Catholic political subculture, prevalent in the North-Eastern regions, is clearly present in its support to agriculture, private building, the family and the Catholic welfare network.

Bagnasco and other scholars identified a series of social-cultural factors at the basis of the districts’ genesis and development:

- First of all, the agrarian contracts entered into in these areas granted farmers a certain degree of autonomy. This made remarkable organizational skills and a propensity to independence widespread among the population, leading families to accumulate financial capital by selling the surplus produce. These aspects constituted important factors for the following development of small autonomous enterprises.
- The diffused presence of complex family structures made up of various family units capable of providing a wide labour force, allowing families to differentiate their income sources. This enabled members to increase their adaptability to flexible jobs and low remunerations and to face entrepreneurial risks. Moreover, the family represented an important means for transmitting knowledge, skills and competencies, and fostered the socialization of local society’s values.
- A dense network of small and medium-sized cities carried out a series of important urban functions on the territory for the development of entrepreneurial activities (infrastructures, banks, commercial services, professional schools). This contributed to avoid the massive concentration of productive activities and population, which is typical of areas characterized by the presence of large enterprises.
- A shared system of values supported and rewarded professional vocations, the disposition to saving, the entrepreneurial spirit, the production of motivated and flexible labour force, a continuous circulation of knowledge, skills and competencies, the diffusion of

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<sup>1</sup> The “Third Italy” model was further described and organised by various authors in following years: Provasi, 1995; Bagnasco, 1999, 2003; Parri, 2001; Zanfrini, 2001; Mutti, 2002; Trigilia, 2002, 2005; Crouch, Trigilia, 2004; Pichiari, 2007; Cerea, 2010. The “Third Italy” has been object of particular attention outside the Italian context: Piore, Sabel, 1984; Sabel, 1988; Fukuyama, 1995.



entrepreneurial skills. A traditional culture based on social solidarity and local identity solidly grounded on a strong political belonging, fuelled a climate of generalized trust, fostering cooperation between enterprises. If the role of this traditional culture has weakened over the years, the close-woven extra-contractual relationships uniting the economic actors (family relationships, bonds of neighbourhood and friendship, religious and political associations) continue to play an important role.

- Lastly, a class structure - characterized by a host of small entrepreneurs and artisans, a high ascending social mobility and a strong homogeneity of life styles - fuelled expectations of social advancement, fostering, on the one hand, the propensity to entrepreneurial risk, and on the other hand the acceptance of the development model.

All these factors come together to guarantee a good level of social integration and useful resources for the development of entrepreneurial activities, the good functioning of market relationships, the diffusion of innovation. Said resources include diffused knowledge, skills and competencies in continuous circulation, a labour force adequately qualified and strongly motivated but at the same time flexible and low cost, the propensity to entrepreneurial risk, infrastructures and services to firms, a social climate of generalized trust. These resources are external to the individual firm, but are to be found within the districts, and are capable of increasing firms' competitiveness by lowering costs, reducing uncertainty, favouring innovation. The sociological literature calls these resources "local collective goods," defined in such way "because they are at the local firms' disposal regardless whether they contributed directly to their forming" (Le Galès, Voelzkow, 2004, p. 12, Author's translation).

In the Eighties, the industrial districts were put under pressure by a series of transformations that involved both global economy and local societies (Bagnasco, 1999). The increased international competition led to an economic strategy based on low production costs increasingly less effective since it was easily obtainable through the delocalization of productive activities in countries that offered cost advantages. Therefore, the districts' competitiveness strongly decreased, a situation which only few enterprises managed to face by increasing research and development functions and marketing activities, and by exporting products toward emerging countries (Berger, 2006; Foresti, Guelpa, Trenti, 2007; Foresti, Trenti, 2007). This led to the selection of firms: the enterprises capable of remaining competitive at international level increased their size and gave origin to groups of enterprises or networked enterprises; the remaining firms shut down or were absorbed by new leading companies (Parri, 2002). Hence, the polycentric productive system of the districts was gradually substituted by an oligocentric system guided by medium enterprises. These transformations weakened social integration, increased inequalities, limited ascending social mobility and reduced the integrative capacities of the labour market. Within the district areas, enterprises polarized between successful and unsuccessful ones, creating wide gaps destined to last over time (Guelpa, Trenti, 2007). This hierarchisation of firms reduced the opportunity of an ascending social mobility and weakened the middle classes (Cerea, Cucca, Rago, 2010). This created a polarization between the upper middle class composed of middle entrepreneurs and professionals on the one hand, and the working class employed in production and services, as well as small entrepreneurs and artisans in crisis on the other hand (Bagnasco, 1988; Provasi, 1995; Bagnasco, Storti, 2008).

