



# Italia contemporanea Yearbook 2020

Istituto nazionale Ferruccio Parri

FrancoAngeli

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## Acknowledgements

It comes as no surprise that a historical institute of the calibre of the Istituto nazionale Ferruccio Parri, which manages a network of 66 local institutes, publishes its own journal. What is less predictable is the fact that, over the years, this journal — ‘Italia contemporanea’ — has managed to become a point of reference within the scholarly debate in Italy, and now hopefully also abroad as we are about to launch this English-language ‘Yearbook’.

As the President of the Istituto nazionale Ferruccio Parri, I am extremely proud of these gratifying results and I wish to thank all those who contributed to their accomplishment, especially the editorial director, Prof Nicola Labanca, and all members of the editorial board.

Paolo Pezzino  
President of the National Institute Ferruccio Parri

It is with great pleasure that I greet the publication of the very first issue of the English-language ‘Yearbook’ of ‘Italia contemporanea’. I am confident that it will act as a valuable means of promoting the most original and innovative outputs of Italian historiography — many of which have appeared in the journal of the Istituto nazionale Ferruccio Parri — among the international academic community.

Filippo Focardi  
Scientific Director of the National Institute Ferruccio Parri





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## Foreword

**Nicola Labanca\***

In 1949, a mere four years after Italy was liberated from Fascism, a small group of intellectuals, politicians and historians decided to establish a historical institute in Milan, which celebrated its seventieth anniversary only very recently. They called it ‘Istituto nazionale per la storia del Movimento di Liberazione in Italia’ (National Institute for the history of the Liberation Movement in Italy). Its founder and first president was Ferruccio Parri, the democrat and republican leader of the Action Party, who — among others — had animated the ‘Comitato di Liberazione nazionale Alta Italia’ (Committee of National Liberation for Northern Italy). Parri was one of the leaders of the Italian Resistance against Fascism, as well as the Prime minister of the first government born after Italy’s Liberation (25 April 1945).

The aim of the Institute was, in fact, to safeguard all documents relating to the Italian Resistance, rightfully considered both the most radical turning point in the history of Italy and the most unifying Italian political orientation. After all, what had distinguished the Italian Resistance — which was not devoid of radicalism — was its unifying drive, bringing together militants from the Communist Party, the Action Party, the Socialist Party and the Christian Democracy, as well as republicans, monarchists and anarchists. Moreover, the Resistance movement had raised the hopes of every single Italian (civilian or soldier) who wanted to put an end to Fascism and the Nazi occupation.

More importantly, only three months after its establishment, the Institute launched a ‘Rassegna bimestrale di studi e documenti’ (Review of studies and sources, to be published every two months): a scholarly journal that offered analyses and presented historical documents, with dedicated book reviews or review articles. The editorial board — which represented the Institute even though maintaining a wide degree of independence — was composed

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of intellectuals, historians and militants with a passion for history. It was the first journal in Italy to be entirely devoted to contemporary history; this was remarkable since, at that time, only Modern history and Risorgimento History were taught at Italian universities — contemporary history was yet to be born. Clearly the idea behind the Institute was to promote a critical approach to the Resistance (rather than an apology), to anti-fascism and to national history. This research activity also involved disseminating the obtained knowledge.

The ‘Rassegna’ soon moved from some dozens of pages to about two hundred pages per issue, and by the 1960s it had become an academic history journal in the full sense of the term. In 1974, it changed its name to ‘Italia contemporanea’. In a certain sense, then, ‘Italia contemporanea’ has existed for 70 years now, just like the Institute, which recently changed its name to ‘Istituto nazionale Ferruccio Parri. Rete degli Istituti per la storia della Resistenza e dell’età contemporanea’ (National Institute Ferruccio Parri. Network of Institutes for the history of the Resistance and the contemporary age). The reason behind this change is that, ever since the end of the war, and especially since the 1970s, about seventy regional or provincial Institutes have emerged across Italy; by uniting into a network, they contribute in a significant way to the study of contemporary history of Italian society in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In other words, they must no longer be considered simply as Institutes for the history of the Resistance but — within the boundaries of the possible, and funding permitting — as many-sided institutes of contemporary political, social and cultural history, which represent one of the most original and important aspects of Italian associationism in the field of history and, as we would nowadays say, history in public.

These Institutes — whenever and however possible — have produced first-class contributions to historiographical research relating to twentieth-century Italy, which have often been more experimental, innovative and up-to-date than what is commonly accepted in Italian universities and university departments. Consequently, ‘Italia contemporanea’ has become one of the most esteemed academic history journals in Italy: its editorial board has been composed of expert scholars for decades now, and it has always remained independent in its scholarly decisions. In fact, the independent ‘Agenzia nazionale di valutazione del sistema universitario e della ricerca’ (National agency for the assessment of the university system and research) has ranked the journal “A”, and in Italy it is considered one of the best journals of national contemporary history.

The journal is essentially composed of three sections: ‘Saggi’ (Essays, i.e. original research articles), ‘Note e discussioni’ (Notes and discussions, i.e. shorter discussion articles) and ‘Rassegna bibliografica’ (Bibliographical review, i.e. book reviews). All the issues from 1949 up to 2009 are now available in open access via the Institute’s website, at [www.reteparri.it/pubblicazioni/italia-contemporanea](http://www.reteparri.it/pubblicazioni/italia-contemporanea). The most recent issues (since 2010) are available at [www.francoangeli.it/riviste/Sommario.aspx?IDRivista=164](http://www.francoangeli.it/riviste/Sommario.aspx?IDRivista=164). Now a four-monthly journal, ‘Italia contemporanea’ follows a strict double-blind peer

review procedure. In recent years, it has adopted a ‘hybrid’ form of publication, with some two-thirds of the articles being published in print and via a subscription, one third on line, in open access. The articles published in open access aren’t reprints of existing articles, though: they are entirely original articles, which can be accessed without a subscription to the journal.

The reason for describing — earlier on — the origins of our Institute and of our ‘*Italia contemporanea*’ is that, while these events are familiar to an Italian scholarly readership, they may not be known abroad.

We now launch a new initiative.

Although important libraries within the European and, in general, Western research context are subscribed to ‘*Italia contemporanea*’, making it available to readers in and beyond Europe, we felt it was necessary to offer a new series of publications aimed precisely at an English-language audience: the present ‘Yearbook’.

Indeed, one of the weaknesses of Italian historiography — whose best contributions are obviously of international, and internationalised, standards when it comes to research questions and methodologies — is the fact that it uses the Italian language. While many of the best Italian scholars of contemporary history read (and write in) English, French, German, Spanish and so on, not all among the best British, French, German, Spanish or American scholars read Italian. Consequently, it is more difficult to make the products of Italian contemporary history research known outside the Peninsula.

Through this ‘Yearbook’, ‘*Italia contemporanea*’ aims to contribute to resolve this problem. Its editorial board has selected about ten longer and shorter articles, which it felt represented the most innovative contributions to have appeared in the journal in 2020. The chosen articles address topics that have received little scholarly attention or adopt innovative research methodologies; either way, we are confident that they will prove of interest to an international readership. Thanks to the publisher, we were able to have the articles translated into English, and we have now gathered them in the present ‘Yearbook’. In doing so, ‘*Italia contemporanea*’ introduces these originally Italian themes, research projects and authors to a global readership. Furthermore, through this ‘Yearbook’, these articles (which have already gone through a rigorous double-blind peer review process) will be freely available in open access.

Obviously, everything has changed ever since the Institute was founded and the ‘*Rassegna*’ was launched: historical circumstances, protagonists, aims, the quality of historical research. Yet, the spirit of the first years hasn’t disappeared completely. The aim, now as then, remains that of studying the original and specific traits of contemporary Italy in the twentieth century and now also twenty-first century. The idea remains that of disseminating, as much as possible, the products of some of the best Italian historical research: previously in print, now on line; previously in a national context, now in the global arena.



**A never requested triumph?  
Reframing gender boundaries in Fiume and Sušak after 1918**

**Francesca Rolandi\***

The First World War unsettled not just the geopolitical arrangement of a large part of Europe, but also previously held gender roles and family relations. With the conflict's end, the bordering cities of Fiume and Sušak went through a long transition characterised by administrative instability and economic uncertainty, as well as by political and national tensions, before being integrated into the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, respectively.

Drawing on available sources in both Italian and Croatian, this article analyses the case study of a border area in order to investigate women's presence in the public sphere, considering both their political participation — to the extent this was allowed by the different forms of suffrage — and their associationism within political and philanthropic organisations. Moreover, in order to trace the reactions triggered by women's activism, the article examines gender representations in the local press, which was mostly linked to the main conflicting political factions and dominated by male journalists.

**Key words:** Upper Adriatic, Gender, Post-WWI, Politics, Representations

In 1919 the Italian-language newspaper of Fiume, *La Vedetta d'Italia*, published an article about a new clothing item: the pyjama. Instead of focusing on matters of fashion and style, the article engaged in a wider discussion about women's role in contemporary society:

In these recent times without strikes, without protests, it cannot be denied that woman has made great progress. Through facts, rather than through words, she has given proof of her hugely versatile talent. She has invaded factories, warehouses, court rooms, hospitals, laboratories, offices of every kind, and soon she will move, with admiral ease, from the marital room to that of the members of parliament, spreading the gay notes of her femininity everywhere she goes. There is, then, a tendency that she masculinises herself, but only so much. In the meantime, within the domestic walls, in the secrecy of her bedroom, she has started to wear a nightly clothing item that brings her very close to man: the pyjama.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *La moda*, "La Vedetta d'Italia" (hereafter "VI"), 29 August 1919, p. 3.

As the article frivolously suggested, the women of Fiume had conquered a significant presence in the workplace, in educational institutions and in spaces of sociability, and they seemed ready to burst onto the political scene as well. Yet, their path towards inclusion in the public sphere and political representation — which seemed consolidated during the first months of post-war enthusiasm — would prove to be far more complicated and ridden with contradiction. Also, gender representations that would be radically affected by the reshuffling of roles during the war oscillated between the expectations of the first post-war years and the adjustment to more traditional views, which gained traction over the years.

Starting from a historiographical overview of the first post-war period in Fiume, with particular attention being paid to gender narratives, this article aims to examine women's participation made possible by different forms of suffrage, not to mention by their activism within political organisations and philanthropic associations. Moreover, in order to trace contemporary reactions to women's engagement, I will analyse gender representations in the local press, which were mostly conveyed by male voices.

The article focuses on the neighbouring cities of Fiume and Sušak. In the second post-war period, these were merged into the present city of Fiume/Rijeka. In the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Fiume was a *corpus separatum* that depended directly on the Hungarian government, whereas Sušak belonged to the Kingdom of Croatia-Slavonia, also dependent on the Hungarian crown. Although the two cities also differed in terms of identity, with a much stronger Italian-speaking presence in the former and a Croatian-speaking majority in the latter, they developed thanks to a relationship of proximity and interdependence, which persisted after the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire. In 1918, the Italian National Council (Consiglio Nazionale Italiano, hereafter CNI) seized power in Fiume, which had not been included among the claims foreseen by the Treaty of London. The CNI supported Fiume's annexation to Italy — a claim the irredentist poet Gabriele D'Annunzio had also made his own. Thus, in September 1919, D'Annunzio marched into Fiume with military troops and ruled the city — together with municipal authorities — until December 1920, when the Italian army forced him out in view of the Treaty of Rapallo that had been agreed with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes (hereafter SCS), which established the Free State of Fiume. A situation of continued instability, generated by local as well as foreign nationalists and fascists, obstructed the functioning of the small state, even if it was internationally recognised. It was eventually annexed to Italy via the establishment of transitory authorities. The neighbouring city of Sušak, on the other hand, was the propulsive centre of pro-Yugoslav nationalism. It passed the first post-war years under Italian occupation before it fell under the sovereignty of the nearby Kingdom of SCS in 1923.

My analysis focuses on the long transition period following the First World War, and draws on a range of local press outlets — both in Italian and Croatian — that represented the main political factions vying for control over the city: the press that supported Fiume's annexation to Italy and, accordingly, D'Annunzio's expedition; the pro-Yugoslav press, which instead sustained the annexation of Fiume as well as Sušak to the nascent Kingdom of SHS; the autonomist press, which advocated the creation of a Free State of Fiume, drawing on a culturally Italian urban identity that — after 1919, also in opposition to Fascism — was increasingly viewed from a supranational perspective.<sup>2</sup> Given that Fiume's Socialist and Communist parties left only few traces in the period under examination, both in terms of press sources and archival material, I have not been able to include these political sectors into my analysis. It is nonetheless certain that they supported women's suffrage; for example, after 1921 there had been a Women's section of the Communist Party of Fiume.<sup>3</sup>

Over the last years, new scholarly research has studied the unique history of Fiume during the entire twentieth century, paying particular attention to the post-war periods,<sup>4</sup> to the formation of national and political identities,<sup>5</sup> and to the continuities and divisions that marked the crisis of Fiume during the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire.<sup>6</sup>

Fiume acquired both international and national fame during the first post-war period, when the city — claimed by competing irredentists — became one of the sources of contention in the Paris peace negotiations. This time of political tension culminated in Gabriele D'Annunzio's expedition, and he would maintain control over the Kvarner city for more than 15 months. Throughout the decades, numerous Italian-language studies have been dedicated to this

<sup>2</sup> Due to the repressive actions against the press that opposed the joint rule of the CNI and D'Annunzio's entourage, the autonomist and pro-Yugoslav newspapers were published irregularly. Consequently, they are available in smaller numbers as opposed to the pro-annexation newspapers.

<sup>3</sup> Mihael Sobolevski, Luciano Giuricin, *Il Partito comunista di Fiume 1921-1924*, Rijeka, Centar za historiju radničkog pokreta i NOR-a Istre, Hrvatskog primorja i Gorskog kotara; Rovigno, Centro di ricerche storiche dell'Unione degli italiani dell'Istria e di Fiume, 1981, pp. 184, 246-249.

<sup>4</sup> William Klinger, *Un'altra Italia: Fiume 1724-1924*, Trieste, Lega nazionale; Rovigno, Centro di ricerche storiche, 2018; Andrea Roknić Bežanić, *Uspostava i organizacija civilnih i vojnih vlasti u poslijeratnoj Rijeci*, "Časopis za povijest Zapadne Hrvatske", 2011/2012, n. 6/7, pp. 163-177.

<sup>5</sup> Ivan Jeličić, *The typographers' community of Fiume: combining a spirit of collegiality, class identity, local patriotism, socialism, and nationalism(s)*, "Austrian History Yearbook", 2018, pp. 73-86; Marco Abram, *Integrating Rijeka into socialist Yugoslavia: the politics of national identity and the new city's image (1947-1955)*, "Nationality papers", 2018, n. 1, pp. 69-85.

<sup>6</sup> Dominique K. Reill, *Post-Imperial Europe: when comparison threatened, empowered, and was omnipresent*, "Slavic review", 2019, n. 3, pp. 663-670; Dominique K. Reill, *The Fiume crisis: life in the wake of the Habsburg Empire*, Belknap-Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2020.

political phase,<sup>7</sup> often focusing on its diplomatic history or on the political meaning of ‘fiumianism’. Croatian historiography has revisited the entire incident paying specific attention to the urban centre of Sušak<sup>8</sup> as well as to the theme of national persecutions against the Croats in Fiume, highlighting the continuity between D’Annunzio’s actions and Fascism.<sup>9</sup>

A vast amount of both Italian and Croatian literature has approached national identities as eternal and unchanging elements, which can be revived or suppressed. This perspective contrasts with new historiographical studies of the post-Habsburg area that have analysed processes of national construction from an increasingly critical viewpoint.<sup>10</sup> Although the predominantly nation-centred perspective has contributed to convey a narrative focused exclusively on the conflict between Italians and Croats, there are also studies that have analysed the multiplicity of identities within these formations as well as actors that cannot be placed on any side of the dichotomy.<sup>11</sup>

Moreover, some of the more recent studies have highlighted how the insurrection of sections of the national army that followed D’Annunzio to Fiume affected the fragile political balances in Italy.<sup>12</sup> Due to the dual focus on political events and the construction of the “poet-soldier” myth, and on the consequences of local political theorisations for Italy, studies of Fiume have often evoked an image of the city that corresponds to its external perception and imagination by those thousands of individuals that flocked to the city, rather than analysing the impact of international events on the fabric of local society.

<sup>7</sup> For an overview of Italian historiography on this period see Francesco Perfetti, *D’Annunzio e l’impresa di Fiume. Un bilancio storiografico*, in Melita Sciucca (ed.), *Fiume nel secolo dei grandi mutamenti / Rijeka u stoljeću velikih promjena*, Fiume = Rijeka, Edit, 2001; Antonella Ercolani, *Da Fiume a Rijeka: profilo storico-politico dal 1918 al 1947*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2009; Giovanni Stelli, *Storia di Fiume: dalle origini ai giorni nostri*, Pordenone, Biblioteca dell’immagine, 2017; Raoul Pupo, *Fiume città di passione*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Željko Bartulović, *Sušak 1919.-1947.: državnopravni položaj grada*, Rijeka, Adamić - Državni arhiv Rijeka - Pravni fakultet, 2004.

