

REGGIO CALABRIA

The governance of urban development in a peripheral city

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The place and its spaces: a provincial city, in a peripheral region



- Not a “global” metropole
not a “national” centre
not a “regional” chief town
(as such, rather interesting for comparative purposes)
- Never Fordist; from pre-industrial to post-Fordist
- Specificities:
 - A medium sized **provincial** city
 - a very **peripheral** position (cut-off main centres of accumulation)
 - A city wounded by repeated **earthquakes**: fully destroyed in the last one (1908); inscribed in DNA...

Lead theme(s)

- **The governance of urban transformation in RC from 1950 to 2006.** A “lens” to highlight:
 - the interplay between regulation and accumulation (functional/disfunctional)
 - agency processes (role of main actors – endogenous/exogenous, public/private)
 - power geometries among government scales
- **In particular:**
 - shift in **policy paradigms** (from top-down modernisation strategies to bottom-up local development discourses)
 - relevant role of **Central State** and weakness/fragmentation of local agency, including **local government** (until 1992)
 - central role of **housing and the construction sector** in the socio-economic development model

The DEMOLOGOS analytical framework and *foci* (a reminder)

- Revisited Regulation Approach *cum* Critical-Historical Institutionalism:
 - Relations between *regulation* (policies and politics of scale), *reproduction* (housing, public services, consensus), *accumulation* (exogenous and endogenous processes)
 - Relations between actors, institutions, structures (and role of discourse in legitimising policy changes) in explaining *agency*
- Space- and time- sensitive:
 - Geographical and historical contextualisation: place specificities and path dependencies
 - Spatial articulation of regulation and accumulation
 - Evolving power geometry among government scales
 - Regimes (phases) of capitalist development

Time frame

- Focus on Post-WW2: (Late) Fordism and Post-Fordism
- Two main ***turning moments*** (eminently local, but roughly corresponding to major national events):
 - **The “Reggio revolt” of 1970**

Protracted anti-state urban riots, as a protest for the assignment of the Regional government seat to another town; reflected popular frustration for failure of development policies; captured by the right-wing, led to an involution of civil society and a decline in municipal governance (*in counter-tendency* to national social mobilisation)
 - **The designation of Mayor Falcomatà in 1993**

The “Tangentopoli” scandal represented a path-breaking moment as it wiped-clean the administrative scene and allowed the designation of a Mayor from the opposition; it marked the beginning of civil society and municipal government renaissance (*in tune* with national politics)
- Three main ***periods***:
 - **1950-1970 – A city at the margins of national accumulation**
 - **1971-1992 – A city drifting away**
 - **1993-2006 – The Reggio “Renaissance”**

Scalar dialectics

- Articulation of spatial scales:
 - *Municipal* level as “entry point”, but analysis of RC socio-economic trajectory articulated into regional (Mezzogiorno) and national regulatory and accumulation contexts (Part I of case study)
- Evolving power geometry among government scales:
 - Central state (and central institutions)
sole player until 1992
 - Regional governments
created in 1970; no fiscal, but legislative, planning and spending authority; since 2000 empowered for EU programmes and regional planning framework
 - Municipal governments
always subordinate to Central state; but since 1992 greater autonomy, with some fiscal authority and direct election of Mayors
 - European Union
since 1989 constrains national policy, especially *regional policy*

The story (I)

1950-70: A city at the margin

Policy paradigms

- Fordist-Keynesian (“developmental”) State: direct support of accumulation and reproduction; regional policy to reduce uneven development; top-down modernization approach and discourse, via infrastructural investment and, later, (exogenous) industrialization

Regulation

- Dominance of *Central government* agency (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno period) and politics; local administration weak and subordinate
- Comprehensive planning and rational choices from above
 - 1st Territorial Master Plan for the Industrialization area by Tekne
 - Extensive social housing programmes
 - Urban General Master Plan by Quaroni

Accumulation and reproduction

- Urban development led by *national* programmes of *public investment*:
 - Major *social housing programmes* to solve housing shortage (old from earthquake and new for rural immigration)
 - Public investment in transport and civilian *infrastructure* (Cassa per il Mezzogiorno)
 - Relatively ordered – *planned* – urban growth (+114% rooms)
- No local accumulation dynamics: *urban growth without a development project*
 - Despite relevant outmigration, rural influx and population growth (+ 20%)
 - No exogenous industrialisation and decline of traditional activities
 - Leading employment sectors: public services, construction.
- A city left at the margins of the “Great transformation” of the Mezzogiorno and Italy:
 - In the absence of development projects, the assignment of the Regional Government seat to another town triggers urban riots (1970)

The story (II)

1971-92: A city drifting away

Policy paradigms

- Progressive shift from exogenous modernisation to endogenous development strategies. Crisis of regional policy.
 - After the last wave of Fordist investment (early 1970s), crisis of the Fordist industrialisation strategy and of the Cassa per il Mezzogiorno.
 - In the 1980s rise of “Endogenous development” theories and discourses (Sme, Flexible manufacturing systems, Industrial districts)

Regulation

- Crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian State in mid-1970s. In Italy growing political management of public expenditure in the 1980s (from the support of accumulation to the support of consensus)
- Creation of Regional Governments (1971)
- Last phase of the Cassa (1970s) and last attempt to reform regional policy (1980s) decentralising to Regional governments

Regulation (cont.d)

- In RC last wave of intensified Central State investment (as a compensation to the riots) and top-down planning in 1970s, with decreasing effectiveness:
 - The “Colombo Package” (1971): Last attempt at Fordist industrialisation
 - 2nd Territorial Master Plan for Industrialisation area by Tekne (1974)
 - Further infrastructural and urban investment
 - Institution of University (School of Architecture and later Engineering and Agricultural Studies)
- Decline in municipal government capabilities, no planning enforcement, and growing corruption in the management of public investment => leading to local *Tangentopoli* scandal in 1992 (mirrors national scandal)

