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Theoretical Foundations and Discussions on the Reformation Process in Local Governments

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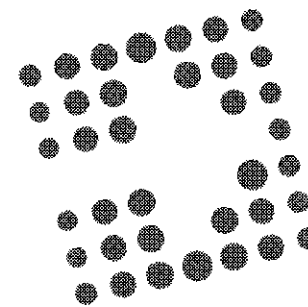
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- ⁷ Since 2005 cumulation of two political mandates at the executive level is forbidden. In everyday political practice politicians who are asked to join the cabinet at regional/federal level are temporarily replaced as mayors or eldersmen.
- ⁸ Eventually the decree only limited provincial participation to a maximum of 20%.
- ⁹ In January 2009 a so called 'restore decree' was approved, which emphasized how many flaws and changes had occurred within this legislative era.

Chapter 11

Italy:

Remapping Local Government from Re- Allocation and Re-Shaping to Re-Scaling

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ABSTRACT

In the last decades Italy faced a long political transition, which displayed its effects also on the institutional policy of this country. The changes occurred in these years on local and meso-governments will be scrutinized in this chapter looking at the different strategies adopted. Remapping local government in Italy fundamentally meant three different 'R-approaches': a Re-allocation of legal power (decentralization in the light of NPM) (from 1990 to 2000); a Re-shaping of the institutional setting (devolution) in favour of subsidiarity (from 2001 to 2009); a Re-scaling of functions in terms of recentralization (upscaling) and a search for an optimal territorial scale in times of economic crisis (since 2008).

INTRODUCTION

In the last decades, Italy faced a long and never really ending political transition, which reflected its effects also on the institutional policy of this country. The changes occurred on local and meso-governments will be scrutinized in this chapter looking at the different strategies – here defined as reallocation, reshaping and rescaling – adopted all along this period.

According to scholars (Sharpe, 1993; Baldersheim & Rose, 2010; Denters & Rose, 2005; Keating, 2013), the redefinition of domestic sovereignty and development of meso-government can include a range of different strategies. The re-allocation concerns a new settlement of tasks and powers without changing the framework, but redefining the weight and the degree of freedom of each level of government. Differently, the reshaping includes a deep revision of the institutional arrangement and implies

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a different intergovernmental system between centre and periphery; hence reshaping is ambitious and may envisage a radical change in the institutional arrangement (e.g. unitary vs. federal State). The rescaling pertains, instead, to a limited re-arrangement of tasks and duties between centre and periphery by shifting either from the upper to the lower levels (down-scaling) or viceversa (up-scaling); it thus concerns the increasing or decreasing of power's delegation in the light of the economic performance and cost saving (scaling).

All three strategies (re-allocation, reshaping and rescaling) are not necessarily interrelated and they reflect a different and contingent political idea of the subnational territorial sovereignty. Italy experienced all these strategies as an effect of an almost permanent institutional policy and according to the different political agendas that promoted a rearrangement of multilevel governance in the country. Three major reform periods concerning a remapping of local governments can be singled out: the first one dating back to the early 1990s; the second one taking place a decade later, in the early 2000s; and the third and most recent reform wave occurring in the years of crisis and dating to 2008-2014. The different reform waves should not be seen as parts of a unique, planned and coherent framework aimed at designing central/local relations in Italy. It could be thus highly misleading to consider and interpret the changes occurred in the last 25 years in the central/local relations, as well as those in the role of the local government in the general Italian institutional setting, as a whole, integrated phenomenon. Each reform period, has been in fact triggered by (sometimes very) dissimilar causes and by different political backgrounds and socio-economic conditions. It is, in fact, not unusual to have the Italian institutional reforms labelled as "unintended", "fragmented", "incremental", almost "preintentional" (Dente, 1985; Diamanti, 2008): that is as a scattered ensemble of provisions.

The main argument of this chapter is that these different periods were marked by the three above-mentioned different approaches about remapping local government. At first, the reforms aimed at a re-allocation of (mostly legal) powers, according to the downscaling approach typical of the New Public Management (NPM) (Bobbio, 2005). In a second phase it was the centre-periphery balance of power to be under revision through a Constitutional reform oriented to devolution: a re-shaping of the institutional setting deeply changed the previous intergovernmental relations (Brunazzo, 2010; Baccetti, 2011) with a particular attention to subsidiarity. A third and most recent phase tended instead to re-scale local government's functions (Baldini & Baldi, 2014) by exploiting a policy window created by the global crisis. In this phase, a stronger coordination and steering role of the central state to the detriment of the local levels is to be detected, as well as a remapping of local government aimed at coping with financial constraints and at defining an adequate scale for managing functions.

The main steps of these three reform periods as well as their approaches and main effects on local level will be addressed. The chapter will be organized into five major sections. In the first section an explanation of the institutional setting of Italian local government will be provided along with an overview of the pre-1990 background, that is before the first reform period. Later, after an analysis of the reform waves, which, in the 90s and in the early 2000s respectively, reallocated powers and reshaped the institutional framework (section 2), a snapshot on the most recent reform process during the years of the global crisis will follow (section 3). An assessment of the main features of the last reform wave (2008-2014) will be then conducted (section 4). The last section will be devoted to the perspectives and the future of Italian local government opened by the most recent reform (section 5). Some final remarks will be concluded in this chapter.

THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING AND THE PRE-1990 BACKGROUND

Local governments in Italy played a significant role in national politics and in public service delivery since their emergence. The current (2015) local government landscape includes municipalities (*Comuni*), provinces (*Province*) and metropolitan cities (*Città metropolitane*). All these three local governments are steered by 20 Regions (*Regioni*) that have been delegated by the State with special powers almost like in a federal arrangement (Baldi, 2006). Five of these 20 Regions (Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino-Alto Adige and Aosta Valley) due to the ethnic cleavages they bear within their borders, were granted a special status (*Regioni a statuto speciale* - RSSs) by the 1948 Constitution (Baldi, 2003: 122-125). The remaining 15 ordinary Regions (*Regioni a statuto ordinario* - RSOs) were given fewer powers and the legislation necessary to implement their real functioning arrived only 25 years later, along with the first regional elections, which were held simultaneously in 1970.

Italian provinces are currently (2015) 110: 13 have been transformed into metropolitan cities (Turin, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Naples, Bari, Reggio Calabria, Cagliari, Palermo, Catania, Messina), including the State capital city (Rome), which was entitled with a special autonomy¹.