<sup>9</sup> For an overview of relevant Croatian historiography see Mihael Sobolevski, *D’Annunzijeve vladavine u Rijeci (rujan 1919. - siječanj 1921.) - Prvi egzodus hrvata* in Marino Manin (ed.), *Talijanska uprava i egzodus Hrvata 1918.-1943. Zbornik radova sa Međunarodnog skupa*, Zagreb: Hrvatski institut za povijest – Društvo Egzodus istarskih Hrvata, 2001, p. 287. See also Daniel Patafta, *Promjene u nacionalnoj strukturi stanovništva grada Rijeke od 1918. do 1924. godine*, “Časopis za suvremenu povijest”, 2004, n. 2, pp. 683-700. For an analysis of women’s conditions see Tea Perinčić Mayhew, *Rijeka ili smrt: D’Annunzijeve okupacije Rijeke 1919.-1921. – Rijeka or death! D’Annunzio’s occupation of Rijeka 1919-1921*, Rijeka, Naklada Val - Maritime and History Museum of the Croatian Littoral - Rijeka EPK 2020, 2019.

<sup>10</sup> Borut Klavžan (ed.), *Borderlands of memory. Adriatic and Central European perspectives*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2019; see also the 2018 special issue of the “Austrian History Yearbook”.

<sup>11</sup> Ljubinka Toševa-Karpowicz, *Masonerija, politika i Rijeka (1785.-1944.)*, Rijeka, Državni arhiv u Rijeci, 2015; I. Jeličić, *The typographers’ community of Fiume*; D.K. Reill, *The Fiume crisis*.

<sup>12</sup> Marco Mondini, *Fiume 1919: una guerra civile italiana*, Rome, Salerno, 2019; Enrico Serventi Longhi, *Il faro del mondo nuovo: D’Annunzio e i legionari a Fiume fra guerra e rivoluzione*, Udine, Gaspari, 2019.



Next, the emphasis on the uniqueness of the Fiume experience has led certain scholars to separate the city's history from that of the surrounding areas and, with only few exceptions,<sup>13</sup> to ignore the continuities that linked the D'Annunzian interval (September 1919 - December 1920) to preceding or successive periods. Furthermore, scholarly interest in the political experiment that D'Annunzio embodied — especially the Italian Regency of Carnaro, proclaimed in September 1920 but never applied, which combined typical elements of right-wing political culture and revolutionary trade unionism — has resulted in the overlapping of political proclamations and actual measures that were implemented in the city.

Another strand of literature has ascribed a politics of female emancipation to D'Annunzio, drawing on an interpretation of the “Endeavour” of Fiume in “libertarian” terms.<sup>14</sup> Thanks to an often uncritical analysis of memorial texts published by the soldiers that were stationed in Fiume in subsequent years,<sup>15</sup> similar studies have helped to convey the image of an orgiastic atmosphere, which supposedly also involved the local population in a triumph of experimentations that is said to have pervaded all spheres of society: from the social order to sexual norms, up to the point that it allegedly anticipated a rebellion against morality comparable to that of 1968. While this comparison may sound out of date, it can be useful to place the incident of Fiume in a contemporary context. As a wide range of studies have stressed, in various European countries many women had come to the conclusion that they could claim a space in the public sphere, especially in Central Europe, where the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the creation of new states seemed favourable to new forms of inclusion.<sup>16</sup> At the same time, recent scholarship has highlighted the fact that the glorification of masculinity and practices considered deviant from bourgeois morality (e.g. drug abuse, homosexuality or going to brothels) was relatively widespread during and after the First World War, whereas the climate of normalisation during Fascism gradually marginalised and criminalised these behaviours.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> D.K. Reill, *Post-Imperial Europe*; Danilo L. Massagrande, *Italia e Fiume: 1921-1924. Dal Natale di sangue all'annessione*, Milan, Cisalpino-Goliardica, 1982.

<sup>14</sup> Michael L. Leeden, *D'Annunzio a Fiume*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1975, pp. 140-142; Claudia Salaris, *Alla festa della rivoluzione. Artisti e libertari con D'Annunzio a Fiume*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2002; Giordano Bruno Guerri, *Disobbedisco: cinquecento giorni di rivoluzione. Fiume 1919-1920*, Milan, Mondadori, 2019

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Giovanni Comisso, *Le mie stagioni*, Milan, Garzanti, 1951.

<sup>16</sup> Ingrid Sharp, Matthew Stibbe (eds.), *Aftermaths of war: women's movements and female activists 1918-1923*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Matteo Millan, *The institutionalisation of squadristo: disciplining paramilitary violence in the Italian fascist dictatorship*, “Contemporary European history”, 2013, n. 4, p. 44; Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Unmaking the fascist man: masculinity, film and the transition from dictatorship*, “Journal of modern Italian studies”, 2005, n. 3, pp. 336-365.

Many civilians awaited the end of the First World War with mixed feelings of joy, mourning for the losses and hopes for a better future, to be built from the ashes of a useless bloodbath. While the men were at the front, women were often forced to maintain the family unit on their own, whereas the forced distance put interpersonal relations to the test.<sup>18</sup> When, in the autumn of 1918, various national councils aimed at claiming independence were created across the ex-Habsburg area, from the beginning Fiume revealed itself to be a contested city; thus, a National Council of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was proclaimed only to be substituted — shortly thereafter — by an Italian National Council.

Following the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, both the Croatian and the Italian press testified to the women's zealous participation, as well as to the contradictory promises of inclusion. From 1918 onwards, an inter-allied military occupation corps of Italian, French, American and — for a brief period — Serbian armies was stationed in Fiume. As the inter-allied naval ships approached the city, on the pages of the Croatian-language daily *Primorske novine* (printed in Sušak) the National Council of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes invited young women to participate in the ceremony and to prepare flags — an invitation that was welcomed with enthusiasm.<sup>19</sup> According to the newspaper, women of different ages and dressed in the various national costumes took part in an oceanic demonstration of 25,000 people that traversed the city, waving Yugoslav flags and greeting the Italian fleet as allies; they did so to demonstrate the force of the pro-Yugoslav sector as well as the city's willingness to be part and parcel of the future Kingdom of SCS. If the courtesy demonstration for the Italian contingent served to reaffirm the limits of its mandate, the hearts of the pro-Yugoslav women and men in reality beat for the French soldiers, viewed as the real guardians of the nascent state of southern Slavs. A delegation of six Fiumian women visited Captain Georges Edmond Just Durand-Viel on the Touareg ship, and held a brief speech in French, which ended with the following words: "Long live France, our guardian, friend and ally".<sup>20</sup> Very soon the various armies present in Fiume would reveal their polarisation, with the Italian and French contingents supporting the city's annexation to Italy or the Kingdom of SCS respectively.

The first narratives that interpreted women's contribution to the new state of the SCS in emancipatory terms emerged at this stage. Thus, the musician

<sup>18</sup> In recent decades, international historiography has increasingly focused on the effects of the First World War on the internal front of the involved countries. For a groundbreaking but still valid study see Richard Wall, Jay Winter (eds.), *The upheaval of war: family, work and welfare in Europe, 1914-1918*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988. For a historical synthesis see Heather Jones, *As the centenary approaches: the regeneration of First World War historiography*, "The Historical journal", 2013, n. 3, pp. 868-870.

<sup>19</sup> *Vesnik*, "Primorske novine (hereafter PN)", 1 November 1918, p. 3.

<sup>20</sup> *Doček talijanske flote*, "PN", 5 November 1918, p. 1.

Pavica Julija Kaftanić made an appeal to the women of the nearby isle of Krk (Veglia) where she herself came from, inviting them to answer the call of the fatherland. In doing so, she insisted on the value of education; in fact, it would have come down to intellectual women, in particular female teachers with a national conscience (“you industrious bees”), to organise public lectures, tackle illiteracy and stimulate the thirst for knowledge.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, as women were loudly calling for a participatory space, forces keen on keeping them out of the local political sphere — and not just symbolically — already seemed to be emerging. Indeed, on the same day of the great commemoration, in order to avoid chaos the *Primorske novine* warned the Women’s committee for propaganda not to convene in the National reading room, considered the place par excellence of Croatian — and subsequently Yugoslav — identity in Fiume, where only male committees assembled. Instead, it was invited to gather in the Secondary women’s school of Sušak, where the women would have found ample space to dedicate themselves to various forms of female labour.<sup>22</sup>

An even more direct call for women’s inclusion marked the pro-Italian sector. From its very genesis, the CNI sought to embed the female question into its political discourse. On 2 November, the Italian-language daily *Il Giornale* publicly greeted the women who, during the war, had suffered from the internment of their husbands, brothers and fathers, or who had themselves been imprisoned by the Hungarian authorities.<sup>23</sup> The pro-Italian women also participated in official delegations. When, a few days later, the Italian Admiral Guglielmo Rainer paid a visit to the Filarmonica-Drammatica, the symbolical headquarters of pro-Italian associationism, he met a delegation of prominent members of Fiume’s society; this included various women, among whom the irredentist teacher Emma Brentani.<sup>24</sup> In those first months, local political forces seemed unanimous in supporting women’s suffrage. Indeed, among the first to have called for a women’s vote there had also been the Socialist Party: even before the war it had fought for universal suffrage,<sup>25</sup> organising demonstrations with a strong female participation.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> *Sestrama Jugoslavenkama sa otoka Krka!*, “PN”, 17 November 1918, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> *Doček talijanske flote*.

<sup>23</sup> *La seduta di ieri del Consiglio nazionale italiano*, “Il Giornale”, 2 November 1918, p. 2.

<sup>24</sup> *Cronaca. L’ammiraglio Rainer visita la Filarmonica*, “Il Giornale”, 8 November 1918, p. 18

<sup>25</sup> Ivan Jeličić, *Nell’ombra dell’autonomismo. Il movimento socialista a Fiume, 1901-1921*, doctoral thesis, Università di Trieste, 2015/2016, pp. 266-278.

<sup>26</sup> *Si costituisce il Consiglio degli operai*, “Il Giornale”, 31 October 1918, p. 2; *L’imponente manifestazione operaia*, “Il Giornale”, 2 November 1918, p. 2.

## The ambiguous narratives of the women's vote

In Fiume, the plea for women's participation on behalf of sectors close to the CNI became ever more explicit in the following months; "Il Giornale" repeatedly stressed that the Fiumian women had reached such maturity during the political struggle that they could now engage in politics.<sup>27</sup> Yet, from the start their inclusion seemed to depend on their level of support for the dominant political option. As an article published in the same newspaper stressed, "we have verified that the majority of Fiumian women contributed to the successful outcome of our sacred cause, which does us great honour, but it would be regrettable if this fact were not to be reconfirmed in the current elections".<sup>28</sup>

Gabriele D'Annunzio's *entourage* also adhered to the plea for women's participation; on 12 September 1919, D'Annunzio had taken hold of the Adriatic city on request of the CNI, while the inter-allied occupation corps had withdrawn, with the exception of the Italian army. In an article written by the journalist Orazio Pedrazzi — D'Annunzio's Head of Press Office — and published in "La Vedetta d'Italia", the daily that increasingly imposed itself as the citizen government's mouthpiece and eventually even surpassed "Il Giornale", Pedrazzi affirmed that women's suffrage was a compensation men had granted women for their patriotic efforts: a "triumph the Fiumian women had obtained without ever having dreamed of invoking it, without having proclaimed or even foreseen it", represented more in terms of religious bliss than political activism.<sup>29</sup>

In those months, women's participation in the pro-D'Annunzio demonstrations was repeatedly recorded both in the local press and in the many images of the time, which show the Fiumian women populating the political spaces of the masses. Yet, if the cause of Fiume mobilised many Italian middle-class women,<sup>30</sup> the absence of relevant women's associations in Fiume stands out. Similarly, there are no existing accounts by local activists that took part in the political turmoil. The depicted women are usually part of a large mass and rarely identified as proper political subjects, with names and surnames.

On the pages of *Primorske novine*, which gave voice to a varied sector that put its hopes into the new Kingdom of SCS, considered as a stronghold against Italian imperialism, women's suffrage in Fiume was transformed into a weapon to debase local politics. Enfranchisement was presented as a strategy of a dominant elite aimed at grabbing consensus at the cost even of counting the votes of servants and prostitutes, considered the only women willing to

<sup>27</sup> *Il dovere di organizzare le donne*, "Il Giornale", 6 August 1919, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> *Sorelle fiumane*, "Il Giornale", 21 October 1919, pp. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> Orazio Pedrazzi, *Le donne fiumane*, "VI", 7 September 1919, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Venice, Marsilio, 2007, p. 56.

“soil themselves” with politics.<sup>31</sup> A violent disapproval of female participation emerges in particular from the *Primorske novine*’s response to Pedrazzi’s article-manifest, published before the Italian occupying forces censured the daily for more than two years. The article, deliberately written in Italian and signed “A Fiumian of seven generations”, criticised the pro-annexation activists’ political passion, accusing them of immorality and stigmatising women’s presence outside the domestic sphere:

The Fiumian woman was and is our pride, she, who as a girl was closely watched by her parents, never exhibited herself alone in the street, as a wife she sacrificed her entire life for her family, caring for her husband and children, a faithful companion and friend, she had neither time nor will to wonder about.

And, in response to his Fiumian counterpart:

Go ahead, just admire your women who forget to clothe their children and leave the house, who are not bothered to prepare your meal, as long as they can take the car for a pleasure ride to Čavle, Castua and even Trieste.

The political passions that the female part of Fiume represented were considered a corruptive element, and the author observed that

our honest Fiumian woman does not ruin herself with street politics, she has more sacred duties to fulfil, the family is her place, never will she soil herself by acting the way your women do!<sup>32</sup>

The article culminated in degrading attacks against those women who were engaged in the Italian nationalist cause, denying them any political maturity and accusing them of demanding the return of the Italian grenadiers,<sup>33</sup> the latter supposedly being the fathers of their illegitimate children.

Nonetheless, the local newspaper’s tones of misogynist hysteria seemed to contrast with the considerable activism of local women in women’s associationism. In the immediate post-war period, many women in Sušak were engaged in pro-Yugoslav propaganda, giving lectures, gathering funds for care work activities but also claiming more rights. The most notable presence was that of the Democratic Association of Yugoslav Women [Jugoslovensko žensko demokratsko društvo, hereafter JŽDD], founded in January 1919 in the presence of 250 people, with the aim of

<sup>31</sup> *Riječki izbori*, “PN”, 10 September 1919, p. 1.

<sup>32</sup> *Alla Vedetta d’Italia*, “PN”, 11 September 1919, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> The grenadiers, who were stationed in the city as part of the Inter-allied occupation corps, were sent away on decision of the Commission the latter had created so as to investigate the bloodshed of July 1919, as they were considered too close to Italian pro-annexation sectors.

promoting and creating awareness among women of their role in the widest possible sense, in the economy, in politics, in the family, in school, and so on; protecting children and youngsters, especially if in poverty; protecting disabled veterans from decline<sup>34</sup>.

The JŽDD conveyed a Yugoslav identity that was encapsulated in a concept of integral Yugoslavism, probably close to that of the dominant Democratic Party in Sušak,<sup>35</sup> even if it initially adhered to a campaign in favour of women's suffrage.<sup>36</sup> At the time of its foundation, it made a particularly inclusive plea, addressing every "conscious Yugoslav woman, whether she is a factory worker, a domestic worker or a clerk, the wife of a rich man, an artisan or a merchant".<sup>37</sup> It nurtured the ambitious goal of organising classes for illiterates, opening reading rooms and libraries, but also caring for abandoned youth in Fiume, Sušak and in the surroundings.

In the local context, where the margins of the Croatian language — considered inferior to Italian — had been further narrowed during the D'Annunzian period, culture came to represent an emancipatory tool both for the Yugoslav population and for its female component. The fact that education played an essential role in the creation of the new state and that educated women had the moral duty to put themselves at the service of the cause was also the main thesis conveyed in the editorial that opened the first issue of the magazine "*Jugoslavenska žena*" [The Yugoslav woman]. This is how the originally Slovenian feminist — and also a staunch Yugoslavist — Zovka Kveder addressed the magazine's female readers:

[S]isters, any among you who can read and write, wherever you are, put your strength at the service of the just liberated Yugoslavia. May each of you be a teacher for your sisters, a preacher in your social circle, may you enhance the idealism of your husband, brother, son, parents and acquaintances.<sup>38</sup>

Published in Zagreb, the magazine recounted the events of Fiume and Sušak,<sup>39</sup> passed on the greetings of a woman from Baška (on the isle of Krk), on the verge of launching a local library, reported the JŽDD's first-ever meeting in Sušak,<sup>40</sup> whereas other letters — often written by women teachers — testified to a widespread activism that also involved smaller cities.

The unifying message also became evident from the fact that the association comprised both Croatian women — which also made up the initial majority of members — and Serbian women, like its president, Milica Vidović. Although

<sup>34</sup> 1309 in Hrvatski državni arhiv (HDA), Zbirka pravila, F 1353 Grupa VI.

<sup>35</sup> Ž. Bartulović, *Sušak*, pp. 94-101.

<sup>36</sup> *Skupština žena u Zagrebu za pravo glasa*, "Jugoslavenska žena" (hereafter JŽ), 1919, pp. 118-119.

<sup>37</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 30 January 1919, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Zofka Kveder, *U kolo*, "JŽ", 1919, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> *Sa Sušaka mi piše učiteljica*, "JŽ", 1919, pp. 47-48.