Meanwhile, social transformations took place. The increase in female activity rates and the rise of separations and divorces, in addition to the aging of the population, undermined the family's traditional functions. Higher education levels and the weakening of the family's role in socialization to work, distanced the new generations from the labour culture of the previous generations, making the generational change difficult both for the working class and the small entrepreneurs. The new generations' employment preferences and expectations turned to tertiary activities - since they had greater social acknowledgment - and toward subordinate work positions, with lighter workloads and fewer responsibilities. From a cultural viewpoint, the

weakening of social solidarity and local identity and the spreading of individualism compromised the climate of trust typical of the district model.

These changes contributed to reducing districts' social integration and the local societies' ability to provide the territory with collective goods. However, the effects of said changes on the districts' future appeared to be positive, because the traditional social assets no longer seemed able to support economic development. The weakening of strong relationships, the increase of individualism, the rise of education levels, allowed districts to open up to the global market and endowed them with human resources prepared to face the new challenges of globalization. Hence, firms' inability to open up to the outside and the use of the new resources helps explain the economic crisis of several districts. In fact, this phenomenon - in literature called "lock-in" - indicates firms' closure in their traditional cultural, cognitive and relational systems. In other words, in some circumstances, social cohesion can lead to the forming of closed communities, capable of compromising economic development.

Empirical literature confirms the difficulty in generational change due to the transformations in the youth's employment preferences and expectations, but also to the manifestation of entrepreneurial familism. Entrepreneurs, when facing their sons' and daughters' lack of interest for the productive activity, carry on until possible and then shut the firm down, rather than handing it over to a manager or selling it to a third party (Cerea, Cucca, Rago, 2010). Moreover, there is a clear difficulty for small enterprises to build networks of relationships with other economic actors, due to the slackening of trust bonds, but also to the strong propensity to operate in autonomy (Ginsborg, 1999; Ramella, 1999; Cerea, Cucca, Rago, 2010). Lastly, firms are unable to use the new collective goods available on the territory. This is the case of graduates, whose number has grown exponentially in several districts, but are not much requested by firms. It is also the case of the migrant population that has entered the economic sectors and training paths progressively abandoned by the Italians, meeting a series of obstacles, both within firms and schools (Cerea, Cucca, Rago, 2010).

#### **2.4. A new geography of development? Continuity, differentiation and convergence processes**

As emerged from the review, over the last forty years the stresses produced by the changes occurred in the global economy, in the welfare state and local societies - changes accelerated by the recent financial crisis - have altered the distinctive traits of two of the three *formazioni sociali* identified by Bagnasco at the end of the Seventies. Scholars have recently acknowledged all these changes and the consequent need to update the "Three Italies" scheme to understand the current economic and social trends. Southern Italy has remained an area of underdevelopment and of social integration guaranteed less by public expenditure and more by the mafia economy. On the other hand, "Central Italy" and the "Third Italy" have been affected by relevant changes which have given life to differentiation processes within the single areas, but also to a convergence between the same.

In both these *formazioni sociali*, the organization of the production has shifted toward the model of networked enterprise, which is a network of firms permanently connected through physical and virtual cooperation. In "Central Italy," this model is the result of the outsourcing of large Fordist enterprises, while in the "Third Italy" it is the result of hierarchization processes of small enterprises in industrial districts. The post-Fordist transition, accompanied by the crisis of the traditional mechanisms of social integration, produced several relevant social impacts: the increase of unemployment and fixed-term jobs, the growth of social inequalities, the reduction of ascending social mobility, the worsening of living conditions for the lower middle class. On the other hand, the two *formazioni sociali* differentiated from within. In part, the metropolitan areas of the North-West followed different trajectories: Torino has recently re-emerged from the deep economic and social crisis caused by the end of Fordism owing to new urban policies pointing to

new economic sectors, while Milano is solidly inserted in the global cities network, with related economic advantages, but also strong social inequalities, that said insertion entails. Likewise, the industrial districts of the “Third Italy” have evidenced different capabilities of reaction: some have remained trapped in “lock-in” mechanisms, while others have developed international competitiveness.