The total amount of municipalities is 8,054 with around 57 millions of inhabitants on the national territory; the average municipal population counts 7,408 inhabitants, and the total number of municipalities with more than 15,000 inhabitants is slightly over 500. Instead, municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants are 5,692 (70,3%). Inter-municipal cooperation and other second level entities (like chambers of commerce, municipal partnerships, optimal territorial districts for public utilities management, health districts, mountain communities, consortia, parks, etc...) are minor local authorities.

The Background: From Unitary to Decentralized State

Between the XIX century and 1990, the nature of sub-state authorities had remained substantially unchanged or had been only partially modified. Municipalities and provinces were created under the Italian Kingdom in 1861 following the Napoleonic State model. As in France, the prefects (appointed by the central government to rule the provinces) were in a remarkably powerful position in the "chain of command" at the local level, but in the following decades, most part of the provincial legal power was delegated to the municipalities. The municipalities thus progressively overruled the provinces and became a crucial arena in the national politics (Aimo, 1997). The Italian State was thus unitary (formally), but decentralized in practice. This contradictory and ambiguous *de facto* arrangement was preserved until the end of WWII (1946).

After WWII the Republican Constitution enacted in 1948 maintained the previous institutional setting but integrated the two local tiers (municipalities and provinces) with a higher-ranked level (the Regions) with the task of steering the lower levels by fixing their objectives and by distributing financial resources. Nevertheless, as it was anticipated, the Regions remained for a long time on paper and were implemented only in 1971. The new Italian "regional State" was however a soft modification of the former unitary arrangement without a definite and clear-cut turn toward regionalism or federalism (Baldi, 2003:120). In other words it was a typical *regionalist* arrangement (Sharpe, 1993): the integration of the local governments in an administrative multi-level governance without a real devolution. For this reason the Italian Regions long continued to be reputed as negligible by both the central government and the public opinion.

Only in the mid-1980s—after remarkable amounts of money began to flow from the former European Community (now European Union (EU)) to the Regions, more and more involved in the implementation of the EU Structural Funds—Regions began to gain a more significant political role in the intergovernmental relations of the country.

Nonetheless, the 15 RSOs never got from the State neither financial autonomy nor an exclusive law-making power. This made the Italian regionalism extremely weak because Regions suffered the “strong predetermination of resources and competences” steered by the State, without being equipped with effective legal and financial autonomy (Baldi, 2006: 84). Moreover, as said before, the regionalisation of the Italian State superimposed the former arrangement of the local tiers, without triggering a real integration. This engendered a redundancy of tasks, units and of political representation among the three sub-state entities (regions, provinces and municipalities). The redundancy was encountered in the sharing of similar powers among local authorities, even if formally policy-making and service delivery competences were mostly assigned to the municipalities. The municipalities were in fact the real core business of local political life. An incremental and stratified decentralization had thus developed during this decade. At the end of the 1980s, this redundant arrangement of local authorities was strongly criticized and labelled as a sort of ‘governing the fragmentation’ (Dente, 1991) that is an institutional setting characterized by an inefficient overlapping and a lack of accountability. A fragmentation that nonetheless endured, substantially unchanged, until the first wave of reforms in the early 1990s.

THE REFORMS IN THE 1990S AND EARLY 2000S: RE-ALLOCATION OF LEGAL POWER AND RE-SHAPING OF THE INSTITUTIONAL SETTING

Since 1990 a new pattern of decentralization was formulated by the Parliament and the central government. It aimed at producing a clear-cut separation between the different levels and at increasing the accountability of the intergovernmental system. A re-allocation took place looking at a «policy window that gradually opened due first to the NPM and then to the scandals that afflicted the core of the Italian political system, on the one hand, and to the financial crisis and the risk of default (both in 1992), which led to implementation of the Maastricht parameters and the Stability Pact, on the other hand» (Lippi, 2015). Henceforth, re-allocation was perceived as a necessary step to adjust the country to the internal and external pressures. It triggered a long wave of reforms that started in the early 1990s and went on for almost a decade, endorsing autonomy and vertical subsidiarity (Bobbio, 2005). This reform wave empowered both local tiers and the Regions. This first set of provisions promoted a series of changes ranging from New Public Management (NPM) innovations to a different electoral system for representative bodies. As Verzichelli (2006: 471) points out «the transition of the 1990s has to be seen as a profound change in the delegation (and accountability) process. (...) In a sense, the turmoil of Italian politics began with an explicit request for an appropriate system of delegation and accountability, in particular a system making the political class and the executive more accountable».

The expected change following the first reform period was ambitious and included three general re-allocative aims (Lippi, 2011):

- Creation of a clear structure of responsibilities and functions replacing the current fragmentation;
- Introduction of institutional and organizational innovations;

- Reduction of the financial involvement of the State in the allocation of costs to the lower levels following the Treaty of Maastricht.

A second reform period then was between 2001 and 2009 through a radical Constitutional change and the following decrees, which implemented various aspects in the direction of a quasi-federalist arrangement (Bobbio, 2005; Piattoni & Brunazzo, 2010; Lippi, 2011). It encompassed two attempts to change the Constitution (one of which, in 2001, succeeded, while the other, in 2006, failed). This second reform period was clearly oriented to reshape the territorial arrangement as a consequence of the former reform wave.

Both reallocation and reshaping encompassed a broad range of goals that will be presented here in four different sections:

1. Institutional changes affecting the local democracy;
2. Organizational changes inspired by NPM;
3. Local multilevel governance between local tiers and the Regions;
4. Devolution of power from the State to the Regions.

How Local Democracy Changed: Majoritarian Electoral System and Municipal Presidentialism

The institutional change pertained to the electoral system and to the representative bodies for municipalities and provinces, concerning in particular the role of the mayor and the president of the province.

In 1993, new rules for the election of the city mayors and the municipal councils were introduced along with innovative tools, which were completely unknown in the Italian local administrative and government practice. The traditional proportional electoral system was replaced with a majority system according to the number of inhabitants of the concerned municipalities: a plurality system for municipalities under 15,000 inhabitants and a majority system over 15,000². Moreover, since 1993, mayors (and the presidents of the provinces) had been directly elected by the citizens. Indeed, it implied the mayoral power to appoint and revoke the executive councillors (*assessori*), i.e. the members of the municipal executive (*Giunta*) as in the so-called municipal presidentialism (Kuhlmann & Wollmann, 2014). In contrast with the past, when the *assessori*, as well as the mayor, were chosen by the council, with the new system the directly-elected mayor appoints his/her own staff of local ministers who are directly responsible to him and to him tightly linked by a (often personal) trust relation. The personalization, especially in terms of electoral responsiveness and government responsibility thus became dramatically strong. Also the presidentialization features (Poguntke & Webb, 2005) here implied are evident: the *Giunta* was a collegial office and the whole local government functions as such, but it is guided by the monocratic power of the mayor.