<sup>40</sup> *Vijesti sa Sušaka i Baške*, "JŽ", 1919, pp. 126-127.

she came from an area with a very small Serbian minority, at the Congress of Yugoslav women in Belgrade Vidović represented the women of the coastal area that the Italians had occupied.<sup>41</sup>

The ambiguity between the Yugoslav and Great-Serbian ideals was reflected in the political capital of Serbian women within the pro-Yugoslav associations, also in view of the war effort they had given proof of on the winners' front.<sup>42</sup> Vidović, who had already directed earlier philanthropic initiatives both in a local context and aimed at the Serbian population,<sup>43</sup> continued to strengthen the link between Sušak and Belgrade, for example by collecting funds for the Society for the protection of the Yugoslav children, which assisted orphans of fallen war heroes.<sup>44</sup> She also hosted the Serbian feminist Delfa Ivanić, who visited Sušak in 1919, during one of her trips.<sup>45</sup> The lectures they organized covered a variety of topics: women's emancipation,<sup>46</sup> Yugoslav-inspired politics,<sup>47</sup> topics that conveyed a profoundly traditionalist image, as emerges from the lesson Vidović herself gave, which drew on Serbian epic poetry in the recollection of the role played by Mother Jugović, whose nine sons are said to have died heroically in the battle of Kosovo Polje.<sup>48</sup> Similar contradictions could also be discerned in the activities carried forward by Zovka Kveder, who had inspired the JŽDD. Although prior to the conflict she had demonstrated a socialist and pacifist orientation, in the framework of the young state she increasingly championed women's inclusion in a platform of integral nationalism.<sup>49</sup> Exemplary of this change might be the work *Arditi na otoku Krku* [Storm troops on the isle of Krk]; it presented female roles that were strongly rooted in traditional gender standards while embracing a narrative of war heroism.<sup>50</sup>

The enthusiasm with which the Yugoslav idea had been welcomed soon weakened, especially in Croatia, due both to the feeling that the Serbian element became dominant and that the state itself was dysfunctional.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Adela Milčinović, *Kongres jugoslavenskih žena u Beogradu, "JŽ"*, 1919, pp. 281-286.

<sup>42</sup> Ida Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opazne iluzije: rodni stereotipi u međuratnoj Jugoslaviji*, Zagreb, Srednja Europa, 2014, pp. 73-74.

<sup>43</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 8 April 1919, p. 3.

<sup>44</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 23 July 1919, 3 August 1919, p. 3.

<sup>45</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 6 June 1919, p. 3. Jasmina Milanović, *Delfa Ivanić. Zaboravljene uspomene*, Belgrade, Evoluta, 2015, pp. 207-208. I am grateful to Isidora Grubački for pointing me to this.

<sup>46</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 25 February 1919, p. 3

<sup>47</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 5 April 1919, 27 April 1919, p. 3.

<sup>48</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 11 February 1919, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Andrea Feldman, *Poričući gladnu godinu: Žene i ideologija jugoslavenstva (1918.-1939.)*, in Jelka Vince Pallula *et al.*, *Žene u Hrvatskoj*, Zagreb, Institut "Vlado Gotovac" - Ženska infoteka, 2004, pp. 239-240.

<sup>50</sup> Natka Bađurina, *Od strepnje do autoritarnog subjekta (ideološki zaokret Zofke Kveder)*, in *Riječki filološki dani*, Rijeka, Filozofski fakultet, 2010, pp. 17-36.

<sup>51</sup> Dejan Djokić, *Elusive compromise: a history of interwar Yugoslavia*, New York and London, Columbia University Press, 2007; Pieter Troch, *Yugoslavism between the world wars: indecisive nation building*, "Nationality paper", 2010, n. 2, pp. 227-244.

Additionally, many women became disaffected with politics after the post-conflict window of opportunity for a democratic climate that was favourable to universal suffrage was closed.<sup>52</sup> In the early 1920s, when different legal systems coexisted in the Kingdom of SCS, women in Croatia and Slavonia enjoyed an extremely limited voting right — conditioned by their patrimonial and professional status, or by their educational level — and only in local elections, which they probably lost in 1923.<sup>53</sup> Given that local elections in Sušak were repeatedly postponed in light of the Italian occupation, some women managed to vote only once, in 1923.<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, only one list presented itself in these elections, confirming the status quo.<sup>55</sup>

However, the hopes for a more intense participation had been shattered previously, as a situation recorded by the Information Office of D'Annunzio's government illustrates. In January 1920, during a meeting of Sušak's Electoral Committee, the proposal for a new electoral law was submitted for an advisory vote; it included, among its various points, the extension of the voting right to women. The majority of voters expressed their disapproval, after which "some [women] teachers and women [...] protested against the dissenting vote".<sup>56</sup> Moreover, concrete difficulties were encountered in the attempt to mobilise women, as demonstrated by the fact that — notwithstanding the many appeals — only one woman signed up for the course for illiterates in Sušak.<sup>57</sup> As post-war enthusiasm waned, the opposite tendency to draw women back into the domestic sphere increasingly seemed to take shape.<sup>58</sup> If in pro-Yugoslav women's associationism two souls coexisted, one being more sensitive to the expansion of political rights, the other more conservative, linked to the ruling dynasty of Yugoslavia and relegating women's participation to the philanthropic sphere,<sup>59</sup> the latter seems to have taken over in subsequent years.

## Women, political passion and violence

The aforementioned article-manifest that Pedrazzi published in "La Vedetta d'Italia" also made reference to one of the most obscure events that marked the

<sup>52</sup> Irena Selišnik, *Female suffrage in Slovenia*, in Blanca Rodríguez-Ruiz, Ruth Rubio-Marín, (eds.), *The Struggle for female suffrage in Europe: voting to become citizens*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2012, p. 340; I. Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opazne iluzije*, pp. 89-90.

<sup>53</sup> I. Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opazne iluzije*, pp. 95, 101-102.

<sup>54</sup> Ž. Bartulović, *Sušak*, p. 98.

<sup>55</sup> *Poslije gradskih izbora*, "Primorski Novi List" (hereafter "PNL"), 5 June 1923, p. 1.

<sup>56</sup> Italian Army Command in Fiume of Italy Information Office, 27 January 1920, in Državni arhiv u Rijeci (DARI), Privremene vlade, kk. 18-19.

<sup>57</sup> *Vesnik*, "PN", 5 August 1919, p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> I. Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opazne iluzije*, p. 113.

<sup>59</sup> Isidora Grubački, *The emergence of the Yugoslav interwar liberal feminist movement and The Little Entente of Women: an entangled history approach (1919-1924)*, "Feminist encounters", 2020, n. 2.



post-war period in Fiume.<sup>60</sup> In July 1919, a crowd composed of paramilitaries and civilians assaulted and lynched a group of French colonial soldiers, killing nine. This burst of violence was followed by the creation of an Inter-allied Commission, which was to determine the responsibilities of Fiume's Battalion, the paramilitary formation founded by Giovanni Host Venturi, who would eventually come to represent the most unyielding branch of Fascism in Fiume.<sup>61</sup>

It is likely that the local press played a not insignificant role in fomenting a climate of hatred against the colonial troops from French Indochina, often remembered as "Annamite" or "Vietnamese". In doing so, it partially drew on gender stereotypes. A week prior to the attack, "Il Giornale" had published an article where the French contingent was described as "those yellow little monsters that roam around our city" and as "primitive and obscene beings", accused of having undressed on the beach and harassed Fiumian women.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, many later sources mention an incident in which a drunk, French soldier allegedly ripped a cockade with the colours of the Italian flag from a Fiumian woman's chest,<sup>63</sup> damaging her honour and, accordingly, that of Italy. Although it is impossible to reconstruct the facts, the account of this incident seems relevant as it testifies to the coexistence of contrasting trends in the Italian nationalist milieu that D'Annunzio theatrically barged into on 12 September 1919. On one side, the article introduced the metaphorical representation of the foreigner who threatens the woman's integrity, a recurrent topos in nationalist narratives of the nineteenth century,<sup>64</sup> which was reinforced by the presence of colonial troops.<sup>65</sup> On the other side, women continued to be described — in particular during the first months of D'Annunzio's rule, but also further ahead — as patriots equally willing not just to sacrifice themselves for the nation and to grieve their loved ones, but also to take the initiative on the field, up to the point of becoming the very protagonists of violent acts. In this intense local climate, with the possibility of demobilisation still far ahead, the pro-Italian sector initially welcomed women into the violent sphere, which seemed inseparable from the political battle. The apparent paradox of extending suffrage, supported by nationalist and militarist political actors, as well as their closeness to the women's associations, was not a distinct feature of Fiume but could also be spotted in adjacent areas. The Italian feminist associa-

<sup>60</sup> O. Pedrazzi, *Le donne fiumane*.

<sup>61</sup> W. Klinger, *Un'altra Italia*, p. 310.

<sup>62</sup> *Oscenità spudorata*, "Il Giornale", 1 July 1919, p. 2.

<sup>63</sup> Edoardo Susmel, *La città di passione. Fiume negli anni 1914-1920*, Milan, Treves, 1921, p. 212; Gino Berri, *La gesta di Fiume. Storia di una passione inesausta*, Florence, R. Bemporad, 1920, p. 12; Giovanni Host-Venturi, *L'impresa fiumana*, Rome, G. Volpe, 1976, p. 75.

<sup>64</sup> Alberto Mario Banti, *L'onore della nazione: identità sessuali e violenza nel nazionalismo europeo dal 18. secolo alla grande guerra*, Turin, Einaudi, 2005, p. 260.

<sup>65</sup> Anne McClintock, *Imperial leather: race, gender and sexuality in the colonial contest*, New York-London, Routledge, 1995.

tions, of which an important part had embraced interventionist and nationalist positions during and after the conflict, continued to fight for suffrage, which seemed at hand in the first months following the conflict.<sup>66</sup>

Women's suffrage, introduced by the CNI's decision of August 1919, shortly before D'Annunzio's arrival in Fiume, became a reality in the October elections;<sup>67</sup> not only many women voted in these elections, but three women were even elected into the citizen's council.<sup>68</sup> D'Annunzio's direct appeal to the crowds required unconditional support — even devotion — to his figure. All these elements emerge from the descriptions of the *popolane*: the women of the Old City, who were represented as irrational actors, tending towards fanaticism and ready to blindly obey a leader's orders, though also capable of giving solemnity to political rituals. "La Vedetta d'Italia" thus reported the Fiumian women's euphoria as they voted for the first time, showing images of elderly and disabled women being carried on stretchers into the polling station. This enthusiasm also infected women without *pertinenza*,<sup>69</sup> that is, women who could not vote; a certain Carmela Pagan, for example, allegedly declared that she was willing to throw herself into a fire for the Italian flag. In the press, women voters gave different reasons for voting the National Union list: from an unconditional love for either Italy or D'Annunzio to the possibility to keep control over the harbour and rail system in case of annexation. There were also motivations that implicitly seemed to diminish the vote's political function, as certain young ladies said they wanted to avoid seeing the Italian soldiers leave.<sup>70</sup>

The devotion of the Fiumian *popolane* for D'Annunzio also seems to emerge from other sources. According to a report by the Information Office, the women of the Old City had allegedly made a sign of the cross at D'Annunzio's passage, requested that he baptised a newborn and voted against the approval of a plebiscite. Indeed, in December 1919, the Fiumian population was called to decide whether to accept a compromise from the Italian government or to sustain the immovable line represented by D'Annunzio.<sup>71</sup> Although the citizens voted in favour of the former option, the vote was subsequently nullified by D'Annunzio's government.

The mysticism of patriotism and war was glorified by the incident of the dagger's benediction, when Fiumian women symbolically donated the weapon

<sup>66</sup> Emma Schiavon, *The women's suffrage campaign in Italy in 1919 and Voce nuova* ("New voice"): corporatism, nationalism and the struggle for political rights, in I. Sharp, M. Stibbe (eds.), *Aftermaths of War*, p. 52.

<sup>67</sup> *Verso le elezioni della Civica rappresentanza*, "Il Giornale", 25 August 1919, p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> *L'esito delle elezioni*, "VI", 28 October 1919, p. 2.

<sup>69</sup> *Pertinenza* was a bureaucratic category that had originated in the Austro-Hungarian Empire, linking political rights to the place of origin.

<sup>70</sup> *Il trionfo di Domenica. Episodi della giornata elettorale*, "VI", 29 October 1919, p. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Italian Army Command in Fiume of Italy Information Office, 19 and 26 December 1919, in DARI, Privremene vlade, kk. 18-19.

to D'Annunzio. Contemporary testimonies focused on the juxtaposition between violence and religion. Thus, the dagger was considered “sacred”, and it was said that the the Fiumian women “religiously donated” it in the hope that it might be used to engrave the word “Victory” in the enemies’ living flesh; the hilt allegedly carried the writings “Italy or death” on one side, “Fiume or death” on the other.<sup>72</sup> The theme of the parallel between Christ’s and the soldier’s sacrifice was rooted in the First World War as well as in the actions of certain Catholic exponents. The latter saw the conflict as an opportunity to impose a new central role of the Church onto the national-patriotic discourse, like Father Giuliani who celebrated the ceremony — a priest who had acted as a military chaplain during the war and who had distinguished himself for his fascist activism, eventually dying during the colonial war in Ethiopia.<sup>73</sup> Moreover, post-war radicalism often drew on religious language in an attempt to oppose sentiment to rationality.<sup>74</sup>

The exploitation of Christian topoi continued with the comparison between the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian — whose name day fell on the day of the donation of the dagger, and to whom the church that hosted the ceremony was dedicated — and that of D'Annunzio, who was ready to give his life for Fiume.<sup>75</sup> The figure of the *popolana*, for what it represented, seemed useful only to offer irrational political support to the leader. However, the pages of “La Vedetta d’Italia” also describe female figures of the Old City passing concrete requests on to D'Annunzio, seeking to exploit their support for the cause. As early as the first half of October 1919, a number of *popolane* wanted to send a delegation to the Commander to denounce what was considered incorrect behaviour by certain merchants.<sup>76</sup> Nevertheless, the fact that the citizens’ call for participation was not taken too seriously soon became clear; when 400 women — including higher-class women and *popolane* — were summoned before the municipality, the authorities refused to receive them.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the proclamations made in favour of women, and their presence in local political rituals, women’s participation mostly turned out to be of a

<sup>72</sup> *Le donne fiumane al comandante D'Annunzio*, “VI”, 17 January 1920, p. 2; *Il devoto omaggio delle donne fiumane a D'Annunzio*, “VI”, 21 January 1920, p. 2; Ferdinando Gerra, *L'impresa di Fiume*, Milan, Longanesi, 1974-1975, p. 268.

<sup>73</sup> Alberto Mario Banti, *Sublime madre nostra. La nazione italiana dal Risorgimento al fascismo*, Bari-Rome, Laterza, 2011, pp. 119-137. For a general analysis of the sacralisation of the conflict see George L. Mosse, *Le guerre mondiali: dalla tragedia al mito dei caduti*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018.

<sup>74</sup> Emilio Gentile, *Il mito dello Stato nuovo dall'antigiolittismo al fascismo*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1999, p. 16.

<sup>75</sup> Marko Medved, *Riječka crkva u razdoblju fašizma. Nastanak biskupije i prvi talijanski upravitelji*, Zagreb, Kršćanska sadašnjost, 2015, pp. 170-172.

<sup>76</sup> Italian Army Command in Fiume of Italy Information Office, 10 November 1919, in DARI, Privremene vlade, kk. 18-19.

<sup>77</sup> *Una chiamata inutile*, “VI”, 1 November 1919, p. 2.

formal kind. Many photographs immortalised the numerous female activists that flocked to the Adriatic city to offer their support to the front that wished to be annexed to Italy. Some of these, while not playing any real political role, transformed themselves into the symbols of militaristic iconography, like the Marchioness Margherita Incisa da Camerana, portrayed in the uniform of an *ardito* (storm trooper),<sup>78</sup> or Lina Iglioni, who posed with a Roman dagger hanging from her waist. Far more relevant was the presence of women of the likes of Tullia Franzi, who founded a school for legionnaires,<sup>79</sup> or Teresita Pasini (alias Alma Dolens), who was engaged in care work activities; similar women gave continuity to that juxtaposition between nationalism, irredentism and humanitarianism that was born during the First World War, in which women had played an important part. Yet, on the pages of the pro-annexation press it is impossible not to note their limited presence, in spite of the huge effort they made.

Likewise, the presence of Fiumian women activists who had been involved in irredentist associationism was also rather scant, except in the early months following the end of the conflict. These women do not seem to have taken any specific stance on women's participation; on the contrary, in some cases they even embraced a conservative view on women's role and gender relations. For instance, the aforementioned Emma Brentani — who had become head of a city school after the war — expressed her disapproval of granting women access to technical courses, in that they “contribute to damage society by depriving it of women who understand their true and noble passion”, hoping that “the majority of working-class daughters refrain from taking — and rightfully so, if they are not to create an excessive number of misfits — the path of higher institutes”.<sup>80</sup>

The staunch support of many Italian feminists for the Endeavour of Fiume does not seem to have led to any direct contacts or mutual influences.<sup>81</sup> Local political events were monitored on the pages of the “Voce nuova”, which represented this sector, through the writings of the Trieste-based journalist Ada Sestan, who manifested a particular interest in the elections and in the women's vote.<sup>82</sup> “La Vedetta d'Italia”, by contrast, overflowed with images depicting

<sup>78</sup> Incisa da Camerana, who during the first post-war period took the surname of her husband Rossi Passavanti, had already visited Fiume at the eve of D'Annunzio's expedition and established contacts with Host Venturi in order to volunteer as a nurse. Margherita Rossi-Passavanti d'Incisa, *Nella tempesta MCMXV-MCMXIX*, Rome, Colombo, 1929, p. 250.