Accumulation and reproduction

- Urban growth unchecked (+73%rooms): unregulated urban sprawl and growing divergence between plans and reality; soaring “abusivismo” (unlawful private self-help housing construction)
- Failure of industrialisation attempts: only infrastructural investment
- Further tertiarisation (public administration and public services)
- Social involution
 - Rise of local “construction” power bloc
 - Decline of local civil society after the riots of 1970 in contrast with rest of the country)
 - Rise of “entrepreneurial” criminal organisation *’Ndrangheta*

The story (III)

1993-2006: The Reggio “Renaissance”

Policy paradigms

- Rediscovery of regions as locus of competitiveness. Neo-liberal critique of “developmental state” approach. “Endogenous development” as normative model. “Collaborative” planning discourse.
 - Within Italy, pressures from Northeastern Small and medium firms against regional policy for the Mezzogiorno.
 - From EU, pressures for devolution and compliance to Cohesion policy guidelines

Regulation

- After the national *Tangentopoli* scandal, Italian “Second Republic”:
 - New parties, new electoral system, further administrative decentralisation
 - Austerity macroeconomic policy: cuts in public spending
- End of “national” regional policy for the Mezzogiorno
 - EU Cohesion policy programmes
 - “Local” development, “negotiated” and “territorially integrated” programmes

Regulation (cont.d)

- In RC Falcomatà becomes mayor (1993-2001):
 - The Municipality recovers its regulatory role
 - Incremental and pragmatic approach: no Master Plan, but scattered urban projects with high symbolic value (the Waterfront is returned to citizens), using left-over national and new EU resources
 - Strategy of “rehabilitation” of degraded built environment
 - City recovers identity and pride
- The subsequent right-wing municipal government (2001-to date) continues in the same track:
 - Adopts “negotiated” programming approach, within EU co-funded 2000-06 Regional Operational Programme
 - Targetting sme and tourism; territorial marketing
 - In the process of drafting new “Structure plan” within new regional urban legislation => polycentric structure, as a strategy to provide order to urban sprawl.

Accumulation and reproduction

- Relative renaissance of Sme in business- and tourism-oriented services
- Construction sector leads again.
- However, not enough to absorb new labour supply (young and women):
 - Unemployment soars (educated); emigration of young educated people to the North
 - Immigration from developing countries to take over less-skilled jobs in services
- After Falcomatà, power blocs re-form and civil society less active

The “pillars” of RC socio-economic and urban development model

- **Public expenditures** (major accumulation, employment and reproduction vector)
 - Housing (since the earthquake and until 1970)
 - Infrastructure
 - Public services
- **Real estate and construction sector** (accumulation, employment, power bloc)
 - First eminently public; later also private (and unlawful)
- **Services** (public and private, the latter largely informal):
 - Public (administration, education and health, transport)
 - Consumer and tourism-oriented
- **The criminal organisations** (multiplier effect)
 - Reinvests/launders profits into local activities

Actors and agency in a peripheral city

- Weak and fragmented **local** actors:
 - **Institutional actors** (government, parties, unions): very weak at local level; surrogated by Central state until 1980s
 - **Entrepreneurial forces**: *exogenous* limited; *local* extremely fragmented, i.e. micro- and family-enterprises, with little associative and pressure capabilities
 - **Civil society**: fragmented and weak. Urban petty bourgeoisie + rural immigrants => 1970 (anti-state) riots; civil servants + middle class => civil associations in late 1980s
 - **Criminal organisations**: rise in late 1970s; federalist structure; relevant actor, but interstitial behaviour
- Agency in a peripheral city:
 - Until 1992 **no strategic choice from *within*; rational choices from *without*** (national actors), with decreasing impact
 - From 1970 to 1992 RC transformation is **random-incremental**; “resultant” of uncoordinated micro-choices from *within* and *without*
 - From 1993 **planned-incremental** transformation from *within*

Questions and findings

- A major question throughout the case study was: is devolution conducive to improved accumulation and governance capabilities?
- In other words, are (bottom-up) endogenous development strategies able to ensure convergence better than (top-down) Fordist national regional policies?
 - In line with DEMOLOGOS – there are no universal recipes; strategies that work in specific contexts will not necessarily work in others.
 - Path-dependencies are hard– although not impossible – to break. In peripheral contexts such as RC and the Mezzogiorno, uneven development and negative cumulative causation mechanisms – in regulation, reproduction and accumulation – are difficult to alter and need concerted, integrated, multi-scalar efforts.
 - In such weak socio-economic contexts, local empowerment strategies and bottom-up local development strategies **alone** cannot achieve economic and social convergence.

Questions and findings

- The RC case shows that central State policies were partially effective until the late 1960s. In the 1970s and 1980s public expenditures were functional to political hegemony and dysfunctional to accumulation. But even when local governance capabilities have been created/re-enforced, local accumulation dynamics are too weak to ensure full employment and sustainable socio-economic development.
- Cohesion investment and redistributive policies are still needed – whether from the central State or the EU.
- Another major question concerns local governance effectiveness. Are we really witnessing new-found local strategic capabilities or just renewed local power blocs?
 - It is not evident that the empowerment of local governments in the management of public resources is better than central state programmes. It may actually prove less transparent and less accountable.
- How much do formal politics count in local governance?
 - In RC Mayor Falcomatà was left-wing, but charismatic and pragmatic; the new right-wing administration is apparently following the same approach, but possibly in a more exclusive way.