These innovations have been introduced with clear targets to be achieved (Baldini, 2011). The first objective was to increase the government stability at local level by reinforcing the head of the executive and by consolidating the collegial executive. Secondly, the reform aimed at slowing down the political de-mobilization and the non-vote attitude by giving the electorate the possibility, by directly choosing the mayor, of a more involved role in the local politics. The third goal was the reduction of the party fragmentation, mainly by introducing the above-described electoral system, which could assure a strong

majority to the winning candidate and his/her supporting lists³. Fourth, the new institutional arrangements implied a higher decision-making capacity and a wider room of manoeuvre for the mayor as the head of the municipal executive. Finally a greater autonomy of the local executives from the parties was envisaged.

Considering the aims and the results of the municipal reform, it can be affirmed that its main goals have overall been attained. Local governments are since then much more stable and accountable, the executive – and in particular the mayor – has been reinforced. As Di Virgilio (2005: 5) summarizes, among the main results of this reform emerges «the capacity of assuring political stability to the municipal executives and of revitalizing the representative-electoral circuit by assuring “decision power” to the electors’ vote and more autonomy and responsibility to the head of the executive.

The Influence of NPM on the Organizational Arrangements: Many Inputs and Contradictory Outcomes

The organizational change was widespread even if launched by a microlegislation that incrementally (and separately from one provision to another) introduced at the end a consistent range of NPM tools. These were, among others:

1. The abolition of legal controls by the State and
2. The substitution of the municipal secretaries (appointed by the Minister) with general managers;
3. The possibility for local tiers to recruit public employees autonomously also by hiring managers through private law contracts;
4. The introduction of organizational flexibility for administrative organizations through the adoption of NPM guidelines in place of the traditional bureaucratic patterns;
5. The increase in local financial autonomy through self-financing for all local authorities;
6. The privatization of public services including the possibility for municipalities to own private law companies for service delivery;
7. The contracting-out of service delivery to no profit organizations;
8. The performance assessment of human resources and/or services and the policy evaluation.

The impact of these innovations was partially contradictory (Lippi, 2000). On one hand, the local authorities (and in particular the municipalities) were strongly empowered from the NPM innovations. Many positive effects may be observed, e.g. the increase of service delivery and of users’ satisfaction, the differentiation of governing and more discretionary policy-making according to the territorial needs, the diffusion of a culture of performance and the development of an emerging and well-educated cluster of local manager and employees (Lippi, 2003). At the same time the reforms were mostly bottom-up implemented without any central steering and they generated a scattered landscape and many inequalities among the local authorities. Besides, the increasing tasks of service delivery caused an increase in local public debt while the expected privatization (i.e. the recruitment of private capitals to support an emerging public utilities sectors) substantially failed and most part of service delivery remained in charge to the public budget. In general, the *managerialisation* of local tiers was perceived by the public opinion as positive and proactive, while municipalities have been increasingly reputed as the best performers in the Italian public sector (Capano, 2003).

Supra-Municipal Entities and Multilevel Governance: More Failures than Successes

The sub-regional multi-level governance was affected by the reforms through the creation of supra-municipal entities and the fostering of municipal amalgamation. Moreover, a strong commitment for finding the best scale for public service management and delivery was pursued through the creation of territorial supra-municipal units (ATO- e.g. Optimal Territorial Districts) (Citroni et al. 2015a).

Until the end of the 90s, amalgamation was conceived as an innovative instrument to increase the economy of scale for small municipalities. They were allowed to amalgamate through a bottom-up procedure: the mayors and the municipal councils of the candidate merging municipalities had to communicate to the Ministry of Interior their will to join; then the central government proclaimed a popular referendum in the concerned municipalities. The program of amalgamation was especially conceived for small municipalities (less than 5,000 inhabitants) and the participants were compelled to amalgamate in ten years.

Accordingly, also inter-municipal cooperation was envisaged as a bottom-up tool, but fully voluntary and based on the simple decision by the mayors and municipal councils (without popular referendum). This tool was envisaged as an intermediate step, a sort of a piloting partnership experience, before the amalgamation. This innovative tool was called *Unioni di Comuni* (Municipal Union, MUs), and, as the French *communautés*, it was conceived as a temporary partnership among municipalities to jointly manage a certain amount of front office and back office activities (Fedele & Moini, 2007, Baldini et al., 2009; Bolgherini, 2015). They were aimed at replacing former supra-municipal entities like consortia and mountains communities.

Finally, 12 new Metropolitan cities were envisaged through the amalgamation of a regional capital city (those with more than 300,000 inhabitants) with its neighbor municipalities. The logic of economy of scale was a basic idea: an integrated management for service delivery, planning and infrastructures. Unfortunately, the legal design envisaged these metropolis as voluntary and bottom-up entities. The borders and the number of municipalities potentially involved in the new entities were not planned by law and it should have had to be indicated by the participants: the implementation of the metropolitan cities should have been made according to the political resources of the mayors of each capital city.

As for the management and delivery of public services, it was pursued in these years through the adoption of a regulatory governance approach (Citroni et al., 2012) and the following separation between regulator (municipalities clustered as independent authorities) and service provider (Citroni et al., 2016a). The territorial units were now the Optimal Territorial Districts (*Ambito Territoriale Ottimale*) gathering a certain number of municipalities (up to 60 or 70) for the management of water and sanitation services, waste collection and disposal and local transportation. The Parliament and the central government enacted a specific stream of legislation – water and sanitation services in 1994, waste management and disposal in 1997, energy in 1999, public transports in 1999, gas in 2000 – instead of a systematic and comprehensive legislation aimed at transforming the local public service from a public management toward a regulatory arrangement, also recruiting private capitals and encouraging Public Private Partnership. It was defined as ‘new regime’ (Napolitano, 2013; Lippi & Profeti, 2014) joining liberalisation, regulation and user rights with actual privatisation (Citroni et al. 2016a) – the separation of providers from regulators, the full cost recovery through tariffs and finally the awarding of the service through compulsory competitive tendering.