<sup>79</sup> Giuliana Bertacchi, *Da Alzano a Fiume: Tullia Franzi attraverso le carte del suo archivio. Mostra documentaria: Alzano Lombardo, Biblioteca comunale, 17 novembre - 30 novembre 2001*, Vilminore di Scalve, Il filo di Arianna, 2001.

<sup>80</sup> Verbal proceedings of the second conference held on 7 October 1919 by the Teaching corps of the Italian female city school in DARI, Školsko vijeće, k. 52.

<sup>81</sup> E. Schiavon, *The women's suffrage campaign*.

<sup>82</sup> See, for example, Ada Sestan, *Le elezioni a Fiume*, “Voce nuova”, 11 November 1919, p. 2.

women as they “give their assistance” to male figures, not just in a private context but also in a public one; the daily thus recalled the assistance women had given to the Italian prisoners during the war, or the cult of the dead, with recurrent images of mothers commemorating their deceased sons.<sup>83</sup>

In some cases the contradiction was evident, as with the public figure of the Ligurian Maria Vitali. After settling permanently in Fiume, she founded the association of the Guardians of the Dead, with the purpose of looking after the fallen soldiers’ tombs. On one side, Vitali embraced the eternal auxiliary role that has been attributed to woman, even presenting herself as “the betrothed of the dead”;<sup>84</sup> on the other side, she strongly claimed her presence in the public sphere and promoted what would have been the only women’s association in post-war Fiume of significance. She accused “La Vedetta d’Italia” of not granting her the desired space, and entrusted her publications to the fascist journal “Il Popolo di Fiume”.<sup>85</sup>

During 1920, there was an increase of repressive measures of D’Annunzio’s rule, as well as of political violence and common criminality, the last perpetrated by various actors who had poured into the city. D’Annunzio’s expulsion from Fiume by the Italian government, in December 1920, did not bring an end to the tensions. It was in this climate of instability that the city prepared for the Constituent Assembly elections of April 1921, with an annexationist and an autonomist list vying for votes; thus, in the first real electoral competition that took place in Fiume, women’s support could have been decisive. Although in previous months women’s presence in the local press had increasingly thinned out, on the eve of the vote both formations appealed to women’s suffrage. In a rhetoric context where all parties tended to address voters of both sexes — that is, using both masculine and feminine word forms — not even the local Fascio was an exception to this, addressing the crowd at an assembly with “*tutti i fascisti e le fasciste*” [all fascists, male and female].<sup>86</sup>

Claiming that Fiumian women would have been the first Italian women to express their political will, “La Vedetta d’Italia” accused the autonomists of wanting to deprive them of their right to vote.<sup>87</sup> In reality, the autonomist party equally addressed women voters, with its numerous female activists coming from both the middle and the working classes, especially from the tobacco

<sup>83</sup> Robin Pickering-Iazzi (ed.), *Mothers of invention. Women, Italian fascism and culture*, Minneapolis-London, University of Minnesota Press, 1995, p. X.

<sup>84</sup> Misc. 7, 28, fasc. Le Custodi dei morti in Società di studi fiumani – Archivio Museo Storico di Fiume; Maria Vitali, *Modello novantuno: memoria di una cittadina senza importanza*, Rome, s.n., 1974.

<sup>85</sup> *Ostruzionismo*, “Il popolo di Fiume. Settimanale di battaglia” (hereafter “PF”), 9 November 1921, p. 2; *La riconciliazione dei morti*, “PF”, 11 March 1922 and 13 March 1922, p. 1.

<sup>86</sup> *Adunata fascista*, “VI”, 2 February 1921, p. 2.

<sup>87</sup> *Alle donne di Fiume*, “VI”, 21 April 1921, p. 1; *L’incitamento di Orazio Pedrazzi*, “VI”, 24 April 1921, p. 2

industry. The autonomist paper “Fiume dei fiumani” appealed precisely to the latter, inviting them to vote the Torre Civica list so as to “become women again and no longer slaves as you are now”.<sup>88</sup> If suffrage clearly brought empowerment along with it, old prejudices resurfaced in the new context: while they tried to gain their consensus, both competitors considered women voters weak links, more easily purchasable than men.<sup>89</sup>

## Gender stereotypes and prejudices of political and national nature

The theme of political participation represented only a minor part of women’s exposure in the media. Other useful sources to reconstruct gender representations in the local collective imagination consist in the images that can be drawn from the press, mainly from crime news and local columns.

If subsequent accounts have tended to attribute the myth of a revolutionary enthusiasm capable of breaking sexual norms to the case of Fiume, a more complex situation emerges if we look at the press of the time. Many newspaper articles highlight the presence of a significant liberty from family restrictions among Fiumian women, a relative tolerance of premarital relations and a very strong female presence on the job market, from working-class to white-collar jobs. All these elements were typical of a secular and cosmopolitan harbour city with a Central-European tradition,<sup>90</sup> but would have struck contemporary observers as unusual.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, accounts of promiscuity should probably need to be related to the strong presence of prostitutes in the city, which were often very young girls who lived in conditions of profound misery.<sup>92</sup>

The Fiumian futurists’ newspaper, “The Iron Head”, purposely promoted a sexual metaphor of D’Annunzio’s expedition, stressing the idea of possession. The newspaper, which proclaimed the cult of masculinity,<sup>93</sup> hosted a column titled *Woman...* by Margherita Besozzi Keller, alias Fiammetta. A noblewoman from Milan, Besozzi Keller was the wife of a Fiumian legionnaire, and the cousin of Guido Keller, one of D’Annunzio’s closest collaborators; Besozzi Keller herself would enter into a relationship with D’Annunzio.<sup>94</sup> In

<sup>88</sup> *Cose della Fabbrica Tabacchi*, “Fiume dei fiumani! Giornale di battaglia. Contro gli usurpatori, gli oppressori e gli sfruttatori di Fiume”, 23 April 1921, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> *Tra uno sciopero e l’altro*, “VI”, 22 February 1921, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Ilona Fried, *Fiume città della memoria, 1868-1945*, Udine, Del Bianco, 2005, pp. 10, 33-35.

<sup>91</sup> Paolo Santarcangeli, *Il porto dell’aquila decapitata*, Udine, Del Bianco, 1988, pp. 150-151.

<sup>92</sup> *Quelle signore*, “VI”, 4 October 1919, p. 2.

<sup>93</sup> Gabriele D’Annunzio, *La maschiezza resta a Fiume*, “La Testa di ferro” (hereafter TF), 15 August 1920, p. 1.

<sup>94</sup> Gabriele D’Annunzio, *Lettere a Fiammadoro*, edited by Vito Salierno, Rome, Salerno, 2001.

her column, Fiammetta boasted that she was the lover of an *ardito*, that she smoked and indulged in luxuries that she could afford thanks to her journalistic work, and that she had enjoyed many love affairs.<sup>95</sup> At the same time, she encouraged women to free themselves from moral constraints, and cast the Fiumian women off as negative examples in the experimental magazine “Yoga”, accusing them of conservatism:

notwithstanding the divine light that radiates today from the City of life and love, the Fiumian woman is perhaps the only among all Italian women to be, and who rejoices in being, a moralist. A moralist in the full vile sense of the word.<sup>96</sup>

Since “The Iron Head” would soon collide with D’Annunzio’s entourage, continuing its publications from Milan, Besozzi Keller would also leave the Adriatic city. Rather than a plea for women’s emancipation, her words seem to reflect a separation between the imagined and the real city. Indeed, if a group of followers initially welcomed D’Annunzio, who had been invited by the city authorities themselves, a silent divide between D’Annunzio’s entourage and the local citizenry had increasingly widened. This was due also to the isolation the Italian government had imposed upon the city, its catastrophic economic conditions and the authoritarian behaviour of the legionnaires and *arditi* that had flocked to Fiume at different stages.

The sexualisation of the conflict was also prominent in the opposition press, which transmitted an image of Fiume as the reign of vice and moral corruption. Here, too, the city’s feminisation served as a metaphor for the occupation viewed in terms of a sexual conquest or as an act of sexual violence, also widely exploited in the Croatian/Yugoslav context.<sup>97</sup>

Such a representation of the city was not mere rhetorical device; it was corroborated by various chronicles. Sušak newspapers thus recounted the stories of Fiumian women — often pregnant — who had been abandoned by Italian soldiers. Some cases caused an uproar, like that of an Italian lieutenant who had failed to show up at his “reparatory marriage” to a Fiumian woman. According to D’Annunzio’s entourage, “Primorske novine” exploited this incident “to discredit the Italians by accusing them of lies and perjury”. In the end, the wedding took place following pressure from the lieutenant’s superiors, although he eventually vanished.<sup>98</sup> The act of getting involved with Italian

<sup>95</sup> Fiammetta, *Donna... Mi presento*, “TF”, 29 August 1920, p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Fiammetta, *Donne!!!*, “Primo quaderno della Yoga-Il ballo di San Vito”, June 1920; C. Salari, *Alla festa della rivoluzione*, p. 60.

<sup>97</sup> Ana-Maria Milčić, *Od karata na papiru do ženskoga tijela: Futuristi i satiričari u D’Annunzijevoj Rijeci*, in Tea Perinčić Mayhew, *D’Annunzijeva mučenica-L’Olocausta di D’Annunzio-D’Annunzio’s Martyr*, Rijeka, Povijesni i pomorski muzej Hrvatskog primorja, 2019, pp. 35-53.

<sup>98</sup> Italian Army Command in Fiume of Italy Information Office, 30 June 1920, in DARI, *Privremene vlade*, kk. 18-19.

soldiers was stigmatised, occasionally also by the Church, as in the nearby village of Cernik, where the vicar warned girls to stay away from the Italian soldiers.<sup>99</sup>

The Croatian-language press in Sušak adopted the Italian word *giovannotti* (youngsters) to mockingly mark the exasperated masculinity of the violent characters that engaged in the disturbances; these were described as destructive elements and “barbarians”, keen on showing their patriotism through terror, sarcastically responding to the Italian nationalist call for Latin “civilisation”.<sup>100</sup> From the earliest days of D’Annunzio’s march into the city, rumours spread about the Italian soldiers committing acts of sexual violence. Thus, *Zagrebačke novine* mentioned the abduction of 22 girls, aged between 12 and 15 years, two of whom were allegedly raped, although no traces of this incident can be found.<sup>101</sup>

The metaphor of D’Annunzio’s occupation as a rape also emerges from the autonomist press, especially from 1921 onwards. After D’Annunzio was chased out by the Italian army, the hundreds of legionnaires that had remained in the city — along with many local fascists or foreigners — provoked a climate of continued violence, perpetrated through fascist action squads at the expense of opponents, while also engaging in acts of common criminality and oppression. As early as 1920, a document written by the autonomists accused D’Annunzio of having provoked a “moral and economic dissolution”, of having transformed Fiume “into a brothel” and of not “respecting women’s honour”,<sup>102</sup> even of having sexually abused minors. An article published in the autonomist newspaper “La Voce del popolo”, two years later, added insult to injury when it attacked “the liberators of Fiume” because they had allegedly “contaminated and infected far too many girls between 12 and 16 years of age”, “vilified the name of the Fiumian women, treating them as if they were their lovers and friends, as if they were their prostitutes”, and perpetrated every imaginable form of violence.<sup>103</sup>

Furthermore, we must consider the fact that the pro-Yugoslav press of Sušak had long transmitted an image of Fiume both as a centre of modernity and as a threat to traditions. If for Sušak’s inhabitants the larger city of Fiume remained — well into the 1920s — a reference point for various social prac-

<sup>99</sup> Italian Regency of Carnaro. Italy Information Office, 4 November 1920 in DARI, Privremene vlade, kk. 18-19.

<sup>100</sup> *Riječki izbori*.

<sup>101</sup> Italian Army Command Information Office, 6 February 1920, p. 3, DARI, Privremene vlade, kk. 16-17.

<sup>102</sup> See the proclamation *Cittadini e cittadine!* of March 1920, in Società di studi fiumani - Archivio Museo Storico di Fiume, fondo Zanella.

<sup>103</sup> *Per non dimenticare. I meriti dei nostri liberatori*, “La Voce del popolo” (hereafter “VP”), 9 September 1922, p. 2.



tices, from shopping to cinema and theatre-going but also brothels<sup>104</sup> the city was described as a place of widespread cocaine consumption, where the *café chantant* were extremely popular and extramarital relations were common, and where numerous love-related suicides affected youth.<sup>105</sup> Especially the pages of “Sušački Novi List”, Sušak’s main newspaper from 1925 onwards, probably also driven by the misogynist tendencies of its founder Nikola Polić, pointed the finger against modernity’s negative influence on women’s physical appearance (bob, dyed hair, face powder),<sup>106</sup> musical taste (foxtrot) and moral characterisation (the image of the “demon woman”).<sup>107</sup>

Both the pro-Yugoslav and the autonomist press reversed the narrative promoted by the pro-Italian parties, namely that which presented the legionnaires as the “the liberators of Fiume” and as the representatives of a superior civilisation. The newspapers that contrasted Italy’s annexation politics instead described the legionnaires as “occupiers” living at the expense of the Fiumian population:<sup>108</sup> an alien presence in local society. A negative stereotype that frequently emerged was that of the *regnicoli*, citizens of the Kingdom of Italy until 1918, coming from areas that were considered historically and culturally distant from Fiume. Just like the Italian nationalist press tended to promote an anti-Slav stereotype, which cast the Slovenes and Croates as populations of inferior cultural development, strongly rooted in a rural and almost savage world,<sup>109</sup> the opposing sectors replied with a — to a degree — comparable image of the legionnaires and fascists that had flocked to the city; these were described as being native to southern Italy, violent, uneducated sexual predators. While the opposition press is full of such stereotypes,<sup>110</sup> its most exemplary representation can be found in a letter addressed to an editorial board (presumably that of “La Vedetta d’Italia”), but never published. The document evokes the image of a city at the mercy of so-called “liberators”, who would have transformed themselves into “masters”, reducing the Fiumian inhabitants to mere “guests”. The newly arrived — many of whom are described as “tiny southerners” who had allegedly imported the Mafia into the Kvarner region — are said to have corrupted minors and seduced young women, driving

<sup>104</sup> *Odnošaji između Sušaka i Rijeke*, “Sušački Novi List” (hereafter “SNL”), 19 April 1925, p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> *Mjesne i društvene vijesti*, “SNL”, 8 August 1925, p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> *Policija i bubikopf*, “SNL”, 6 October 1925, p. 3.

<sup>107</sup> *Mjesne i društvene vijesti*, “SNL”, 7 and 8 August 1925, p. 3; <http://fluminensia.org/tag/nikola-polic>.

<sup>108</sup> *Per non dimenticare; Još jedan dokumenat kulture i civilizacije*, “SNL”, 26 June 1923, p. 3.

<sup>109</sup> For a historical overview of the creation of this stereotype see Tullia Catalan and Erica Mezzoli (eds.), *Antislavismo. Discorsi e pratiche in Italia e nell’Europa sudorientale tra Otto e Novecento*, special issue of “Memoria e ricerca”, 2018, n. 3.

<sup>110</sup> See, for example, *Il diritto di cittadinanza*, “VP”, 23 April 1922, p. 5; *Mjesne i društvene vijesti*, “PNL”, 3 October 1923, p. 3; *Jedan grozan zločin*, “SNL”, 27 March 1925, p. 3.

them to suicide or prostitution, and committed numerous atrocious crimes at the expense of women.<sup>111</sup> The fact that the letter was probably written by an observer close to the local Fascio demonstrates that the tensions between the newly arrived and the Fiumian citizens went beyond political factions. An exotic representation of southern Italy, described as a place of violence and organised crime, was thus opposed to an even more exotic account of the Balkan world, within a collective imagination where the relations of proximity that had originated in the context of the Habsburg Empire still seemed very relevant, despite attempts to construct new national allegiances.

The anti-Slav stereotypes that thrived during D'Annunzio's rule,<sup>112</sup> and which culminated in the fascist period,<sup>113</sup> were equally conditioned by gender representations. In this regard, it is worth mentioning an article published in "La Vedetta d'Italia" in 1922; it mocked a Croatian girl named Mimiza, a *mlekarica* who had attempted to adapt to the urban context. The *mlekarice* were women who carried milk from the neighbouring municipalities to the city, sometimes walking more than ten kilometres per day.<sup>114</sup> These women represented not only a link between the city and its hinterland, but they also symbolised the idea of a rurality linked to the Croatian world, which in reality was no less stratified than the Italian one. Thus, if the countryside was densely inhabited by Croatian-speaking people, the cities of Fiume and Sušak hosted both a merchant population and a working class that spoke Croatian and also — to a smaller extent — Slovenian. Yet, the above-mentioned article offered a demeaning image of Mimiza's Croatianness, which associated women with a "stinking wet dog smell" whereas the "Slavs" supposedly danced an unspecified "bear dance", which would certainly have appeared ridiculous to the sophisticated guests.<sup>115</sup>

## Conclusion

My analysis of women's presence in public space and gender stereotypes in the local press of the neighbouring municipalities of Fiume and Sušak sheds light on a number of similarities and differences.

<sup>111</sup> Letter to the editors, n.d., in DARI, Privremene vlade, kk. 18-19.