Generally speaking, these changes have imbalanced the functional relationships between economic development and social integration in these *formazioni sociali*<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Territorial cohesion and public policy: the Italian trajectory

Territorial cohesion policies in Italy have been in close connection with the conceptual elaboration in the literature about the drivers of local development, which has been reviewed in the previous section, only after the mid-1990s, and even in this period with some time lag. The relevance of place-based forms of social and economic integration in enhancing economic and social development at national and local level started to emerge at the end of the Seventies and the mid-Eighties; but it was since the Fifties that the reflections proposed by different phases of *Meridionalismo* (a tradition of theoretical elaboration on the problems of Southern regions and their possible solutions) contributed to shaping policy design, which has been swinging between economic liberalism and Keynesian approaches.

The main objectives of territorial cohesion policies in this long time span have been to foster economic growth (in particular enhancing modernisation and supporting industrialisation), and to reduce territorial unbalances, and more precisely the disparities between the Northern and Southern regions of the country. In this sense, it is important to underline that the dichotomy between North and South so appropriately put in question by Arnaldo Bagnasco in his seminal 1977 book discussed in the first part of this paper (Bagnasco, 1977), has lied in fact at the core of the rationale of Italian cohesion policies all along the decades. At the same time, and more importantly for our analysis, one of the lessons learned from the literature on industrial districts and the local determinants of economic development in Italy is the importance of the place-based dimension, and that development may take place only through an appropriate form of activation of existing resources, not only economic, but also social and territorial ones.

#### 3.1. Cohesion policies during the period 1950-1990: the main phases

Public intervention in fostering economic development in poorer regions in Italy certainly pre-dates the concept of territorial cohesion itself, because it started with the institution of the Republic in 1946, and has become central to the political debate in particular between the beginning of the 1960s and the mid-1980s. The extraordinary intervention in underdeveloped regions in Italy started just after the Second World War, partly based on supra-national funding (from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IBRD); it then gained particular salience and relevance with the official establishment of the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* in 1951, a technical public body specifically created to foster economic growth in Southern regions through a mix of infrastructural interventions and incentives to local businesses, and inspired by the New Deal public intervention policies in the US (Lepore, 2011). The *Cassa* in the first years mainly funded interventions in rural infrastructure, while in the subsequent decades it concentrated its investments in fostering industrialisation. In the first decades of territorial cohesion policies intervention was framed at a regional or macro-regional scale, while no specific attention was reserved to cities and to their potential role in fostering economic development.

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<sup>2</sup> For a discussion on the most recent changes in the geography of development in Italy, see Balducci, Fedeli, Curci, 2017.

After the start of the operations of the *Cassa*, the first relevant elaboration on the trends of development in the country, from both a conceptual and a political point of view, is the position expressed by the national government in 1961 through the Additional Note on the Economic Situation of the Country in 1962, prepared by the then Minister of Treasury and Budget Ugo La Malfa (La Malfa, 1973). The Note represented with great clarity both the state of the economic situation of the country and a diagnosis about what should have been done to strengthen the (then) very positive growth trends and to reduce regional disparities. The Note put a strong focus on modernisation of agriculture, on industrialisation of Southern regions and on the state of public services (firstly education, then health and social security), identifying these three elements as potential pillars of a more robust form of development, able to exploit the most promising impacts and to avoid the worse externalities of the economic growth under course. Due to political reasons, the Note has never been fully integrated into economic programming, that tended on the contrary to get dispersed in a number of uncoordinated public intervention programmes (Goldstein, 2012).