The general landscape of the implementation was generally unsuccessful and scattered. Regarding the metropolitan cities and the amalgamations, the outcome was ruinous. The program about metropolitan city entirely failed: no metropolitan city was created and the bottom-up strategy degraded into conflicts between regional capital cities and their neighbors (Profeti, 2010). Amalgamations also failed: only 9 cases of municipal mergers in ten years were realized, while MUs significantly increased since the early 2000s. Finally, although the ATOs were successfully (but very slowly) implemented, in general the regulatory governance failed (par. 5).

The Devolution: Toward a Quasi-Federalism

The devolution of power from the State to the Regions was the most relevant event in the recent Italian History. Amendment in the Constitution was attempted twice. The first change of the Constitution was made in 2000 supported by the centre left majority and then approved by a popular referendum. Then, the centre right majority enacted a second change of the Constitution in 2005 strongly supported by the Northern League Party that was not approved by the following popular referendum in 2006.

The 2001 reform implied a devolution of power from the State to the Regions (and to the local tiers, as consequence) in the name of a shared law making, apart from the legal competence that remained exclusively in charge to the central government (foreign affairs, internal affairs, army). Most important, the revised Constitution supported the vertical subsidiarity claiming local government as the core business of national policy making.

As a matter of fact, for the first time the local authorities ceased to be sub-state components and became autonomous bodies. The Constitution, now, explicitly recites that the Italian Republic is composed by Regions, Provinces, Municipalities and Metropolitan cities, while the old version recognized them only as a branch of the State.

More important, the Regions were called to steer the local governments in an integrated multilevel regional governance through the creation of second level entities, like inter-municipal cooperation and other intermediate bodies (consortia, large areas, districts, mountain communities, optimal territorial districts). This arrangement envisaged also the decentralization as a multilevel governance where the municipalities were delegated to the service delivery and provinces, metropolitan cities and the second inter-municipal authorities were delegate to territorial planning and coordination. At the same time, the Constitution envisaged that the institutional policy (electoral system, representative bodies and policy task) concerning the local governments remained in charge to the State.

Indeed, in 2009, an innovative measure was approved by the Parliament: the *fiscal federalism*. It is, a form of financing territorial autonomies based on the correspondence between revenues and the financial resources available at (and raised by) the same territorial level, and on the principles of autonomy, responsibility, coordination, cohesion and solidarity (Bassanini, 2010). From the outset, this law presented a number of flaws, focusing on what it did mainly to the public expenditure cuts without devolving significant fiscal powers (Baldi & Tronconi, 2011). Various legislative decrees to implement the fiscal federalism law succeeded one another in 2010–2011 (and even through until 2013). The effect is that decentralisation measures have thus been applied very recently, leading to a contradictory bridge period (Bolgherini, 2014).

This federalist attitude remained, however, more on paper than it remained in real. The transition towards the expected arrangement was in fact particularly laboured. The State was reluctant to the new provisions and tried to continue to do its “old job”, while at the same time the Regions struggled to gain effectivity for their new powers. This provoked a number of court litigations between the State and the Regions: the ambiguous allocation of legal tasks was the crucial issue, while the coordination and mediation role of the inter-institutional body between State and Regions (*Conferenza Stato-Regioni*) failed or was negligible. The new institutional design provided many innovations and on the whole it supported a more convinced and institutionalized decentralization. More specifically, local government (and their second level entities) were recognized as important. At the same time, the institutional design was not clearly federalist and it preserved the contradictions emerged in the former decades. As many commentators pointed out, this arrangement could not be considered as clearly federalist, but instead as a ‘quasi federalist one’ (Bobbio, 2005; Lippi, 2011).

As for the infra-regional multilevel governance, the reforms strongly encouraged inter-municipal cooperation. The former kinds of inter-municipal cooperation (like mountain communities, consortia, and the like) were definitively replaced by the MUs.

The main scope of this partnership was to improve the performance of service delivery by aiming at scale economies. Nonetheless, the implementation of the municipal unions succeeded only after 2000, when the Parliament abolished the compulsory amalgamation, which had to follow each municipal union 10 years after its creation. During the 1990s, in fact any amalgamation attempts alarmed the Italian mayors although it was not a novelty in the Italian legal framework. The reforms in the 1990s for the first time supported a clear commitment to reduce the total amount of the municipalities on the national territory, but the implementation was ruinous (only 9 cases) even if the mergers in 2000 were envisaged no longer as compulsory, but as voluntary.

Finally, the creation of the Metropolitan cities, as supra-level entities gathering a large-size city and its relevant neighbours, was an ambitious program that entirely remained on the paper apart from some isolated and failing attempts (Profeti, 2010). This program had never been implemented until 2014, as it will be explained later on.

As a result, the stream of reforms occurred through reallocation and reshaping were very ambitious courageous but contradictory and confused, because they radically promoted a decentralization and recognized the central role of local governments in the Italian political system. Nonetheless it was considered as incomplete and enduring the contradictions. The overlapping tasks, the ambiguity and the lack of accountability remained unsolved problems in the Italian political agenda: the State did not alter its habit and the Regions were unable to understand and to take actions.

The enduring contradictions were to appear again some years later, when the third reform wave took place, accelerated by the global crisis. But now the local governments were strongly empowered but the State (and the Regions) lacked a coordinating role. At the same time the implementation of the reform was scattered and not homogeneous. Many commentators pointed out the contradictions and the inequalities engendered by the different design across the national territory. The local governments located in the northern part of the country took advantage from the new profile, while the southern regions suffered this innovation plan. Finally, many problems were unsolved and the local governments were increasingly in-debt because they were entitled to deliver the most part of public services and to manage a wide range of policies, often without being granted with the relevant resources to do that.

Table 1. Re-allocation and re-shaping measures in the 1990s and early 2000s reform period

Approach	Measure	Year	Impact
Re-allocation	Organizational change	1990	Bottom up and contradictory
	Majoritarian electoral system	1993	Outstanding impact
	Municipal Unions	1990; 1997	Weak, but increasing
	Metropolitan cities	1990; 2000, 2001	Absent implementation;
	Mergers	1990; 2000, 2001	Very limited
	Optimal Territorial Districts (ATOs)	1994; 1997; 1999; 2000	Implemented
Re-shaping	Devolution of power (1st change of the constitution)	2001	Court litigations
	Devolution (2nd change of the constitution)	2006	Aborted
	Fiscal federalism	2009	On paper

Source: Authors' compilation.

THE 2008-2014 REFORM PERIOD: THE RE-SCALING

In the time span ranging from 2008 to 2014 a radical institutional reform took place, which encompassed some of the main features of Italian local government that had been set in the previous decades and through the previous reform waves.