<sup>112</sup> Suffice to think of the rants against "the filthy Serbian swineherd" (*Spalato* of 13 July 1919, in Gabriele D'Annunzio, *La penultima ventura: scritti e discorsi fiumani*, Milan, Mondadori, 1974, p. 276), aimed at stirring up tensions in July 1920 when, following a mysterious incident in Spalato, fire was set to the Narodni dom in Trieste and shops owned by Yugoslav merchants in Fiume were attacked.

<sup>113</sup> In the days running up to 2 June 1928, the opening article entitled 'Inferior animals' was published in the newspaper "La Vedetta d'Italia". It raised polemics across the border, leading the Italian prime minister to request that the director of the Fiumian newspaper be removed from his job. See fasc. La Vedetta d'Italia in DARI, Riječka prefektura, k. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Report on crafts, trades and industries and any economic activity in the area of the Sušak district for the months May and June 1930, in HDA, Politička zbirka, 1883.

<sup>115</sup> *Aristocratici in frack e dame in decolté*, "VI", 18 January 1922, 2.

In both cases, in the first post-war period women claimed a presence in public space which also included the political sphere. In fact, in many cases women became the protagonists of demonstrations in support of the nascent political-national, pro-Italian and pro-Yugoslav projects, but also in favour of Fiume's autonomy. While these were not the only political options at stake, they were undoubtedly the most visible ones, not to mention those that could count on a more structured organisation.

Within Italian nationalism in Fiume, politics gained an unprecedented, mass dimension that was enforced by D'Annunzio's expedition, and which implied a will to include women in the public sphere. Nonetheless, this responded to the need to guarantee support for the dominant cause and deprived women of a political subjectivity of their own. Paradoxically, the concession of universal suffrage and women's inclusion in the nationalist discourse neutralised one of the principle battles of contemporary women's associationism from within, preventing women from acting independently. Not even the pro-annexation activism of many exponents of the Italian middle and lower middle class managed to produce any connections with women from Fiume's civil society, whereas philanthropic women and external agitators struggled to establish relations on a local level.

The autonomist group, which developed in the course of 1919 in opposition to the D'Annunzian rule, joined the political contest trying to win over the female voters. It competed with its rivals for the claim to include women in politics.

In Sušak, a broader hostility to women's political participation initially coexisted with a form of women's associationism aimed at fighting for wider political representation by insisting on the role of education. The latter could have emancipated the Yugoslav population within the international arena as much as the female components of local society. In this way, both would have been able to overcome a condition of subalternity.

Beyond the issue of political participation, female representations in the local press allow us to analyse not only women's roles, but also the relations between the sexes and the intersection between gender aspects and political and social identities, in a context of sudden change that called for new power balances, now that the war had called into question the old ones. While it is undeniable that certain representations of women broke with the past, such as those of women's participation in political violence, traditional images of women and gender relations were equally present in all local newspapers: the mother figure, the fallen soldier's widow, the feminisation of territorial conquests and the enemy's threat to female honour, representing the nation. If contrasting representations of the female component initially coexisted in the local press, soon those images that were more strongly tied to traditional roles started to prevail.

Another important rupture with the past resides in the city's different representations. External sources adopt patriotic terms to idealise Fiume, granting

it a transgressive aura of which Dannunzianism was a symbol, whereas the local press linked the disorder caused by the frenetic military events to gender relations and public morality, even if it conveyed the image of a secular and cosmopolitan city where women enjoyed greater autonomy compared to the surrounding areas. If the pro-Yugoslav or autonomist press sources highlighted the city's — and, accordingly, women's — oppression following the arrival of thousands of paramilitary soldiers, national stereotypes were equally conditioned by a gender dimension.

Moreover, as the years passed women's presence progressively thinned out in all newspapers. Women were gradually marginalised from the political scene and deprived of the — universal and partial — right to vote that they had previously managed to obtain, whereas appeals for political participation started to be directed at an exclusively male audience. After 1923-24, the normalisation process coincided with a period of full integration into two national states — the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of SCS — neither of which kept his promises with regard to participation as it had been theorised within the representative national movements.<sup>116</sup>

In Fiume, women's participation gradually decreased, especially with the city's integration into fascist Italy, which further deprived women of the right to vote — what is more, women did not vote after 1921. Some of the women who had made specific efforts in favour of annexation to Italy continued to fill honourable positions, and accounts of women's engagement in military style did not vanish instantly. Thus, during the commemoration of Fiume's annexation to Italy, Elisa Majer Rizzioli — founder of the female Fasci — recalled the role played by the women of the Nascimbeni family: although “less fortunate” than the family's male members who had died for the cause,<sup>117</sup> they were allegedly wounded during battles in which they had fought “manly”.<sup>118</sup> Furthermore, the Nascimbeni women were said to have participated in the battles of March 1922, which resulted in the fascist coup against the municipal council — largely consisting of autonomists — that had been elected in April 1921.<sup>119</sup>

A good example of the new regime's difficulty in mobilising the female component of society was an incident that involved the local female Fascio, created in 1925 to focalise women's energies towards an acknowledged social

<sup>116</sup> E. Schiavon, *The women's suffrage campaign*, p. 51; I. Ograjšek Gorenjak, *Opazne iluzije*, pp. 112-114.

<sup>117</sup> In 1921, Glauco Nascimbeni was among the victims of the repression — by Italian contingents — of a demonstration that claimed the supremacy of Fiume over the harbour area in Baross, which had been assigned to the Kingdom of SCS.

<sup>118</sup> Elisa Majer Rizzioli, *Coi fratelli fiumani*, “Per l'annessione di Fiume. Edited by the Associazione legionarie di Fiume e Dalmazia”, 27 January - 2 March 1924.

<sup>119</sup> Ernesto Cabrana, *Fiume 10 gennaio 1921-23 marzo 1922*, Montegiorgio, Tip. C. Zizzini, 1933, p. 70.

role: care work.<sup>120</sup> The Tuscan Ersilia Marassi de' Pazzi was placed at the head of this organisation.<sup>121</sup> Three years after its creation, though, the results turned out to be scarce, with only 405 members in the entire Kvarner province.<sup>122</sup> According to local authorities, “[t]he propaganda and expansion of the female organisation is difficult and slow, and it is unnecessary to indicate the causes, which are — if I may be so bold — principally determined by sex”.<sup>123</sup> Nonetheless, it must be noted that the organisation engaged in childcare activities and also initiatives for foreign women, albeit for propagandist purposes.<sup>124</sup>

As the historian Victoria de Grazia has underlined, while being subsumed within a patriarchal framework, the fascist women’s associations broadened their action range beyond the family unit; in some cases, they allowed women to introduce their own contents into the regime’s institutions, and it would therefore be wrong to downplay their importance.<sup>125</sup> Still, in the absence of direct accounts from the local women involved it remains difficult to assess the full meaning of this experience.

The case of the women’s associations of Sušak followed a very similar course. Although they remained active in subsequent years, they completely abandoned all political claims and focused their attention on charity activities. One of the JŽDD committees was still active in 1925, when a female artisan school from Belgrade visited Sušak.<sup>126</sup> In that same year, Pavica J. Kaftanić gave a pan-Slavist concert of “Slav, Russian and Czechoslovakian arias”, and donated the proceeds to the Pupils’ Canteen (Djačka menza) and Children’s Shelter (Sklonište) — two institutions that the pro-Yugoslav associations had founded after the end of the war.<sup>127</sup> Throughout the years, the most important women’s association turned out to be the Society of Serbian Sisters [Kolo srpskih sestara, hereafter KSS]. Its very name revealed a reference to Serbian national identity — compared to the Yugoslavist and democratic-sounding JŽDD — and it had an elitist character, with Vidović again leading the association. Delfa Ivanić, who returned to the city at the end of 1925, recalled its celebration of the day of Saint Sava, the founder of the Serbian Orthodox Church.<sup>128</sup>

<sup>120</sup> R. Pickering-Iazzi, *Mothers of invention*, p. XVI.

<sup>121</sup> Giuseppe Parlato, *Mezzo secolo di Fiume: economia e società a Fiume nella prima metà del Novecento*, Siena, Cantagalli, 2009, p. 121.

<sup>122</sup> The province comprised of a section of the coast and of the hinterland, the latter mostly inhabited by a Slovenian-speaking population, up to the current area of Ilirska Bistrica (then Villa del Nevoso).

<sup>123</sup> Quarterly report on the political and economic situation (December-February 1928), pp. 1-2, in DARI, Riječka prefektura, k. 6.

<sup>124</sup> B. 675, Archivio centrale dello Stato, Partito Nazionale Fascista, Direttorio Nazionale, Servizi Vari Serie I.

<sup>125</sup> V. de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>126</sup> *Mjesne i društvene vijesti*, “SNL”, 22 April 1925, p. 3.

<sup>127</sup> *Mjesne i društvene vijesti*, “SNL”, 22 and 26 November 1925, p. 3.

<sup>128</sup> J. Milanović, *Delfa Ivanić*, pp. 224-225.

If by 1929 the JŽDD — in which many women teachers had played a prominent role — still counted 200 members,<sup>129</sup> the KSS,<sup>130</sup> whose council was primarily composed of housewives, totalled only 26 members. Strongly supported by local and central authorities, the KSS would maintain a constant presence in Sušak's associationism in the following years, underscoring its proximity to the Royal House of Belgrade by electing the first lady-in-waiting Mirka Grujić president.<sup>131</sup>

Notwithstanding the initial moment of mobilisation, the new political structures of the Kingdom of Italy and the Kingdom of SCS (later Yugoslavia) offered few and limited possibilities for political engagement even to those women who had invested in the process of building new post-war societies; and many also remained excluded. These were women who did not identify with the national (and nationalist) options and with the majority parties, who did not have the financial power to participate: women to whom the urban environment of the Kvarner region was not the harbour of opportunities the city had represented prior to 1914, in those years of extraordinary economic development.

<sup>129</sup> Democratic Association of Yugoslav Women in Sušak to the Commission of the Royal Police, 24 January 1929 in DARI, Gradsko poglavarstvo, k. 528, fasc. Žensko demokratsko udruženje u Sušaku 1922-1940.

<sup>130</sup> Jelena Savić, *Kolo srpskih sestara - Odgovor elite na žensko pitanje*, "Glasnik etnografskog muzeja u Beogradu", 2009, pp. 124-126.

<sup>131</sup> Royal prefecture of Fiume to the Police Commissioner, 6 May 1930, in DARI, Riječka kvestura, A3, k. 196.

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## Women beyond borders. Translation as a process of women's emancipation during Fascism

Anna Ferrando\*

Cesare Pavese famously defined the 1930s as “the decade of translations”, perfectly grasping the spirit of his times. What is less known is that the protagonists of this massive cultural mediation were predominantly women. Available sources, in fact, clearly show that women dominated the translation business. Their job entailed a flexible task, which was easily carried out (and hidden) in the privacy of the home, and mostly supplementary to the author's work. Interestingly, though, for a great number of women this “appropriate” job meant getting involved in the public sphere and acquiring a certain degree of emancipation and freedom. This is what happened, for example, when they selected books to translate and proposed them to publishers. When, in 1938, Ada Gobetti translated one of the benchmarks of American black feminism, Z.N. Hurston's *Their eyes were watching God*, it was certainly not just a literary project. Who were the women who bravely engaged in the “decade of translations”? Did this process of cultural exchange and mediation affect their practices, lifestyles and mentalities? This article examines the private archive of translator Alessandra Scalero, an emblematic case study of the ‘gender transformations’ that affected the translation industry between the two world wars.

**Key words:** Women, Work, Translations, Fascism, Gender transformations, Alessandra Scalero

### Translating: a women's job

In the twenty-year interwar period, during which Europe was marked by crises and divided between nationalisms and protectionism, fascist Italy became one of the world's most important consumers of translations.<sup>1</sup> Foreign writers literally invaded the peninsula, thus embarrassing the regime and its aims to achieve autarky, hegemony and cultural imperialism. Cesare Pavese managed

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<sup>1</sup> Christopher Rundle, *Publishing translations in Fascist Italy*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2010, now also available in Italian: *Il vizio dell'esterofilia. Editoria e traduzioni nell'Italia fascista*, Rome, Carocci, 2019.

to grasp the spirit of the time when he famously defined the 1930s the “decade of translations”.<sup>2</sup> Less known, however, are the men behind this massive operation of cultural mediation — or, perhaps better, the women. Indeed, many women chose the translation profession because it was flexible, ‘hidden’ work that could be conducted at home and was supplementary to the writer’s profession, hence justifiable and acceptable for a society that relegated women to the private sphere. In other words, it was considered an ‘appropriate’ job for women. In reality, many women used it to cut out a space of their own in public life — a space of independence and liberty, which they also applied in their selection of texts to translate and propose to the publishers. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many Italian women intellectuals made their entry into the world of publishing and culture through translation work; as a result, the Italian publishing scene evolved to such an extent as to adopt the features of a highly female space, already in the interwar period.<sup>3</sup>

In his *Misery and splendour of translation*, José Ortega y Gasset dubbed the translator “a shy character [who] because of his humility has chosen this occupation”.<sup>4</sup> In reality, though, these ‘shy’ characters weren’t so cowardly after all if we think of the — not just cultural but even political — importance of the very act of translating, especially during Fascism, when it served as a tool of contesting hegemonic culture. When, in 1938, Ada Gobetti translated one of the key texts of American black feminism, Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their eyes were watching God*,<sup>5</sup> this by no means reflected a purely literary operation.<sup>6</sup> The same could be said for the hazardous translation of a group of German authors, whose texts had been burnt during the Nazi book burnings of May 1933, which an unknown Alessandra Scalero had attempted to propose to the peninsula’s main publishers.

Who were, then, the female intellectuals that guided the liberation of Italian culture from the snares of provincialism and autarky? And did this process of cultural mediation, of encounters with others, influence the practices, life styles and mentalities of the women translators themselves? Finally, did this voluntary cultural opening up also translate itself in social liberation, perhaps not entirely consciously? The private archive of Alessandra Scalero and her two sisters — Liliana and Maria Teresa — will allow me to circumscribe an exemplary case

<sup>2</sup> Cesare Pavese, *L’infusso degli eventi*, in C. Pavese, *La letteratura americana e altri saggi*, Turin, Einaudi, 1962, p. 241.

<sup>3</sup> Maria Pia Casalena, *Nascita di una capitale transnazionale. Le traduzioni nella Milano dell’Ottocento*, in Anna Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all’ombra del duce. Le traduzioni durante il fascismo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2019, p. 51.

<sup>4</sup> José Ortega y Gasset, *Miseria e splendore della traduzione*, Genoa, Il Melangolo, 2001, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Zora Neale Hurston, *I loro occhi guardavano Dio*, transl. Ada Prospero Gobetti, Turin, Frassinelli, 1938.

<sup>6</sup> On the political implications of the Italian translation I have written elsewhere: *Cacciatori di libri. Gli agenti letterari durante il fascismo*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2019, pp. 120-125.



study of those 'gender transformations' that marked the translation industry in the interwar period.

In the wake of the suggestions advanced in Translation Studies,<sup>7</sup> and following the emergence of the interpretative category of 'transfert culturel' that Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner have developed,<sup>8</sup> translations and translators have become an object of study and a heuristic tool even for the historian.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the dynamics of cultural mediation have gained a new centrality in view of the tendency to rethink history and literature from a universal point of view. In order to understand the fact that the theme is highly topical, one need only think of two recent book series that go precisely in this multidisciplinary direction: *Letteratura tradotta in Italia* [Translated literature in Italy] edited by Quodlibet and the *New Routledge Research Series on Translation and Interpreting History* published by Routledge. Still, much has yet to be uncovered if we are to shed light on the biographical and intellectual profiles of the male and female translators that were active halfway the two centuries.<sup>10</sup> This delay is partially due to the very characteristics of this 'invisible' profession.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, archival sources often ignore the latter aspect.

<sup>7</sup> Among the many studies I could mention André Lefevere, *Translation, rewriting, and the manipulation of literary fame*, London/New York, Routledge, 1992; Lawrence Venuti, *The scandals of translations: towards an ethic of difference*, London/New York, Routledge, 1998; Cinzia Bianchi, Cristina Demaria, Siri Nergaard (eds.), *Spettri del potere. Ideologia identità traduzione negli studi culturali*, Rome, Meltemi editore, 2002; Sonia Cunico, Jeremy Munday (eds.), *Translation and ideology: encounters and clashes*, "The translator: studies in intercultural communication", 2007, Special issue vol. 13, n. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Michel Espagne and Michaël Werner, *Transferts. Les relations interculturelles dans l'espace franco-allemand*, Paris, Recherche sur les civilisations, 1988. The importance of cultural mediators for history of culture has been explained, among others, by Robert Darnton, *What is the history of the books? Revisited*, "Modern Intellectual History", 2007, 4 (3), pp. 498-500.

<sup>9</sup> See, for example, the two collections of essays edited by Luisa Finocchi and Ada Gigli Marchetti, *Stampa e piccola editoria tra le due guerre*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1997, and *Editori e lettori. La produzione libraria in Italia nella prima metà del Novecento*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2000; Alberto Cadioli, Enrico Decleva, Vittorio Spinazzola (eds.), *La mediazione editoriale*, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 1999; Virna Brigatti et al. (eds.), *Archivi editoriali. Tra storia del testo e storia del libro*, Milan, Unicopli, 2018.