A second relevant step was the elaboration of the so-called *Progetto '80* (The Eighties project, as it was aimed at a programming period lasting towards the 1980s) (Ministero del Bilancio e della Programmazione Economica, 1969; Renzoni, 2012), a coherent attempt at proposing an integrated planning approach for the whole country, able to combine economic programming and urban planning: *Progetto '80* showed the possible role the State could play in fostering the basic conditions for economic and social development through the identification of large scale territorial strategies, in a long-term perspective. Emerged as the result of an intense phase of political and cultural innovation towards the end of the 1960s, *Progetto '80* remained largely misapplied, due to internal complexities and to the need to strengthen technical skills (accounting, evaluation, planning, programming, etc.) within the public administration structure, but also due to political reasons. After *Progetto '80* there has been no further attempt at proposing general territorial programming strategies, while there has been a last important research initiative aimed at mapping the development of the country in a unitary way: the *Itaten* project (Clementi, Dematteis, Palermo, 1996), which took place in the mid-1990s. *Itaten* was focused on the mapping and interpretation of the co-evolution between territory, economy and society, through the identification of 'local settlement contexts' (*ambienti insediativi locali*). Similar integrated analyses have been produced in the same years for specific parts of the country (as the one on the Milan urban region in Boeri, Lanzani, Marini, 1993).

### 3.2. A new programming period in the 1990s

After the publication of *Progetto '80*, the next relevant development policy step concerned the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*: already in the previous decade, but increasingly after the mid-1980s, this public body started to significantly lose effectiveness and efficiency, to become more corrupt and prone to forms of political clientele, and to lose the edge in terms of technical knowledge and capacity. Finally, in 1992, also in relation to EU claims that it favoured state aid to firms, thus altering the European competitive framework, it was finally closed (Casavola, 2015). This meant the total stop of special intervention in underdeveloped Italian regions for some years, until in 1998 the then Minister for Treasury, Budget and Economic Programming Carlo Azeglio Ciampi proposed to re-launch an ambitious programme of extraordinary intervention in regions lagging behind, using both EU Structural funds (European Regional Development Fund, European Social Fund, and others) and targeted national resources. This complex stream of intervention, based on innovative assumptions elaborated in the literature on local development in the previous twenty years, as well as on the tenets of New Public Management, has been known as *Nuova Programmazione* (New Programming) (Ministero del Tesoro, Bilancio e Programmazione Economica, 1998).

In order to bring forth such a significant innovation, a new unit was created within the Ministry of Treasury, the Department for Programming and Development (DPS), directed by Fabrizio Barca. The aims of DPS were to strengthen specific competencies in particular in the fields of planning, policy design and evaluation; a lack of such skills in the Italian Public Administration structure was one of the reasons, according to experts, of the scarce results obtained in the past in the field of development support in underdeveloped poorer regions (Barca, 1998, 2004). Since the beginning of this new programming period, specific attention has been paid, along with strategic policy design dimensions, to the role of knowledge and strategies and devices for the transformation of dispersed private knowledge into usable collective knowledge (Barca, 2004). Moreover, the focus on locality and the relevant role attributed to local resources in supporting virtuous development trajectories brought into the framework a new attention to cities and to their potential role, especially during the second cycle of programming, after 2006 (Trigilia, Burroni, 2010; Casavola, Trigilia, 2012). This new perspective is related also to the phase in which EU urban policies moved from special integrated programmes (such as URBAN) to the inclusion of urban regeneration themes and aspects into ordinary EU programming documents (such as National and Regional Operational Programmes). The underlying conceptual interpretation of the reasons for such intervention is captured in this statement by Paola Casavola: “there are remarkable forces acting against peripheral regions of the system. These are forces which gather strength and do not decline naturally with integration and that thus require policies to combat them” (Casavola, 2015, par. 1, Author’s translation). This position very clearly echoes the one voiced by the Delors Report, that expressed the fear that, in the absence of specific rebalancing policies, the economic and social impact of (in this case, economic and monetary) integration on peripheral regions might be negative, because transportation costs and economies of scale tend to favour the move of economic activities from less developed regions, especially when they also are peripheral ones (Committee for the Study of Economic and Monetary Union, 1989).

There is a second important rationale, also expressed by Casavola, which is the need to strongly concentrate public attention and efforts on reducing regional development gaps. She argues that “since the post-war period and well into the Seventies, the underlying theme of policies for the Italian South was shared by national policies as a necessary internal rebalancing on an integrated growth path from which all could benefit” (Casavola, 2015, par. 1, Author’s translation), while in the subsequent decades this question has shifted away from public attention, and it started to be considered not a national, but a regional issue. Hence the need to use New Programming to build momentum around the issue as a question of national interest.