As said, the approach used in the third and most recent reform period was oriented to a cost containment-oriented re-scaling in the light of cost saving, where the most relevant changes concerned:

1. The nature of the provinces,
2. The new life of municipal unions,
3. The introduction of constraints for small municipalities,
4. The creation of ten metropolitan cities.

The *provinces* (1), targeted as one of the financial black holes of Italy's public administration, have been at the centre of a series of attempts at territorial-institutional change, all entailing their merging or even suppression. After the 2011 European Central Bank (ECB)'s suggestion to the Italian government (Berlusconi IV) to introduce scale economies and to amalgamate or reduce some second-tier authorities (Baccetti, 2014a), the suppression of the smaller provinces was explicitly envisaged. This provision was then quickly dropped as such but the following government (Monti), in the following two years, intervened to this issue again with two acts, which tried to change the number, the organs and the competencies of the provinces.

During 2013, a new government (Letta) was in charge when the Constitutional Court sentenced the previous government's provisions as against the Constitution for an inappropriate use of the decree laws for such a complex institutional matter (Vandelli, 2014, 20-21). A few weeks later the government presented both a constitutional amendment that dropped all mention of provinces from the Constitution (which would consequently permit their ultimate suppression as local authorities through ordinary law without passing through the reinforced procedure of constitutional revision) and new decree law, known as the Delrio decree. It foresaw a territorial articulation where provinces were confirmed as indirect elected

authorities and their functions should be carried out by other territorial bodies such as the municipal unions. Moreover provincial organs were revised.

The fall of the Letta government, in early 2014, did not stop the project of suppressing the provinces (with a renewed constitutional amendment dropping again all mention of provinces from the Constitution), nor the legislative process of the Delrio decree. On the contrary, the new government (Renzi) strongly pushed in the same direction. In April 2014, the Delrio decree was converted into Law No. 56/2014.

This law tried to recompose the fragmented legislative picture of the previous years (Vandelli, 2014) – although a Constitutional revision is expected to be definitively approved in 2016 – and assigned the provinces a definite status as second-tier authorities with basic functions concerning broad over-municipal areas such as territorial planning, environment care, transports, strategic development planning and joint services management, as it will be discussed in section 3.

Between 2010 and 2014 an uninterrupted series of provisions impacted also both *Municipal Unions* (2) and *small municipalities* (3). MUs stepped into the debate with the aim of coping (at least partially) with the traditional inefficiencies of the small municipalities through the joint management of services and they currently are the only inter-municipal cooperation form in Italy, which is still explicitly fostered (also financially).

The first act foresaw the compulsory joint management of municipal basic tasks for those small municipalities under 5,000 inhabitants. These tasks should be progressively joined within December 2013, deadline then extended to December 2014 and then again to 2015.

Meanwhile, after the already mentioned ECB suggestion to the Italian government, two more provisions had been approved, where the balanced budget clearly became a priority. These two acts were cancelled, when converted into law, which the relevant decrees had imagined. With the spending review decree and its following law, another key step was taken. First of all, the basic tasks, which those municipalities under 5,000 inhabitants should compulsory manage jointly, were explicated; at the same time the constraints for the joint management were loosened: small municipalities could join also in looser inter-municipal forms than the MUs (although after three years if some requisites were not complied, a compulsory MU entered into force).

In this flow of reforms the above-mentioned Delrio law is the ultimate step also for municipalities and MUs. This law summarizes the political orientation of the Italian Parliament in providing the policy direction about territorial reforms over the last years. Along with the changes for provinces, this law imposes the MUs as the only admitted inter-municipal cooperation form, thus reinforcing their role in the second-tier authorities' arena. Finally this law strongly pushes in favour of municipal merging, which started to be a strategic tool for territorial reform. After decades in which it encountered a lukewarm enthusiasm from the part of municipalities if not an open opposition, something seems now to be changed. Both at the national as well as at the regional level, a clear favourable governmental attitude towards the merging has arisen, also through various financial incentives (Baldi and Xilo 2012; Marinuzzi and Tortorella 2014). From 1990 (the year of the first normative act about merging) to 2000 only 9 merging had took place in the whole country. Now they count 41, 24 of which created in 2014 and other 20 are planned to be enacted within 2016. The pace of change is striking and likely to continue in the near future.

The last pillar of the institutional reform of the last years is the *metropolitan cities* (4). Already foreseen in 1990, they had never been implemented until the Delrio law, which established their definitive creation starting from the January 1, 2015. On this date, ten metropolitan cities (Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, Reggio Calabria) should enter into force and replace their relevant provinces also in terms of tasks and functions. This last aspect has been one of the most

debated issue of the reform and the one most revised during the legislative process of the Delrio law (Vandelli, 2014, 23). Nonetheless, this act represents a turning point after a series of implementation gaps and failures on this topic (Serges, 2014). Eight attempts have been made along 25 years—since 1990 to 2015—to set up these second-level authorities, following the path of the regions: they have been implemented 25 years later than their normative prevision. The last attempt succeeded because the new metropolitan cities were introduced along the same territorial borders of the provinces and replaced them, while the former metropolitan cities had been imaged as new entities voluntarily gathered municipalities.

In 1990, as said, a first and farsighted normative act on this topic was introduced but the part concerning the metropolitan cities was never implemented; the same happened in 1999 and 2000 with two acts that provided a comprehensive and organic systematization to the local government matter after the reforms of the 90s (see again section 2). As well, in 2003 the Law that implemented the 2001 Constitutional reform disregarded the part concerning the metropolitan cities, which highly paradoxically, have had a constitutional entitlement exactly with the Constitutional reform – they were in fact cited in art. 114 Const. as components of the Italian Republic; and finally in 2009 with the fiscal federalism law. In all these occasions, the part of the law containing the norms on metropolitan cities remained unattended.

Between 2008 and 2014, the attempts to tackle this issue encountered some obstacles of other nature and ended up with complete failures more than in implementation gaps in the past: as said, the provisions concerning the provinces (and thus the metropolitan cities which should replace them) were declared against the Constitution. The real novelties of these years are however twofold: on the one side, the metropolitan cities have become compulsory and no longer on volunteer territory; on the other side, the push towards their implementation turned out to be driven by budgetary reasons, as it will be discussed later.