<sup>10</sup> This gap has also been spotted by Giorgio Mangini, *Lavinia Mazzucchetti, Emma Sola, Irene Riboni. Note sulla formazione culturale di tre traduttrici italiane*, in Luisa Finocchi, Ada Gigli Marchetti (eds.), *Editori e lettori*, p. 185. On translations and translators see (in addition to the essays cited thus far): Jean Delisle (sous la direction de), *Portraits de traductrices*, Arras-Ottawa, Artois Presses de l'Université - Les Presses de l'Université d'Ottawa, 2002; Carla Gubert (ed.), *Frammenti d'Europa. Riviste e traduttori del Novecento*, Fossombrone, Metauro Edizioni, 2003; Edoardo Esposito (ed.), *Le letterature straniere nell'Italia dell'entre-deux-guerres*, Lecce, Pensa Multimedia Editore, 2004; Edoardo Esposito, *Con altra voce. La traduzione letteraria fra le due guerre*, Rome, Donzelli, 2018.

<sup>11</sup> Gabriele Turi has emphasised the scarce professional dignity translators have received and the distorted effects of a similar denial in terms of the production and reception of knowledge. See Gabriele Turi, *Tradurre, un mestiere difficile*, "La Fabbrica del Libro. Bollettino di Storia dell'editoria in Italia", 2/2011, anno XVII, pp. 2-4.

In reality, as has been highlighted on two different occasions, letters written by translators exist but have not sufficiently been valorised or studied, despite their inherent potential.<sup>12</sup>

While individual person descriptions do not lack, there seems to be a substantial ‘prejudice’ when it comes to choosing translator profiles that merit being remembered. According to Valerio Ferme, the special attention being reserved to certain great translators

is partially due to the value of the contributions and comments that accompany their translations, in part due to the process of canonisation that, in the years following the Second World War, concerned certain American authors rather than others and, accordingly, their translators.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, a simple look at the publishers’ catalogues reveals that the protagonists of the “decade of translations” weren’t only authors like Cesare Pavese or Elio Vittorini. On the contrary, numerous — known and lesser known — intellectuals, often resisting the predominant conformism of the editorial boards of newspapers and universities, decided to dedicate themselves to translations, thus becoming ‘hidden’ mediators of ‘other’ messages than those conveyed by the hegemonic culture. Maria Pia Casalena has already highlighted the fact that these intellectuals contained many women, in a rich essay published in “Genesis” in 2007 and dedicated to the Germanist Lavinia Mazzucchetti, by now undoubtedly the most studied female translator from a historical perspective given her cultural and militant background, capable of investing her literary mediation with strong political connotations.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, the “Germanised Milanese” is an exemplary case: for her, publishing and translating became the only possibility to work, since in 1929 she not only wasn’t allowed to continue her collaboration with newspapers,<sup>15</sup> but she was also denied a “teaching position in German Language and Literature at the Faculty of Literature of the R. University of Milan”, for having signed “the so-called ‘Croce manifest’”.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>12</sup> See Rosa Maria Bollettieri Bosinelli and Serenella Zanotti, *Investigating translators’ archives*, workshop *Diasporic literary archives*, Università degli Studi di Pavia, 28 February - 1st March 2013; Sara Sullam, *Traduzione*, in V. Brigatti et al. (eds.), *Archivi editoriali*, p. 133.

<sup>13</sup> Valerio Ferme, *Tradurre è tradire. La traduzione come sovversione culturale sotto il fascismo*, Ravenna, Longo Editore, 2002, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> See Maria Pia Casalena, *Contrabbandiera di cultura. Lavinia Mazzucchetti e la letteratura tedesca fra le due guerre*, “Genesis”, *Esercizi di stile*, 1/2007, pp. 91-115.

<sup>15</sup> See M.P. Casalena, *Contrabbandiera di cultura*, p. 103.

<sup>16</sup> L. Mazzucchetti to Giovanni Gentile, 1 June 1929, cit. in Giorgio Mangini, *In nome del passato. Lavinia Mazzucchetti tra Arcangelo Ghisleri, Ernesto Rossi e Ferruccio Parri*, in Anna Antonello, Michele Sisto (eds.), *Lavinia Mazzucchetti. Impegno civile e mediazione culturale nell’Europa del Novecento*, Rome, Istituto Italiano di Studi Germanici, 2017, p. 34. On Mazzucchetti see also Anna Antonello (ed.), “Come il cavaliere sul lago di Costanza”. *Lavinia*

Lavinia Mazzucchetti's biographical itinerary needs to be framed in the context of literary, translation and historical studies of the last years if we are to understand whether she was an exception or if she truly and fully represents a transformation that affected the female, educated or averagely educated, universe in the interwar period, when publishing and — in particular — translation activities acted as a stimulus to gain public and social self-awareness for the female protagonists of the “decade of translations”. In what follows I will seek to shed light on this hidden ‘iceberg’, of which Mazzucchetti represents only the best known and visible tip. Due to plain methodological obstacles, the extent of quantitative data is difficult to assess in detail, but we can get an idea of women's presence by looking closely at examples of women who translated some of the main book series dedicated to international literature during the interwar era. By contrast, qualitative data will focus on the translators' cultural mediation: if it is true that the women translators often made selections from foreign texts, which texts did they choose? What mediation strategy did they adopt with regard to the dominant culture?

### **Gender transformations: the *ventennio* of translations and female translators**

The transition from modernity to the contemporary age marked the beginning of a process that saw some middle-class women gradually make their entry into professional activities.<sup>17</sup> Middle-class women disrupted the dominant perspective on female professional education that considered marriage its end objective, turning the course of their studies into the foundation of an independent existence, even with regard to the management of their own sexuality.<sup>18</sup> In Italy, too, especially in the wake of the Great War, young middle-class women started to enact a “silent revolution”: a differentiation of women's working conditions due to education and schooling and supported by the expansion of the tertiary sector.<sup>19</sup> The gender challenge in the public sphere thus changed location and protagonists: from the places ‘of physical efforts’ to those of ‘intellectual efforts’; from the lower-class women working on the land

*Mazzucchetti e la cultura tedesca in Italia*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2015.

<sup>17</sup> For a broad critical analysis of women workers in the contemporary age see the recent overview by Alessandra Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, Rome, Viella, 2019.

<sup>18</sup> Alessandra Pescarolo, *Il lavoro e le risorse delle donne in età contemporanea*, in Angela Groppi (ed.), *Il lavoro delle donne*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1996, pp. 336-337.

<sup>19</sup> Barbara Curli, *Dalla Grande guerra alla Grande crisi: i lavori delle donne*, in Stefano Musso (ed.), *Il Novecento (1896-1945). Il lavoro nell'età industriale*, Rome, Castelvechi, 2015, p. 204.

and in factories to middle-class women, who started making their entry into hospitals, law firms, schools and universities, public administration, newsrooms and publishing houses. This change was by no means linear and evenly spread across the country, and it strongly accelerated during the two world wars, but suffered a political setback in Italy during the fascist period. In this context, the translations of foreign works that invaded the Italian market in those interwar years allow us to assess not the end but the decline of the emancipatory process, and to identify — within that underground river running below the surface of ‘italianness and fascist virility’ — the signs of a continuous presence of female intellectual work during, and despite, the fascist regime itself.<sup>20</sup>

What about intellectual women? [thus Anna Kuliscioff raised the issue at the famous conference held in 1890 at the Milan Philological Circle] In order to face up to man’s monopoly, it is necessary for them to at least disguise themselves as men as much as they can and sell their goods, even if of excellent quality, using a male pseudonym.<sup>21</sup>

Many women translators of the first half of the twentieth century did not translate using a pseudonym, and a great deal of their names can in fact be traced back in publishers’ catalogues. In other words, there was no embarrassment in revealing the translator’s gender. After all, only the most acute readers ‘would have noticed’ that the translator was female. Moreover, the latter only played a subordinate and hierarchically inferior role as opposed to the original author, whose name counted most and visually occupied the book cover. Further still, were women translators really intellectuals? Then as now there was a common perception that “it takes nothing to translate”: all you need is some knowledge of a foreign language, a dictionary at hand and time.<sup>22</sup> In sum, no specific talent was deemed necessary.

Nonetheless, just as the fascist regime made public work a male reserve, limiting access for women even in the private sector,<sup>23</sup> middle-class women attempted to enter the intellectual field precisely through this most hidden — yet most productive and influential, in those years — sector of the publishing world. This was a challenge in the full sense of the world, if we consider that still in 1919 the most prolific translators were all men: Giulio Albera,

<sup>20</sup> During the first post-war period, in all so-called Western countries the new social figure of the *travailleuse intellectuelle* emerged, accompanied by attempts to regulate her access to the public administration and to the liberal professions. B. Curli, *Dalla Grande Guerra alla Grande crisi*, p. 225.

<sup>21</sup> Anna Kuliscioff, *Il monopolio dell’uomo*, now accessible online, edited by the Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli of Milan: [www.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/dm\\_0/FF/FeltrinelliPubblicazioni/allegati/testoritrovato/0012.pdf](http://www.fondazionefeltrinelli.it/dm_0/FF/FeltrinelliPubblicazioni/allegati/testoritrovato/0012.pdf), p. 58.

<sup>22</sup> Roberta Scarabelli, *Quanto costa tradurre*, in Vittorio Spinazzola (ed.), *Un mondo da tradurre*, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, *Tirature '16*, Milan, Il Saggiatore, 2016, p. 20.

<sup>23</sup> Victoria de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, Venice, Marsilio, 1993, pp. 229, 232, 248.

Federico Verdinois, Gino Valori, Nicola Festa, Ettore Lo Gatto, Virginio Bondonio, Mario Nesi, Alessandro Chiavolini, Antonio Crisi, Giovanni Papini and Diego Angeli.<sup>24</sup> In the next decade, however, the number of female translators active in the editorial boards of magazines and publishing houses grew progressively, up to the point that they came to represent nearly the totality of external collaborators, as becomes evident from the case of Salani (as we will see further ahead). Even when they were a numerical minority, like the editors called to write reading opinions in the efficient Mondadori hub of translated literature (24 men against five women), the most productive translators were three women: Lavinia Mazzucchetti, Alessandra Scalero and Giuliana Pozzo.<sup>25</sup> For these experts in foreign languages, the nascent translation industry of the 1930s represented an expanding job market, since the internal production — especially of consumption literature — wasn't enough to satisfy the readers' demand and publishers had to rely on translated foreign novels. One should also note that imported literature offered the further advantage of allowing publishers to count on works with a certified success in the countries of origin, whose copyright was less expensive than that of Italian authors.<sup>26</sup>

The rise of this translation industry evoked many hostile reactions.<sup>27</sup> Although the totalitarian book censorship project had been going on for a longer time, starting in 1927-1928,<sup>28</sup> the first real measure aimed at obstructing translated foreign books wasn't announced until January 1937. The census of translators that had been imposed — though without ever having been fully enacted — on all publishing houses in 1936 fell under this regulation, which sought to place a fixed quota on imported literature.<sup>29</sup> If we add to this the

<sup>24</sup> These data have been drawn from Jakob Blakesley, *Le traduzioni e l'editoria italiana: uno studio dell'anno 1919*, "Rendiconti dell'Accademia dei Lincei", anno 2016, serie IX, volume XXVII, fasc. 3-4, p. 337.

<sup>25</sup> See *Indice delle firme ai pareri di lettura* in Pietro Albonetti (ed.), *Non c'è tutto nei romanzi. Leggere romanzi stranieri in una casa editrice negli anni Trenta*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 1994, pp. 595-596. Felice F. has been excluded as he was not a collaborator of the Mondadori publishing house, but a reader working for the Ministry of Press and Propaganda.

<sup>26</sup> Gianfranco Pedullà, *Gli anni del fascismo: imprenditoria privata e intervento statale*, in Gabriele Turi (ed.), *Storia dell'editoria nell'Italia contemporanea*, Florence, Giunti, 1997, p. 361.

<sup>27</sup> Christopher Rundle, *La campagna contro le traduzioni negli anni Trenta*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 52-68.

<sup>28</sup> Giorgio Fabre, *Il censore e l'editore. Mussolini, i libri, Mondadori*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2018, pp. 85-86. For a broad theoretical reflection on censorship and translations see Francesca Billiani (ed.), *Assessing boundaries – Censorship and translations. An introduction, in Modes of censorship and translation. National context and diverse media*, New York, Routledge, 2014. In the same volume see also the case study on fascist censorship of translations by Giorgio Fabre, in the chapter titled *Fascism, censorship and translation*, pp. 27-59.

<sup>29</sup> Carlo Marrubini, circular of 20 May 1936, cit. in Angelo Fortunato Formiggini, *Elenco dei traduttori, "L'Italia che scrive"*, August-September 1936, anno XIX, n. 8-9, p. 203.

provisions of the decree-law of 5 September 1938, which imposed a cap of 10% on female employees in public and private offices, excluding them altogether in companies with less than ten employees,<sup>30</sup> it is even more surprising to find that, by 1940, 16 out of 30 revisers of foreign books that were regularly employed by the Ministry of Popular Culture's Book Division were women.<sup>31</sup> In order to reduce the flow of foreign works that had been proposed by many female intellectuals, the regime had to rely on the female employees it wanted to marginalise. Moreover, these were highly specialised employees, who had often developed their translation skills by working for those same publishers the regime now wanted to control more closely.

The translation boom of the end of the 1920s was rooted in a much longer trajectory dating back to the Risorgimento, when Milan had already shown early signs of the future transnational book capital — a dynamic city where, from the nineteenth century onwards, a new cohort of translators had developed. Books written by women were mostly translated books, possibly entering the Italian peninsula for the first time in this format, like Mary Edgeworth's collection of stories, which Bianca Milesi Mojon converted into Italian in 1829.<sup>32</sup> There is undoubtedly still much work to do to gather and analyse the biographies of women translators' from the long nineteenth century; in the last decades, top publishers such as Treves and Sonzogno assigned translation jobs to various women in virtue of their linguistic skills as also for economic reasons.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>30</sup> V. de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, p. 248.

<sup>31</sup> Amendola Eva (English, German, Polish); Alessandrini Alessandro (Hungarian, Romanian); Alterocca Anna (French); Bellonci Maria (French); Brelich Dall'Asta Mario (Hungarian); Caprile Enrico (English); Carpi Giorgio (English and French); Cortese Mario (Spanish, Portuguese, Hungarian); Caroncini Amalia (Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, German, English, French); Checchi Leopoldo (English, French); De Sanna Maria (French, English, German, Spanish, Portuguese); Dolghin Eva (English, French, Russian); Fianamore Amedeo (Polish); Ficher Costantino (French, Turkish, Spanish, Portuguese); Gallo Pietro (English); Guzzi Francesca ved. Agostinone (English); Geremia Luigi (French, German); Gelosi Andreina (French, Spanish, English); Jacucci Giuliana (English, French, German); Marano Franco (German); Nasti Emma (French); Porcario Elena (French); Pardo Diego (Serbo-Croatian); Pirone Raffaele (Russian); Randi Oscar (German); Santoro Elena (English); Saccà Concetta (Bulgarian); Simonelli Clara (French, German); Tangari Battistina (English); Toddi Rivetta Pietro Silvio (Japanese); Vucetich Nelly (Hungarian); Zuccolini Console Bruno (German, English, Spanish, Portuguese). G. Casini to the prefect Luciano Chief of Staff of H.E. the minister, 19 January 1940, in Archivio Centrale dello Stato (ACS), Minculpop, Gabinetto, b. 56, ministero della Stampa e della Propaganda, 1936-1937. Primary archival analyses lead us to believe that even if we examined the translators and employees of the Ministry for Popular Culture's Foreign Press office, the emerging picture would tell us that the female presence — neglected until present — was, in reality, quite strong.

<sup>32</sup> M.P. Casalena, *Nascita di una capitale transnazionale*, pp. 33; 40-42; 47-48.

<sup>33</sup> If current research seems to confirm that many women translators — albeit not professionals — already worked in the publishing industry of the nineteenth century, the perspective I offer here has thus far only been adopted for women authors, such as Diane Long Hoeveler,

In fact, it was precisely when the publishing business — triggered by the industrial revolution — started to cut loose from its artisan dimension that knowledge of foreign languages became ever more urgent for a young state keen on presenting itself as an integral part of the European forum, in step with the times and with an eye to modernity. For this reason the Lombard intelligentsia decided to found a Milanese Philological Circle on the example of Turin,<sup>34</sup> as announced in an institutional memo of 21 March 1872.<sup>35</sup> The oldest cultural association of Milan was thus born: an institution that — although deeply anchored in the local community — was also open to national and, especially, European culture. The document was signed by men only, and in subsequent decades the Society's summit was composed of all male figures, from the first president — Count Emilio Borromeo — to Eugenio Torelli-Viollier, founder of the Philological Circle's library and of the “Corriere della Sera”,<sup>36</sup> as is widely known. From 1876 onwards, the daily published translated foreign literature in an appendix that served as a strategy to increase sales figures.

At the above-mentioned 1890 conference on the “Monopoly of Man”, Anna Kuliscioff became one of the first female protagonists of the Milan Philological Circle. Here the study of classical and modern languages was complemented by a dense programme of literary readings and lecture series on foreign literature. Particularly popular were several lectures held in 1926 by Tat'jana Suchotina-Tolstaja, who — like Kuliscioff — had migrated from Russia to Italy. Second child of Lev Tolstoj, Suchotina-Tolstaja was a memoirist and author who apparently came to Italy as her father's ‘informal agent’. In the 1930s she collaborated with Mondadori on various editorial projects, which were completed in the next decade.<sup>37</sup> Halfway the 1920s, another woman — and a great friend of Kuliscioff — was slaving over Tolstoj's masterpiece *War and Peace*: Augusta Osimo Muggia. When Barion republished the classic a few years later, the following line was published on the cover: “fully integral translation and compliant with the original text by A. Osimo Muggia”.<sup>38</sup>

*Gothic feminism. The professionalization of gender. From Charlotte Smith to the Brontës*, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 1998. I am grateful to Elisa Marazzi for this useful comparison.