The connection between analytical literature on forms of local development or local development ‘systems’, or districts, as they were defined (Garofoli, 1991; Becattini, 1987), and the policy dimension, was not a linear one. Literature on local production systems, as it has been explained in the preceding section, has shown how the effectiveness of such systems lies in extremely contextual forms of integration between the productive dimension and the social and territorial ones. Though it was extremely difficult to directly extract policy lessons from the analysis of the existing local development systems in a normative direction (Garofoli, 2002), the connections between analysis and policy experimentation and design have always been quite strict. The launch of integrated territorial projects and other similar place-based development policies was linked, for instance, to the assumption that ‘successful’ territories were characterised by a strategic development project, explicitly or implicitly shared by local stakeholders. In industrial districts, this implicit project was strong enough to lead local development, while in weaker territories, like the ones in Southern regions, it had to be promoted and supported by public policies (Casavola, Trigilia, 2012).

### 3.3. A mixed evaluation of New Programming and the most recent developments

After 2005, and in preparation for the new programming period 2007-13, there has been a robust evaluation of the achievements and failures of the previous programming period, which has especially highlighted the limits of additional and extraordinary intervention in the face of on-going problems of mainstream intervention in the same period. There has been in fact a growing agreement among experts and policy makers that additional intervention *per se* is not able to trigger significant discontinuities in the trends of development in regions lagging behind (Viesti, 2011).

This is due to the fact that the general conditions and functioning of local institutions, policies and societies can significantly contribute to block the most innovative or disruptive trends, especially because in many local contexts there are well-entrenched structures of interests contrary to the development trends, in that a number of local actors extract a rent from the persistent underdevelopment condition. As the Bank of Italy puts it: “Regional policies, which refer to just 5% of transfers to Southern regions, can integrate available resources, they can facilitate their higher territorial concentration, they can contrast negative externalities and reinforce positive ones. But they cannot substitute the good functioning of normal institutions” (Banca d’Italia, 2010, p. 9, Author’s translation).

It is in this phase and thanks to this debate that the role of policies fostering the production and diffusion of essential public services (healthcare, especially for the elderly, transport, education and childcare, water and waste management) has emerged as crucial to ensure basic citizenship rights as a basis for strengthening local contexts and therefore enhancing the opportunities for endogenous development. This approach has been seen in opposition to the preceding attitude of direct financial incentives to firms. The main difference between the setting of public service objectives and the preceding approach of programming documents is also visible in the fact that service objectives are expressed in terms of targets, and the path towards their attainment can therefore be measured by a set of performance indicators, while the accent in the preceding programming periods had been focused more on financial implementation (actual spending capacity under the new rules set by the EU). This shift is to be considered a very relevant one: while in the previous programming periods local and regional authorities’ main efforts were targeted at formal compliance with EU rules and procedures, in this new phase the substantive dimension of change brought forth by public intervention lies at the centre of monitoring and evaluation (Busetti, Pacchi, 2014).

Among the main results of this evaluation, there are the most recent developments of territorial cohesion policy in Italy, which concern the development of a specific focus on Inner Areas. They are the objects of a specific programme, launched by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion in 2013, the *Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne*, SNAI (National Strategy for Inner Areas) (Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale, 2013). Inner areas are characterised by a number of positive features that can bring a valuable contribution to the development of the country, such as the presence of valuable landscapes, culture and local traditions (De Rossi, 2018), but today they do require additional attention for the construction of explicit policies in the face of the downturn they are experiencing, visible in increasing abandonment, depopulation, presence of ageing population (Pacchi, 2014). The recent earthquakes in Marche and Abruzzi have even increased the necessity of such strategy also as a way to allow the reconstruction and re-development of the devastated areas. The strategy is a very clear effort at rebalancing and reducing the gaps with the most developed areas of the country (both metropolitan regions and medium density urbanisation areas).

### 3.4. A general evaluation of territorial cohesion policies

Overall, the evaluation expressed by experts and scholars is that the model developed since the late 1990s is a quite balanced combination of different tensions and directions (Ministro per la Coesione Territoriale, 2013; Casavola, 2015), even if, after the very first years, there has been a growing lack of attention on the part of political actors: “The New Programming design is never fully implemented. It suffers primarily from a scant attention and sharing on the part of political coalitions, both centre-right and centre-left, who take turns in governing the Country” (Viesti, 2011, p. 103, Author’s translation).