From this perspective the Delrio law represents a decisive step. Metropolitan cities are declared as broad over-municipal territorial authorities, along with the reformed provinces. In Fall 2014, their bodies have been elected: the metropolitan mayor is by law the mayor of the provincial capital city; the council is the decision-making body and is formed by mayors and municipal councillors of the municipalities belonging to the metropolitan city (that is the ancient province) and elected by all mayors and councillors of the involved municipalities (i.e. an indirect election); the conference is the assembly, composed by all mayors of the municipalities in the metropolitan city.

Finally, a last insight about the new Optimal Territorial Districts is due. The ATOs were suppressed by the central government in 2010 to save money at a time of crisis, and their number has indeed decreased from 91 to 70; but the situation now appears more chaotic and uncontrolled than ever. Then, according to 'quasi federalism' the Regions were in charge to enact new ATOs for water and sanitation, waste and disposal and local transportations (Citroni et al., 2015b). The outcome of this rescaling was scattered: some regions reverted to a very similar system; others created regional authorities or assumed direct control of water services; yet others did nothing and are now under compulsory administration.

The overall presentation of the main innovations introduced with the last reform, does highlight its rescaling trend (Table 2).

THE LAST REFORM: WHAT HAS CHANGED

After the above-narrated detailed excursus on the main novelties of the third reform wave, three main evidences about the 2008-2014 reform process can be singled out.

Table 2. Re-scaling measures in the 2008-2014 reform period

Measure	Year	Impact
Abolition and restoring of ATOs	2009; 2013-14	New scattered regionalized authorities
Cutbacks	2010-2012	Recentralization and upscaling
New provinces	2014	Undergoing implementation
Metropolitan cities	2014	Undergoing implementation
MUs and mergers	2014	Re-launched

Source: Authors' compilation.

- Scattered and Incremental Nature of Remapping:** The first evidence is that the reform process showed a quite scattered and incremental nature. The measures introduced, still demonstrate, in fact, an incredible degree of normative fragmentation, which hinders a comprehensive understanding of the policy design behind them. Moreover its results are still uncertain. This can be attributed to its still partial implementation - several normative acts in the last years (2011–13 in particular) were designed to reallocate a certain number of competences among provinces, municipalities and MUs, but with uncertain outcomes (considering that some of these reallocations have already been decided and others not); but also to the fact that the guidelines for the reform were austerity and the balanced budget priority and not an organic institutional reform project.
- Austerity as a Policy Window:** The second evidence is that the provisions in these years had been strongly characterised by austerity. The insistence on public expenditure cutbacks is obvious. A long series of balanced budget-oriented provisions have been approved in the time span between 2008 and 2014, mostly entrenched with the structural provisions.
- The Interlink between Reforms and the Crisis:** The third evidence is that the process shows the peculiar link between crisis and reform in Italy. In the 2008-2014 legislative acts, two goals can be detected: on the one side, the balanced budget discipline and, on the other side, the rationalization of local government (Bolgherini, 2014: 208): to tackle the problem of municipal fragmentation (that is, the large number of efficiency-lacking medium-small and very small municipalities); to reduce the number of local authorities, in particular the provinces; and to thin out local apparatuses. Let us see better this last point. The balanced budget compliance is an obligation imposed by the *fiscal compact*⁴: Italy adopted a Constitutional amendment to introduce the balanced budget principle in 2012 (Morgante, 2012). This is the most striking example of these years' trend: the basic rules of financial nature that have marked local governments, have not been established directly by the local government reforms themselves, but indirectly by other provisions (budgetary laws or balanced budget acts) (Bolgherini, 2015) Nonetheless they represent the real rule-setter of the reforms. Local government reforms have been largely influenced by, or even shaped upon, urgent financial provisions, on their turn oriented to cope with the sovereign debt crisis and the possible financial crackdown of the country. Reforms have instead been pursued with the second goal in mind – that of rationalization – and are evident with the attempts to reduce (or at least to reorganize) the number of local authorities and to ameliorate the distribution of tasks among governmental levels. A new recasting of tasks between central government and local authorities has in fact taken place: the new (weakened) role of the provinces, the new (empowered) one of the MUs, the (still unclear) transfer of tasks from the provinces to the municipalities or regions confirm this

trend. Structural provisions have also been introduced, concerning the size of local authorities: from the hypotheses of merging or suppression of the provinces to the warmly encouraged merging of municipalities, to the compulsory joint management of basic tasks for small municipalities under 5,000 inhabitants. However the final shape of territorial borders between municipalities, metropolitan cities and provinces still remains uncertain.

To sum up; the functional reforms have been conceived on financial goals and the crisis seems to have played a significant role on this reform process (Bolgherini, 2015). As it has been noted in other national contexts, such goals usually entail the merging, suppression or reduction of local bodies in a rationalisation perspective (Hulst & Van Montfort, 2007; Swianiewicz, 2010), likely to involve substantial changes to the rules and forms of local authorities.

The 2014 Delrio Law: A Never-Ending Story?

This is what is likely to happen with the Delrio law (No. 56/2014). Although the disjointed nature of the overall process, the Delrio law may be turn out to be a pivotal step in remapping Italian local government. For three reasons: first, because of the comprehensive nature of this law and its attempt to put in order the evolutions on local government since the early 2000s. The second reason relies on the radical changes this law entails by recasting tasks and reallocating power intergovernmental relationships both vertically and horizontally. The third reason is that this law seems to (partially) reverse the logic of the entire period that is the ancillarity of territorial reforms versus the budgetary goals. In the last provisions preceding the Law No.56/2014, all attempts to finally implement them have been driven by the spending review and cost containment approach; instead of the previous efforts, in which the aim was to optimize the areas of local government. The Delrio law seems to come back to a more comprehensive perspective, also because it has been approved by the centre-left majority as a middle step looking forward to the change of the Constitution.

From what has been presented until now, it is clear that the balanced budget goal as well as that of territorial rationalization, have, despite their limits and flaws, triggered a dramatic reform in Italian local government. Intergovernmental relations, their power relations, let alone the local authorities' basic features, have been strongly impacted (despite some parts of the reforms still have to be implemented).

Under a comprehensive perspective, the reform process in Italy seems to be, once again, 'a never-ending story' (Lippi, 2015). For two main reasons: first, the Delrio Act has been enacted thanks to a policy window, created by the economic crisis. The main arguments in favour of the reform were both cutbacks and cost saving. As such, the reform concentrated on the costs of the representative bodies looking for a better allocation of tasks and duties to the supra (Regions) or sub (municipalities) levels of local government, thus lacking a general view of administrative functions and power that have been delegated to regional laws according to the devolution approved by the Parliament in 2001. This fact made the implementation of the Delrio Law partially uncertain as well as incomplete. The rescaling of tasks and power is related to specific policy design enacted by each Region and it weakened the original potentiality of the reform delegating the new configuration to the choices by the regional government. As a consequence, the real impact of the reform depends on the decisions of the Regions, thus shifting the judgement on its implementation after the regional intervention.