<sup>34</sup> For information on the Philological Society of Turin see Enrico Miletto, Marco Novarino, “... Senza distinzione politica e religiosa”: repertorio bibliografico e archivistico sull'associazionismo laico a Torino e Provincia, 1848-1925, Turin, Centro Studi Piero Calamandrei, 2011, p. 168.

<sup>35</sup> Cit. in Alberto Vandelli, Roberto Bianchi, Gino Cappelletti, *Un modello di lungimiranza: il Circolo Filologico Milanese*, in *L'alchimia del lavoro. I generosi che primi in Milano fecero le arti e le scienze*, Milan, Comune di Milano, 2008, p. 54.

<sup>36</sup> A. Vandelli, R. Bianchi, G. Cappelletti, *Un modello di lungimiranza*, pp. 55-58.

<sup>37</sup> Sara Mazzucchelli (ed.), *Percorsi russi a Milano. La mediazione editoriale per la diffusione della letteratura russa*, Milan, Fondazione Arnoldo e Alberto Mondadori, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> L. Tolstoj, *Guerra e Pace*, Milan, La Universale Barion, 1949.

This specific editorial choice, which the publisher began using in the 1930s, responded to the growing desire of readers, critics and editors to read complete and original translations. Piero Gobetti had supported this idea ever since the 1910s, speaking of “an unfortunate and shameless mystification” with regard to the translations of the *Biblioteca amena* by Treves, because “he translates Russian books from French”.<sup>39</sup> Antonio Gramsci showed the same sensitivity in 1929 when — referring to Russian authors — he asked his sister-in-law Tatjana Apollonovna Šucht, herself an ardent translator, not to send him “any translation that isn’t by Slavia, even if it is presented with authority”.<sup>40</sup> A “society that published foreign authors in integral versions”, Slavia went precisely in this new direction. It was founded in Turin a month before Piero Gobetti passed away in Paris, and managed to appreciate his innovative editorial project, which was an inherent part of his brief but fertile intellectual life. Piero’s young wife Ada Prospero collaborated with the society for some time, offering her Russianist skills, which she had developed through hard study and translations conducted together with her husband in previous years.<sup>41</sup>

Slavia is the first important testing ground for the ‘gender transformations’ I mentioned earlier on, starting with its protagonists. The pool of translators that contributed to the success of the Turin publishing house contained many women: Ada Gobetti, Barbara Allason, the sisters Cristina and Clotilde Garosci — to whom we owe the groundbreaking discovery of Polish literature,<sup>42</sup> as for example Zeromski’s books, translated for the *Genio slavo* [Slavic genius] series — and Enrichetta Carafa Capecelatro, Duchess of Andria, who translated many of Tolstoj’s works. The latter were included in the *Genio russo* [Russian genius], the first and richest of all series published by Slavia, which benefitted from the contribution of many Russian, Polish and Czechoslovakian women who had migrated to Italy in the wake of Kuliscioff and Tolstoj’s daughter: Raissa Olkienizkaja-Naldi, Valentina Dolghin-Badoglio, Anna Ruska and Maria Karklina.<sup>43</sup>

The *Genio russo* series was inaugurated with the publication of *The Brothers Karamazov*, translated into Italian by Slavia’s founder, Alfredo Polledro — one of the most prolific translators within the publishing house.

<sup>39</sup> Piero Gobetti, *La cultura e gli editori*, “Energie Nove”, 1919, II, 1, now in Paolo Spriano (ed.), P. Gobetti, *Opere complete*, vol. II, *Scritti storici, letterari, filosofici*, Turin, Einaudi, 1969, p. 465.

<sup>40</sup> Antonio Gramsci to T.A. Šucht, 2 June 1929, in Sergio Capiroglio, Elsa Fubini (eds.), A. Gramsci, *Lettere dal carcere*, Turin, Einaudi, 1965, p. 279.

<sup>41</sup> Laurent Béghin, *Introduzione*, in Laurent Béghin and Francesca Rocci (eds.), *Slavia. Catalogo storico*, Turin, Centro studi piemontesi, 2009, p. 41.

<sup>42</sup> Maria Bersano Begey, *Cristina Agosti Garosci (1881-1966)*, “Ricerche slavistiche”, XIV (1966), pp. 308-310. Cristina’s son is Giorgio Agosti, who participated with his cousin Aldo Garosci in the Giustizia e Libertà movement.

<sup>43</sup> L. Béghin, *Introduzione*, pp. 40-41.



In reality it was Polledro's wife Rachele Gutman who had launched the ambitious idea of importing the great Russian narrators of the nineteenth century: Dostoevsky, Tolstoj, Turgenev, Gogol', Cechov. Gutman was a Russian Jew who had migrated to Turin at the end of 1904 in order to complete her degree in medicine, which had become impossible in her home country, probably due to the limited number of Jews that were allowed into imperial universities.<sup>44</sup> Gutman gave private Russian lessons in order to earn her living, and Alfredo Polledro was among her first students, along with the Gobettis. Moreover, Gutman and the many aforementioned women translators launched a real methodological revolution,<sup>45</sup> which soon became Slavia's hallmark: that of drawing the Italian versions exclusively from the original Russian text, as I have already mentioned. The other qualitative 'transformation' was that of making "Dostoevsky [...] a great author",<sup>46</sup> that is, of canonising and legitimising as great literature the works of the Russian nineteenth-century authors, previously considered consumption literature in Italy.

Slavia's programme, editorial board and method served as a prototype for those — especially Milanese — publishing houses who, over the next decade, shifted their attention to the translated foreign book. Similarly, other publishers launched their own series, including Modernissima's *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* [Writers from all over the world]; *Narratori nordici* [Nordic narrators] and *Pandora* by Sperling & Kupfer; *Medusa, I romanzi della Palma* [The palm tree novels] and *Omnibus* by Mondadori; Bompiani's *Letteraria* [Literary]; Frassinelli's *Biblioteca europea* [European library]; and, finally, the *Biblioteca delle signorine* [Young ladies' library], *Romanzi della Rosa* [Rose novels] and *Biblioteca dei miei ragazzi* [My boys' library], all published by the Florentine publisher Salani.

Active ever since the nineteenth century, Salani managed to fully exploit the benefits of combining translated novels with print publications, purchasing the copyrights of foreign works probably already published in newspaper appendices. It is at this point that Salani's success in children's and adolescent literature and in the so-called romance novels began, which became its hallmark precisely during the fascist period.<sup>47</sup> By recognising that female readers were a highly receptive target audience, Adriano and — subsequently — Mario

<sup>44</sup> On Rachele Gutman see the concise profile in the PRIN project *Russi in Italia*: [www.russinitalia.it](http://www.russinitalia.it).

<sup>45</sup> Obviously in addition to far more famous collaborators of value, such as Ettore Lo Gatto, Leone Ginzburg and Rinaldo Küfferle.

<sup>46</sup> Anonymous editorial published in the first issue, in "Solaria", 1926, I, 1, p. 3. Cit. in Michele Sisto, *I "tedeschi" di Bompiani. Sul posizionamento delle collane di narrativa straniera nel campo editoriale intorno al 1930*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 217.

<sup>47</sup> Ada Gigli Marchetti, *Libri buoni e a buon prezzo. Le edizioni Salani (1862-1986)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011.

Salani gave proof of a capacity to stay up to pace with time; indeed, the very high print run of women's news magazines such as "Novella" and "Lei",<sup>48</sup> filled with foreign feuilletons, revealed the presence — also in the popular publishing industry — of a very broad audience of eager middle-class female readers of romance novels.<sup>49</sup> Their preference went to imported novels: Delly sold more than Carolina Invernizio, as did many other foreign authors the majority of whom wrote in German. If we look at Salani's catalogue between 1922 and 1945,<sup>50</sup> focusing on translated foreign works whose translator can be identified, we may conclude that the Florentine publisher mostly employed women for his many translation jobs: 54 out of 77 foreign books were translated by women. In sum, nearly all of Salani's collaborators were women. These were often intellectuals who — while completely unknown to us today — reveal the strong female presence in this hidden sector of the publishing industry: Miriam Papa, Maria Ferdinanda Giachetti, Margherita Mancini Taddei, Matilde Boni, Luisa Mazzolani, Giuliana Strazzil, Sonja Jensen in Mirabelli, Gabriella Brenzini Berson, Eugenia Costanzi Masi, Flora Ferrero and Adriana Tedeschi, to mention only a few.

Many romance novels published by Salani were purchased through the International Literary Agency (Agenzia Letteraria Internazionale, hereafter ALI). Founded in Turin in 1898, ALI was the first Italian agency to play a central role in the purchase of copyright for translated foreign works, be they literary texts or scientific essays,<sup>51</sup> and in their sale on the national market, thus contributing to the translation boom. ALI exclusively bought the translation rights for books by contemporary authors, making these its trademark until the end of the Second World War. It is noteworthy that founder Augusto Foà's literary advisor was a woman, Alessandra Scalero, a prolific translator who worked for the main Italian publishers. Based on my reconstruction, I have found that, among the *carnet* of works ALI selected between 1930 and 1945, a large number of women were employed for the translation of these works.<sup>52</sup> Between 1937 and 1939, that is, in the years of the "bonifica libraria"

<sup>48</sup> See Silvia Salvatici, *Il rotocalco femminile: una presenza nuova negli anni del fascismo*, in Silvia Franchini, Simonetta Soldani (eds.), *Donne e giornalismo. Percorsi e presenze di una storia di genere*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2004, pp. 110-126; Fabio Guidali, *Tradurre in "roto"*. *Periodici popolari e letteratura straniera (1933-1936)*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 87-103.

<sup>49</sup> On the romance genre see Silvana Ghiazza, *Così donna mi piaci. La letteratura rosa negli anni Venti-Quaranta*, in Gigliola De Donato, Vanna Gazzola Stacchini (eds.), *I best seller del Ventennio. Il regime e il libro di massa*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1991, pp. 129-151.

<sup>50</sup> A reconstruction of Salani's entire catalogue, on which my information is based, can be found in A. Gigli Marchetti, *Libri buoni e a buon prezzo*.

<sup>51</sup> On the importance of translated essays, which has thus far received little scholarly attention, see Irene Piazzoni, *Orizzonti internazionali e traduzioni: gli orientamenti della Bompiani*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, pp. 104-122.

<sup>52</sup> On the history of ALI see A. Ferrando, *Cacciatori di libri*. A list of works ALI negotiated is included in the appendix.

(increased book censorship measures) launched by the Commission that was created ad hoc in 1938 and by the aforementioned decree-law that affected women workers in that same year, 36 out of 57 works whose translator I was able to identify were translated by women. Obviously, these names also appear in the catalogues of the editors to whom ALI had sold the foreign books: Irma Valeria Zorzi and Cecilia Mozzoni Marocco for Mondadori; Susanna Guidet Comi for Corbaccio; Antonietta Maria Banti for Salani.

The qualitative transformation of the editorial proposal carried forward by the duo Foà-Scalero — which entirely focused on contemporary works — affected the Italian publishing panorama of the fascist period. Indeed, Scalero worked for Mondadori's prestigious foreign literature series, the *Medusa*, which contributed most to the dissemination of the contemporary English novel.<sup>53</sup> If we only consider the Italian versions of the 33 English-language books, no less than a dozen was signed by women: Doletta (together with her husband Giulio) Caprin, Barbara Tosatti, Irma Vittoria Zorzi and Scalero herself, who alone translated eight books. These included Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* and *Flush*, which marked Woolf's debut in Italy; *All Passion Spent* by Victoria Mary Sackville-West; and Richard Aldington's *Women Must Work*.<sup>54</sup> These are significant works in that they were the forerunners of modernist literature, which in Italy only gained full recognition after the Second World War. The presence of women translators is also important for the other foreign literary works that were published in the *Medusa* series. Thus, seven among the first 20 published books were translated by women,<sup>55</sup> including Jakob Wassermann's *Laudin und die Seinen* and Herman Hesse's *Narziß und Goldmund*, translated by Barbara Allason and Cristina Baseggio respectively, or Carola Prosperi's translation of Colette's *La Vagabonde* in 1933.

Similarly, the collection *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* that Modernissima launched in 1929, just as the so-called translation boom was gaining momentum, then revealed in 1931 by Enrico Dall'Oglio, presents analogous transformations in terms of both the publisher's offer and the chosen collaborators. Here, too, we may witness a feminisation of the translation job; of the first 20 books published in the series, which was edited by the dynamic translator and editor Gian Dauli, half was translated by women, predominantly by Bice Giachetti Sorteni and Alessandra Scalero. Like Alfredo Polledro and Rachele Gutman for Slavia, the director of *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* had also hoped to surround himself with experts in foreign languages and literatures, and therefore needed to address a large number of women, for the aim was to

<sup>53</sup> Sara Sullam, *I romanzi inglesi nelle collane editoriali degli anni Trenta. Classici, moderni, modernisti, contemporanei*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 270.

<sup>54</sup> S. Sullam, *I romanzi inglesi nelle collane editoriali degli anni Trenta*, pp. 270-271.

<sup>55</sup> I gathered these from the rich appendix edited by M. Sisto, *I "tedeschi" di Bompiani*, pp. 239-244.

publish only authors that “are *ours*, that *we* discovered, taken from their home nation, that is, who don’t reach us second-hand”.<sup>56</sup> These women translators introduced Italian readers to the latest publications in German and American modern literature, destined to become a part of the great literary canon: from Thomas Mann’s *Zauberberg*, translated by Giachetti Sorteni, to John Dos Passos’ *Manhattan Transfer* or Sinclair Lewis’ *Babbitt*, translated in Italian by Alessandra and Liliana Scalero.

If we take a closer look, all above-mentioned series present analogous “transformative” traits. Suffice to think of the important collection of Sperling & Kupfer, *Narratori nordici*, which hosted prestigious names that had been almost unknown in Italy until then, such as Franz Werfel, Thomas Mann, Arthur Schnitzler, Hermann Hesse, Ricarda Huch, Leonhard Frank, Hans Carossa and Stefan Zweig. To achieve such an ambitious project, the publisher used highly qualified collaborators, among whom Lavinia Mazzucchetti (together with Giacomo Prampolini), the real director of the series who selected the — both male and female — translators: Barbara Allason, Berta Burgio Ahrens, Maria Sofia Borgese Cederna, Cristina Baseggio, Lucia Paparella, Paola Faggioli (for translations from Finnish), Kirsten Montanari Gulbrandsen (for translations from Danish) and, finally, the ‘usual’ Alessandra Scalero.<sup>57</sup>

### **Alessandra Scalero, faithful translator of restless souls and herself an errant soul**

Alessandra Scalero’s name repeatedly emerges from these first examples: a significant presence in the female universe of women translators and also an exemplary protagonist — even if today mostly unknown — of those ‘gender transformations’ that this universe was both a cause and a consequence of. Scalero also boasted of being a pioneer, one of the first Italian intellectuals to have ventured beyond the European publishing market out into the overseas market, looking for new literary talents.<sup>58</sup> She translated nearly fifty books

<sup>56</sup> Donn Byrne, *Raftery il cieco e sua moglie Hilaria*, Modernissima, Milan, 1930, pp. XX-XXI, cit. in Elisa Marazzi, *Dalle carte di un mediatore. Gian Dauli e l’editoria milanese*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all’ombra del duce*, p. 123.

<sup>57</sup> On Sperling & Kupfer see the recent essay by Natascia Barrale, *La letteratura tedesca dei Narratori nordici (Sperling & Kupfer)*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all’ombra del duce*, pp. 167-183. Thanks to Barrale we have gained important knowledge of the manipulations or ‘betrayals’ of the Italian versions of German novels, especially those of the so-called New Subjectivity movement. See Natascia Barrale, *Le traduzioni di narrativa tedesca durante il fascismo*, Rome, Carocci, 2012.

<sup>58</sup> I have reconstructed Scalero’s biographical and intellectual profile drawing on materials from the private archive of the three Scalero sisters (other than Alessandra: Liliana, also a translator as well as writer and journalist, and the youngest sister, Maria Teresa), held at the Civic

from English and German,<sup>59</sup> which were real revelations for the Italian readership. In fact, they soon entered the canon of foreign literature, so much so that, when they were recently republished, these were still “Alessandra Scalero’s translations, which we feel are unparalleled”, Adriana Motti wrote. An even more authoritative judgement was that of Fernanda Pivano in 2002, when she called the republication of *Manhattan Transfer* in the “Corriere della Sera” the “splendid classic translation by Alessandra Scalero”.<sup>60</sup> John Dos Passos, “a brilliant and humane writer [...] behind his avant-garde crust”,<sup>61</sup> was one of the first American authors Scalero had proposed in 1930. However, “due to the laziness of a savage publisher” he long remained trapped in Gian Dauli’s drawers,<sup>62</sup> until Enrico Dall’Oglio picked it up again along with other books in the *Scrittori di tutto il mondo* series.