This model has been characterised by a constant swing between centre, the national government, and decentralised decision makers, mainly the regional governments. This aspect has become even more complex in the last decades because many strategic directions and regulations are now defined at supra-national level (the EU, in Brussels) and there has always been an important, even if not crucial role played by local actors (sub-regional authorities). The centre can ensure an overall strategic development vision, and some main axes for the concentration of resources (economic ones, but also design and networking skills), moreover it is less prone to the risk of capture by very local interests; on the other hand, it does not have a complete and nuanced picture of the local trends, evolutions and possibilities. Localities are in the best position to define place-based and shared development programmes and projects, and to more effectively integrate different aspects and axes, but they are extremely prone to the risk of capture on the part of local interests (as it has been clearly visible especially after the pioneering phase of the new programming period, after 2000) and particularly to be captured by conservative forces, opposed to change and innovation because they traditionally extract different forms of rent from underdevelopment.

The second dimension in which the model is quite balanced is the one which connects mainstream and extraordinary or additional policies: while after the end of the operations of *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* the whole cohesion policy has been attributed to ordinary institutions (ministries, regional departments etc.), at the same time the significant use of EU funding clearly put the accent on the additional dimension of public spending in such areas.

Moreover, as the years passed, the overall political consensus about the importance of public intervention in Southern regions fades away, “The regional development policy, by definition an additional one, becomes in those years more and more a substitute of missing mainstream spending” (Viesti, 2011, p. 104) in that mainstream public investment in Southern regions lags behind the objectives (originally the objectives were set at 30% for additional vs. 70% for ordinary spending, with a quota of 85% vs. 15% for EU spending and a total target of 45% for the South and 55% for the North).

A third evaluation dimension has been the one about the ability to concentrate spending and investments in terms of territorial focus and of thematic focus; it emerged all along the different phases of regional policy, and it concerned both national and EU resources (Palermo, 2009). Many initiatives and measures were originally devised as being highly concentrated (Territorial Development Pacts, Territorial Integrated Projects), as ways to more precisely and strategically target resources to more promising and higher complexity projects, and/or to territories in particular need, following Hirschman’s idea of ‘unbalanced growth’ (Hirschman, 1958), but they have been subsequently diffused over larger territories and populations, for political clientele reasons.

The effectiveness and efficiency of spending in such conditions have therefore dramatically decreased, leading to the diffusion and fragmentation of funding on almost the whole Italian territory (some of these measures being of regional responsibility, in many cases the models adopted by different regional governments have been slightly different) in a number of small-scale investments, uncoordinated and difficult to be re-conducted to identifiable development strategies. The idea to concentrate resources, knowledge and investments in specific territories

and on specific development projects is to be connected to the analysis of the local determinants of development in literature, which, as we already mentioned, identified the presence of local coalitions gathered around a strategic idea for the future as a crucial factor for local development. Finally, one of the central tenets of territorial cohesion policy since the New Programming phase is that a balance has to be achieved between the mobilisation of exogenous and endogenous resources (Pichierri, 2005). The efforts of New Programming have been aimed at using external resources (economic ones, knowledge, skills, but also systems of rules) to unleash local 'latent' resources, so that these last ones might become the starting point for locally rooted development trajectories. The matching between such external resources and local conditions, stakeholder coalitions and development projects has proved to be one of the most daunting tasks of policy design and implementation on the field.

#### 4. Conclusions

Italy is a country with huge territorial differentiation, which is the historical consequence of social, cultural and political fragmentation. This differentiation has been studied not only to highlight spatial disparities but also to understand the peculiar conditions under which different economic and social developmental paths have been followed. Territorial fragmentation has been used to compare different paths and elaborate different socio-economic models. In this analysis, the idea of territorial cohesion has been widely used, though without any explicit mention of this specific concept.

The starting point is the notion of *formazione sociale*. This notion is grounded on the idea that each local developmental path is based on a peculiar complementarity between economic competitiveness and social integration. Local development paths must therefore be studied by paying attention to the economic, social, cultural and political dynamics at the same time.