Secondly, the reform seems to be provisional. All the above-mentioned measures refer to an allocation of competences moving from the provinces to the Regions or to the municipalities and their inter-municipal

cooperation forms. But these solutions call for other adjustments in terms of intermediate governments. Some Regions where metropolitan cities have been creating (e.g. Piedmont, Tuscany) already stated to create new entities gathering the 'old' provinces into new over-municipal areas. The new areas are probably envisaged as a counterbalance to the new-born metropolitan cities that are likely to become really powerful and influent. In such way the remaining territories may join their forces: the "peripheries" of each Region against the centre (the relevant metropolitan city). This process could involve the ongoing merging and agglomeration processes at municipal level and it can generate a 'domino effect' in the continuous redefinition of borders and territorial arrangements for still many years (Lippi, 2015).

Finally, the Delrio Act is an additional step in a long-standing process in reshaping of territories and intergovernmental relations. It has been perceived by the stakeholder as an incremental step by step arrangement waiting for a more radical reform definitively abolishing the provinces. In this perspective, the Delrio Law is a mid-step change waiting for a major reform abolishing the Provinces through the change of the Constitution. This attempt is now under revision by the Parliament: the Senate approved in October 2015 a decree to change the Constitution foreseeing a new multilevel governance without the old provinces. A final approval of this act and a popular referendum to be held in 2016 are needed before the final ratification.

This fact reduced the implementation and created expectations for a new change in the eyes of the stakeholder so that any implemented change is promoted to looking for the next step to come.

NEW PERSPECTIVES

This last section of the chapter will be devoted to some considerations about the perspectives and the future of Italian local government opened by the recent reform.

Some consolidated paradigms as well as categorization, which have been extensively employed in the last decades to classify and interpret the Italian case, are likely to be challenged by the new situation established by the institutional reform and in particular by the Delrio Law.

Three aspects in particular are cases in point.

Decentralization and Recentralization

Decentralization has been a major trend in Italy but the new provisions seem to entail strong re-centralizing features. The combined effect of the many anti-crisis provisions, introduced in the years 2008-2014 and strongly marked by the austerity-oriented policy discourse (Kamkhaji & Radaelli, 2013), has in fact tended to diminish local authorities' discretion and capacity for autonomous organisations (Bolgherini, 2014; 2016). In the years of the crisis, which overlapped with local government reform, Italian local level has lost room for manoeuvre and greater power has been put in the hands of central authorities. When any major crisis occurs the turn to the central government is not surprising. In the EU member states it is even more so, due to the EU governance stipulations and the required role of national government under the supervision of the European Commission.

A recentralisation trend has thus begun in Italian local government: its capacities for self-organisation and discretion have lessened and have been altered by new and direct central intervention. This is clearly in contrast with the trend over the previous decades of the 1990s and the early 2000s (see Section 1), when decentralization in Italy has been particularly strong (Baldi, 2003; Bobbio, 2002). In the last years,

instead, a new debate on a possible recentralization has newly emerged (Mangiameli, 2013; Vandelli, 2012; Perulli, 2010; Piperata, 2012). Along with the local government empowerment that occurred since the 70s, a progressive and increasing functional overload has also taken place. Local governments – and more in general democracies – have been invested during the 21st century by an overload increasing (Flinders, 2012). Since the post-WWII expectations towards politics and governments have skyrocketed: “the public’s expectations of politics have grown even greater, as have the range of issues for which politicians are expected to shoulder responsibilities” (Flinders, 2012, 21). Parallel to the overload increase, public authorities’ budgets have dramatically diminished and the size of the involved political-administrative borders has often become inadequate when compared with the pressures and the matters to deal with. It is evident that at the local level this generalized conditions impacted even more strongly, due that the available resources at that level are usually more limited than at the national level. It is thus possible to hypothesize that since the early 2000s, decentralization has reached its limits, to be intended as a physiological obsolescence.

Summing up, decentralization and re-centralization phases overlapped instead of alternating. Two different cycles of reforms took place in turn in a stratified process: decentralization started in the 1990s and seemingly ceased in the last decade when a recentralization process originated, but in fact re-centralization did not dismiss the previous arrangement. On the contrary, decentralization measures continued to be enacted while the recentralization strategies were expanding. The overall landscape resulted as ambiguous and stratified and it gave the policy makers the chance to promote new changes. Instead of a pendulum swinging between a decentralization trend and a recentralization one, both decentralization and recentralization coexisted in a contradictory tendency and it left room to policy makers to launch new reforms and to maintain the intergovernmental relations as provisional (Lippi, 2015). The new reform confirmed this swinging and at the same time, overlapping tendency.

Fragmentation and Localism Are Still Alive

The effects of the measures that have been put into force could impact central/local relations in Italy as far as the very nature of these relationships is concerned. Traditionally Italy has been classified by the literature on local government among the Napoleonic model of centre-periphery relations according to its historical administrative legacy. According to the literature on central/local relations, Italy has a historical Napoleonic state tradition (Page & Goldsmith, 1987; Loughlin et al., 2010), inter-institutional relations and power allocation (Hesse & Sharpe, 1991; Bennett, 1993; Denters & Rose, 2005) which tend to be classified as ‘unitary’, as well as a clientelistic system of relations (Goldsmith, 1992); it also belongs to the political localism’s countries (Page, 1991) where, as said, a decisive role is played by local level’s leeway to directly access the national level when local issues are at stake. Political localism reflects the degree of influence of a local political elite in national decisions affecting local level. It also entails a strong role of personal leadership and a brokerage ability to be exerted through a direct and personal access to national policy-making.

The different reform waves, which have affected Italian local government have always mixed the ingredients of localism and of the centre-periphery relations. Nonetheless informality and clientelism have never been removed or really challenged. The central State, as well as the regions, have never really grasped their new role, in particular that assigned them by the 2001 Constitutional change and continued

to do their ‘old job’. As well, several centre-periphery coordination bodies have failed their goal, thus paving the way to a persistency of (political) localism. Local governments, in particular the mayors, have pursued in keeping the proximity and localism on, while sub-state and central governments have dismissed their coordination tasks. This had some major effects also on point c). The recent reform will probably propose this schema again, i.e. that of a reshuffling of political localism and of its features without changing its nature.

The creation of brand new local authorities (metropolitan cities and, in certain respect, also MUs) as well as of new not-clearly-defined governance areas (the over-municipal areas), will in fact pave the way for this new reshuffling of power: allocation of competences, territorial borders, conflicts and struggle for catching the new power and policy making opportunities. Fragmentation and localism are thus likely to survive even if, again, in newly reshaped forms.

The Failure of the Regulatory Governance

As mentioned above, the Regulatory governance at local level was one of the most intricate outcomes of local democracy in Italy. It implied the disproportionate increase of the corporatisation at local level (Citroni et al., 2016b). Privatization and corporatization of local public services (not only affecting public utilities, but also including distributive policies as social services, economic development, libraries, pharmacies, education, etc...) engendered a disproportionate number of private law companies directly owned by the municipalities (more than 5,000 for 8,000 municipalities) almost entirely supported by public money (Citroni et al., 2012). This fact was an effect of the already mentioned political localism and of the traditional consensual political culture in the country (Citroni et al., 2015a). This situation displayed in an incremental creeping way, without an explicit address to liberalization and thus leaving room to ambiguities both in the ownership and in the rules of awarding the concessions for service delivery.

All these factors caused a blurred legislation and a huge recourse to court litigation at all levels, thus frustrating the intentions of earlier reformers. The last decade was dominated by the negotiation of conditions for ‘in-house’ provisions by public companies; the imposition of compulsory competitive tendering often proposed as a panacea but always attenuated by loopholes and exceptions; the lack of monitoring, evaluation, users’ protection and systematic, stable and general legislation on tendering and concessions (Citroni et al. 2016a). Finally a more incisive act approved in 2007 that had re-launched privatization and compulsive competitive tendering was abrogated by a popular referendum in 2011 with a massive participation.

In the years of the recent reform the newly introduced regulatory system was increasingly weakened and partially dismantled: the referendum abolished the fixed profit for investors; in 2010 ATOs were abolished in an attempt to save public money (but leaving the system of regulation virtually unsupervised); finally, the national agency for water service was also dismantled, and its competences were transferred to the agency for energy (Citroni et al. 2012).

As a result, the regulatory approach was substantially substituted by a *de facto* governance. This state of the art has been strongly criticized by the public opinion and considered as expensive, inefficient (even if some companies are very well performers) and poorly democratic. As a matter of fact, this public local services governance is an outstanding feature of the current local democracy in the country, very appealing for mayors and local stakeholders.

CONCLUSION

Italy experienced all along over 25 years an uninterrupted institutional policy between decentralization and centralization in a seemingly never-ending process of reform. This recurrent reform waves can be interpreted as a long-lasting attempt to remap local governments in the lights of efficiency, performance and economy scale, even if the very last period of reforms has been more strictly related to a rescaling approach. The overall reform approach in Italy has always been characterized by a trial-and-errors strategy so that the continuous remapping that has taken place can be conceived as an indicator of a seeking for an optimal arrangement.

In the three reform waves, which has been analysed in this chapter (early 1990s, early 2000s and 2008-2014), the policy rhetoric and discourse as well as the stakeholders promoting the new arrangements changed from one period to another. Nevertheless, remapping local government in Italy fundamentally meant three different 'R-approaches':

- Re-allocation of legal power (decentralization in the light of NPM) (from 1990 to 2000);
- Re-shaping of the institutional setting (devolution) in favour of subsidiarity (from 2001 to 2009);
- Re-scaling of functions in terms of recentralization (upscaling) and a search for an optimal territorial scale in times of economic crisis (since 2008).

After decades without any change since the 1990, the country experienced a stronger and stronger attention paid to local governments and to their empowerment (or weakening).

As previously described, Italian local levels have always played a significant role in counterbalancing the weaknesses of the national political system and of central institutions. They have compensated for the lack of performance and of effective national policies and have played a significant role in the Italian democracy by giving legitimacy to the local democratic institutions. In other words, local democracy supported and reinforced State democracy. At the same, time local democracy suffered a strong indebtedness and has become, especially in the years of the global crisis, a target for austerity measures. The pendulum of downscaling thus moved toward upscaling, justified by the essential role of the State in periods of crisis.

In this 'action and reaction' overlapping and contradictory movements all along the decades, the Italian institutional setting has been radically modified, even if this has happened through a step-by-step and quite disjointed approach more than through a clear, comprehensive and planned reform design. The new formal arrangement originated by the last reform wave in the years of crisis, did not hinder or diminish the flourishing the traditionally strong role of (political) localism. Fragmentation is also still present as a central issue in the Italian political debate. The implementation of many of the introduced innovations partially failed or has been biased by localism and local reinterpretation – e.g. the scattered NPM innovations throughout the country or the regulatory practice in municipal service delivering. Local governance thus still seems to be provisional and indefinite instead of cost saving-oriented and coherent.

Nonetheless, it has also been a remarkable laboratory for well-performing service delivery systems, thus enabling the local level to be considered the more reliable level of the Italian political system.

This contradictory arrangement is still one of the most relevant aspects of Italian local government. The impact of the current austerity strategy, which dominated the last reform wave, is going to affect the possible future re-arrangements (Lippi, 2015). For the moment, although some attempts to systematize

the provisions affecting local levels, the evidences reported allow us to affirm that also for the 2008-2014 reform period, alike the previous ones, an unintentional, contradictory and incremental strategy is at work. In the future, a more in-depth analysis of the outcomes of the current reform will be needed to better claim that the recent remapping is likely to be followed, once again, by another one.

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ENDNOTES

- ¹ This arrangement has been recently settled by the third reform period. A further radical change concerning the full abolition of the provinces is expected to be approved by the Parliament in 2016.
- ² To be precise, the previous electoral system for the municipalities adopted already a form of plurality system, but only for the municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants. This innovation was followed, some months later, by the more famous electoral reform for the national Parliament.
- ³ Italian local party system was typically consensual with post-electoral coalitions. Parties selected the candidates, managed the campaign, negotiated the appointments for the executive offices, chose the mayor to be elected according to complex political equilibriums, and determined the political life of the municipal legislature.

- ⁴ The Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union signed in March 2012, better known as *fiscal compact*, obliges EU member states to introduce in their Constitutions the balanced budget principle, which had already been decided in the 1992 Maastricht treaty, then reinforced in the Stability Pact in 1997 and in the recent EuroPlus Pact in 2011.