The concept of *formazione sociale* is used to highlight the existence of at least three different patterns of development in Italy, the "Three Italies" model. The "Central Italy" model involves Italy's North-Western regions, and in particular the "industrial triangle" connecting the metropolitan areas of Torino, Milano and Genova. After the Second World War said area experienced a strong economic development owing to the large Fordist enterprises. Territorial cohesion has been basically achieved through institutional arrangements driven by political as well as social actors. The high capacity of coordination of such actors at local and national level has been crucial to obtain such result. Only in the last two decades, said capacity has been reduced, paving the way for increasing conflicts and social inequality.

The "Marginal Italy" model characterizes Southern Italy. This area of the Country is characterized by economic underdevelopment and by a presence of a submerged and/or criminal economy. The critical situation of Southern Italy is seen as the product of a weak civil society and a strong influence of patronage on (and mafia connections with) the locally-based policy making. Coordination among the strongest social and economic actors based on strongly selective mutual trust relationships on the one hand, and the weakness of state intervention on the other, have conjured together to prevent economic development and to weaken social integration.

In the "Third Italy" model, territorial cohesion based on civic culture, associational life and strong local identity is the crucial factor to explain the economic success of industrial districts. These aspects provide the background for strong local coordination among the main social, economic, and political actors, who can cooperate to produce the collective goods necessary to increase both the economic competitiveness of small firms and the social integration of the population. Only in the 1990s, post-industrial transition, globalization and the dissolution of locally-based subcultures weakened the competitiveness of industrial districts as well as their level of social integration. Industrial districts lost their internal cohesion and inter-firm and inter-territorial divergences emerged.



To sum up, territorial cohesion has been understood in the Italian academic literature as basically a synergetic relationship between economic development and social integration, supported by locally-based horizontal and vertical coordination mechanisms involving enterprises, social forces and civic society organizations. The lack of such coordination has been seen as the main factor of underdevelopment of Southern Italy, while in Northern Italy and the “Third Italy” coordination has been obtained through different social and economic mechanisms. The last two decades have partially changed this situation, paving the way for an increasing dis-organization of local societies.

Territorial cohesion has also been strongly supported by public policy. Since the 1990s a new approach to economic growth has been developed at national level, strongly inspired by the concept of *formazione sociale*. Instead of distributing public benefits to private firms or citizens resident in poor areas (mainly located in the South), the new approach tried to promote local actions able to create a new social and economic climate, based on mutual trust and cooperation, search for competitiveness and effectiveness, joint efforts to produce the collective goods that are necessary to support a new economic development. Experimentation of such approach has spread in many areas with ambiguous outcomes: while in some areas a new local development has started, in many others the change was only residual and unable to really make an overall change. More recently, a stronger attention to the production of local public/collective goods has been paid, based on the idea that only a better social, economic and logistic infrastructure allows greater continuity and stronger impact of experimental local projects. In this perspective, territorial cohesion has become again a new crucial target of local development policy.

If we look back to those policy cycles in perspective, it quite clearly appears that there has been, along the last four decades, a significant connection between scholarly debate on territorial development and local development policy design, but with a partial time lag, readable in different crucial moments. Firstly, we see a significant time lag between the definition of the *formazione sociale* concept, its identification in actual territories and the introduction of policies inspired by it. If scholarly debate ensuing Bagnasco’s work thrives between the end of the 1970s and the 1980s, the first operational elaboration of this concept in terms of policy design clearly emerges only after the mid-1990s, with the end of Cassa per il Mezzogiorno’s operations and the launch of the ‘New Programming’ phase.

A second time lag takes place at the beginning of the new century, when scholarly literature had already identified some internal fragilities and external drivers which put under pressure the classical industrial district model (Bagnasco, 1999), but policy design was still aimed at fostering and supporting local coalitions for development, along the lines of the *formazione sociale* model. The identification of the relevance of basic collective goods which has been mentioned, which characterises the most recent developments of territorial cohesion policies (namely, but not exclusively, in the Inner Areas case), can be seen as sign that the attempt at fostering development mainly from below, focusing on the construction of local coalitions, does not seem to be enough. The model of social integration implicit in the *formazione sociale* concept has to be reviewed in the light of changes in the global competitiveness model, and territorial cohesion policies show an awareness of such changes in accompanying this idea with a more robust endowment of basic collective goods to strengthen the pre-conditions for development.

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