Scalero’s translation qualities were soon noticed by Arnaldo Mondadori’s right-hand man, Luigi Rusca, who was very careful to assign her the “more literary jobs that best suit Your artistic personality”,<sup>63</sup> to the extent that Scalero “helped Vittorini put together Mondadori’s *Medusa*”,<sup>64</sup> the most sophisticated foreign literature series that the Milanese publisher offered its readership. Of course, even when there weren’t any “jobs that merit your quality [more than others]”,<sup>65</sup> Lorenzo Montano — editor of the successful crime novel series *Libri gialli* [Yellow books] — had no choice but to appeal to Scalero’s competencies, claiming he was “very satisfied to see that she has given the same attention to the translation of *Fer-de-lance* as to more important things: she has done an extremely good job”.<sup>66</sup> Accuracy, rigour and seriousness earned her a progressive involvement in all activities of the leading editor during the decade of translations: for example, the selection of potential collaborators and

Library Mondino di Mazzé (Turin). I have revealed the existence of this archive — the Fondo Alessandra Scalero (hereafter FAS) — and described its contents in a short article titled *Fonti inedite: l’archivio delle due traduttrici Liliana e Alessandra Scalero*, in “La Fabbrica del Libro. Bollettino di storia dell’editoria in Italia”, 1/2013, anno XIX, pp. 43-47.

<sup>59</sup> See the reconstruction by Elisa Bolchi: <https://rivistatradurre.it/2018/05/traduzioni-di-alessandra-scalero>.

<sup>60</sup> In 1986, Motti revised Scalero’s translation of Karen Blixen’s *Seven gothic tales* for Adelphi. Fernanda Pivano, *Dos Passos a Manhattan: la nascita del sogno antiamericano. Ritorna una nuova edizione del romanzo che nel ’25 diede la gloria all’autore del “42° parallelo”. Ritratto di New York da parte di un militante di sinistra*, “Corriere della Sera”, 6 April 2002, p. 31.

<sup>61</sup> A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 15 February 1931, in FAS.

<sup>62</sup> A. Scalero to Mario Praz, 13 July 1933, in FAS. Cit. also in Elisa Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa. Alessandra Scalero nel carteggio con la sorella Liliana*, in [rivistatradurre.it](http://rivistatradurre.it), 2018/05, p. 14.

<sup>63</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 26 February 1937, in FAS.

<sup>64</sup> Liliana Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre. Memorie*, 1973, inedito, p. 57, in FAS.

<sup>65</sup> L. Montano to A. Scalero, 11 April 1936, in FAS.

<sup>66</sup> L. Montano to A. Scalero, 16 July 1936, in FAS.

translators,<sup>67</sup> but also offering advice to the Longanesi magazine *Omnibus*, for which the Mondadori employee Emilio Ceretti had been appointed to select editorial material.<sup>68</sup>

But who was Alessandra Scalero? In particular, what professional course had gained her the reputation of “one of the most active collaborators of the *Medusa* series”?<sup>69</sup> First of all, her life trajectory had prevented her — paradoxically — from completing a normal study course, while at the same time allowing her to learn English, French and German in an almost natural manner as well as to develop a cosmopolitan awareness. Born in Turin in 1893,<sup>70</sup> from an early age she had lived with her bohemian family in London, Lyon, Vienna, Rome, New York and Philadelphia, following the professional career of her father Rosario Scalero,<sup>71</sup> a violinist and composer attempting to make his breakthrough. This didn’t occur in Europe, despite his being hired by the Breitkopf und Härtel publishing house, but in the United States, when he was invited to come teach in the most important American conservatory: the Curtis Institute of Philadelphia. Among the nearly two hundred students he taught during his 40-year stay in the US were some of the most influential composers in the history of twentieth-century music: Gian Carlo Menotti, Nino Rota and Samuel Barber, who often spent their summer holidays in the Montestrutto Castle, which Scalero had bought with the generous profits made from the composition for *carillon* commissioned by the Curtis Institute’s director.<sup>72</sup> In the 1930s, Alessandra Scalero used the Canavese dwelling as her favourite intellectual retreat — a perfect salon where she could receive authors, translators and publishers on the example of her uncle Piero Delgrosso’s Roman house, which was attended by the capital’s cultural and political intelligentsia. After having completed her elementary education between Lyon and Vienna, she continued her studies at the Liceo Tasso of Rome, before abandoning these at the outbreak of the Great War and signing up for the nursery school of the Policlinico Umberto I. It is probably thanks to this discontinued and non-institutionalised education — yet filled with encounters, new discoveries and challenges — that she became a curious explorer of “lands and countries books and

<sup>67</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 17 July 1936, in FAS.

<sup>68</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 12 March 1937, in FAS.

<sup>69</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 12 March 1937, in FAS.

<sup>70</sup> For the first reconstruction of Alessandra Scalero’s profile see Fabrizio Dassano, *Alessandra Scalero, una traduttrice. Materiali per una biografia*, “L’Escalina. Rivista semestrale di cultura letteraria, storica, artistica, scientifica”, Associazione Culturale “I Luoghi e la Storia”, Ivrea, October 2012, a. I, n. 2, pp. 285-335.

<sup>71</sup> For a biography of Rosario Scalero (1870-1954) see Flavia Ingrosso, Chiara Marola, *Il carteggio Sinigaglia-Scalero (1899-1913): due musicisti piemontesi a Vienna*, in Alberto Basso (ed.), *Miscellanea di studi*, Turin, Centro studi piemontesi - Istituto per i beni musicali in Piemonte, 2006, pp. 259-313.

<sup>72</sup> Liliana Scalero, notes for a paper on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Istituto Curtis di Filadelfia* (May 1975?), in FAS.

friends, a faithful translator of restless souls [...] and herself an errant soul”, as her sisters Liliana and Maria Teresa remembered her a few months after her death in a hospital in Ivrea, in July 1944.

The foreign spirits that the Piedmont translator wanted to bring to Italy were, therefore, “restless” souls. These were, for example, the female authors Scalero had translated and proposed in the difficult years of ‘fascist machismo’: from the internal and rebellious agonies of *Mrs Dalloway* to the pages of Ricarda Huch, divorced twice and instantly critical of the newborn National Socialist regime.<sup>73</sup> Not just the authors, but the very protagonists of their literary fictions represented a feminine model that was by no means congruous with the model promoted by Fascism. Scalero was a woman who selected and translated women who were “out of place”.<sup>74</sup> “Out of place” in that they overstepped the gender boundaries within which the regime wanted to confine them, in the fictitious and translated page, but most of all in reality. This is the case of a friend of the Piedmont translator, the Alsatian Adrienne Thomas, author of the bestseller *Catherine Soldat*: like Remarque’s *Im Westen Nicht Neues* and other books included in the series *I romanzi della guerra* [War novels], forced down in 1931, Thomas conveyed pacifist ideas and, what is more, using a young female voice.

Scalero used to meet Thomas in Ascona,<sup>75</sup> a small free harbour on the Swiss side of Lake Maggiore, where she also regularly met with a number of German exiled authors. This is when the idea unfolded to ‘import’ into Italy those German-language authors who had been “forced to matter elsewhere”.<sup>76</sup> The project foundered in spite of the ALI’s support,<sup>77</sup> since it had become necessary to “avoid literature of political nature”.<sup>78</sup> It is precisely in Ascona that one of these authors, Ernst Erich Noth, hoped to become acquainted with his potential Italian translator, to whom he declared, in 1935, that

the Italian copyright of “Mietskaserne” is free again. It means a lot to me being able to present myself to the Italian audience with my first book, and I believe that You could help me with this. Would another publisher that I can trust be interested?<sup>79</sup>

Yet, no publisher took on the risk of publishing this novel, like the Frankfurter Zeitung had done; it was burnt in the Nazi book burnings, and for Noth Scalero remained no more than a potential translator. *Die Mietskaserne* wasn’t a great

<sup>73</sup> E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 16.

<sup>74</sup> *Women out of place* is the title of a chapter in Guido Bonsaver’s book on *Mussolini censore. Storie di letteratura, dissenso e ipocrisia*, Bari, Laterza, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> See the brief correspondence between A. Thomas and A. Scalero held in FAS.

<sup>76</sup> A. Scalero to A. Foà, 4 May 1933, in FAS.

<sup>77</sup> On this project see A. Ferrando, *Cacciatori di libri*, pp. 143-146.

<sup>78</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 6 February 1941, in FAS.

<sup>79</sup> E. Noth to A. Scalero, 7 January 1935, in FAS.

deal in literary terms; it rather wanted to offer an eyewitness account of the turbulent years that preceded Hitler's rise to power, when the author sympathised with students groups of the extreme Left and had been forced to flee because of his stubborn anti-Nazism. All his subsequent works — written, interestingly, in French and English so as to emphasise his choice to distance himself from his fatherland — focused on the “spiritual precursors of Hitler's madness”.<sup>80</sup> He therefore had even less chance of being published in Italy, which was ever more caught in the grips of cultural autarky and closer as ever to the German dictator. With time, Noth was forgotten, even if the German publishing industry recently rediscovered him and has started republishing his works.<sup>81</sup> With hindsight, then, we could say that Scalero had good intuition.

Both this intuition and her connections with foreign authors and publishers allowed the Piedmont translator to sign her first contracts with Modernissima and Corbaccio, before entering the Mondadori publishing house. “Everyone says that it took a lot of courage on my behalf to impose books that were considered ‘boring’” — Alessandra wrote to her sister Liliana, in reference to her proposal to Modernissima to translate Jakob Wassermann, Alfred Döblin and Thomas Mann — “but that's what I always say: you need to be brave and insist, and then the book takes off”.<sup>82</sup> These weren't just ordinary ‘boring’ books, though. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* eventually became one of the Weimarian references for young Italian authors such as Ugo Dettore, whose *Quartiere Vittoria* [Victoria District] recalls Döblin's novel even in the title,<sup>83</sup> in search of a “style with an elementary analytical form, drywalled using short sentences, without images, all momentary sensation, all completed”.<sup>84</sup> The Berlin myth of the New Subjectivity movement influenced the Italian cultural landscape even before the American myth did, which it undoubtedly made reference to.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>80</sup> E. Noth to A. Scalero, 22 March 1935, in FAS.

<sup>81</sup> These include: *Die Tragödie der deutschen Jugend*, Frankfurt am Main, glotzi Verlag, 2002; *Die Mietskaserne. Roman junger Menschen*, Frankfurt am Main, glotzi Verlag, 2003; *Deutsche Schriftsteller im Exil 1933-1979 – Einführung in die Exilliteratur*, Frankfurt am Main, glotzi Verlag, 2012.

<sup>82</sup> Cit. in E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> Julius Evola criticised the Italian translation (by Alberto Spaini) of this novel. On 10 September 1932, Evola made the following observation to Alessandra: “the whole problem is the doctrine of the Jew Marx, in an attempt to force it down using the ‘novel’ as an excuse”. Alessandra's reply — which cannot be found in any existing letter — was probably the translation of another one of Döblin's novels, *Pardon wird nicht gegeben*, this time under her name: *Senza quartiere*, published in 1937 for Mondadori. Although the philosopher associated with Fascism undoubtedly knew the three sisters, in the Scalero archive only four other letters remain that were written by Evola between October 1931 and January 1933.

<sup>84</sup> Silvio Benco, *Ludwig Renn: La guerra*, “Pegaso”, November 1929, a. I, n. 5, pp. 765-766. Cit. in Mario Rubino, *L'influsso della narrativa tedesca contemporanea sul romanzo italiano degli anni Trenta*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 184.

<sup>85</sup> M. Rubino, *L'influsso della narrativa tedesca contemporanea sul romanzo italiano degli anni Trenta*, p. 196.



Scalero thus became the mediator of an important 'transformation', which eventually influenced the pens of new generations of writers across the peninsula, distancing them from artistic prose.

Scalero's literary mediation was therefore characterised by contemporaneity, the quest for new talents and messengers of a novel vision of literature in its relation with the world. Thus the Piedmont translator wrote to Richard Aldington, another author who perfectly fitted into this canon: "I have been the translator of John Dos Passos and Virginia Woolf and D.H. Lawrence; and from the German (*sic*), of Jakob Wassermann, Franz Werfel, Ernst Weiss, etc."<sup>86</sup> The biting satire of the Portsmouth author raised many a debate within Italian literary circles, nurturing the competitiveness of publishers who were all too eager to get hold of the copyright for his works. Mondadori eventually won the battle, but censorship ruined the initial enthusiasm, and not all of Aldington's works could be translated instantly. Nevertheless, Scalero knew that one always had to be ready to act, for sometimes a ladder in the tights allowed translators to evade state control. She thus translated *Women Must Work* — published in the *Medusa* series in 1936 — in record time. Through the eyes of the disrespectful protagonist Etta, this unambiguous and provocative title conveyed the 'forced and domestic parasitism' in which many women were trapped. Hence another "restless spirit" Scalero wished to give a voice.

Even if Aldington undoubtedly represented an easy bet, regardless of the censorship, given that he was already an acclaimed — albeit disputed and contested — author in his home country, the same could not be said for the young playwright Eugene O'Neill. Scalero had attempted to launch O'Neill — along with Dos Passos — some ten years earlier, during her stay in the United States. She had met him in New York, in that laboratory of nonconformist talents and emancipated women that was Greenwich Village in the 1920s,<sup>87</sup> and instantly spotted his prodigious talent even before he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1936. It must be said that, when she followed her father to New York, she was no novice to theatre: for some years she had worked as a costume designer along with her sister Maria Teresa. Together they had worked at the renowned Greek Theatre of Syracuse, (Sicily), and subsequently for the Teatro Sperimentale degli Indipendenti [Independents' Experimental Theatre], founded in 1922 by Anton Giulio Bragaglia. This proved an essential experience as it opened up a world of contacts that eventually introduced her to the publishing universe.<sup>88</sup> A confirmation of her talent can be found in the letters Paolo Grassi wrote her in his role as editor of the theatre series of the Rosa and Ballo publishing house: "[...] I thank you, Miss Scalero, for your

<sup>86</sup> A. Scalero to R. Aldington, 13 July 1933, in FAS.

<sup>87</sup> Federico Doglio, *Teatro americano. Lo spettacolo di prosa negli Stati Uniti dal periodo coloniale a oggi*, Milan, Garzanti, 1990, p. 87.

<sup>88</sup> A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 2 February 1926, in FAS.

precious contribution to my THEATRE series with your two Wedekind. The list of works You have proposed is EXTREMELY INTERESTING”.<sup>89</sup> Another authoritative recognition came at the end of her career, which was suddenly interrupted by endometrial cancer; shortly before entering the hospital she reassured Gian Dauli, writing that she would have continued working on the many projects she had in mind even from her hospital bed.<sup>90</sup>

### An unmarried pioneer

The above-mentioned incident is yet another example of Scalero’s character: determined, stubborn, ready to collaborate with whoever would allow her to launch a worthy author, even if this meant having to face up to Gian Dauli once more — the publisher she was often at loggerheads with when it came to payments: “The bad moments, the trouble, the ordeals I have suffered because of You” — Scalero wrote with bitterness and anger, though not submissive and confident that she was in the right — “never seem to cease, nor do I know when they ever will [...] what deeply offends me is that I am treated like a beggar, like some annoying individual who doesn’t even deserve a reply”.<sup>91</sup>

For months, Scalero had been waiting to receive “just the usual 50 lire”,<sup>92</sup> even if these hardly reflected the huge amount of work she was managing for *Modernissima*. Thus, in a letter to her father dated 7 April 1930, she confessed that “anything concerning *Modernissima* is in my hands, and Gian Dauli has no inkling of what needs to be done when I’m not around”.<sup>93</sup> However, since she had moved to Milan on her own, far from her family, she found herself “having to accept anything”.<sup>94</sup> The Piedmont translator was acting like a real entrepreneur of herself, to borrow a modern definition, one that nevertheless applies perfectly to the professional figure that was slowly emerging at the time: through her work method, Scalero embodied this figure excellently.

In the early 1930s, after she returned from the United States, Scalero decided to invest all her resources in the publishing business, taking advantage of the job opportunities that were opening up for people like her, with a good knowledge of foreign languages. She instantly sought to diversify her sources of income, conscious of the fact that publishers were looking for good translators, and at the time there weren’t many around, especially for translations from English and German. “I am dealing with various publishers who

<sup>89</sup> Paolo Grassi to A. Scalero, 14 April 1944, in FAS.

<sup>90</sup> E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della “Medusa”*, p. 19.

<sup>91</sup> A. Scalero to G. U. Nalato, 5 July 1931, in FAS.

<sup>92</sup> A. Scalero to G. U. Nalato, 28 May 1931, in FAS.

<sup>93</sup> A. Scalero to R. Scalero, 7 April 1930, in FAS.

<sup>94</sup> A. Scalero to G. U. Nalato, 28 May 1931, in FAS.

are driving me mad”, she wrote to Liliana in March 1931. “[T]hey all want updates, advice, and they go on and on, they never decide, they are unsure, and it takes a century, kilometres of energy before I even get anything done”.<sup>95</sup>

This ranting reveals the — intellectual and physical — weight of Scalero's mediation efforts, the many projects she conceived, proposed and perhaps even initiated, but which were never concluded due to the publishers' idleness and nerve-racking playing for time. We must also not forget that editorial translation is in itself an activity that requires time, reflection and rereading of an infinite number of drafts.<sup>96</sup> In other words, many unpaid efforts are necessary before a book can be translated, and still more time and letters after the job has been done to retrieve the rightly earned money. This also happened with major publishing houses like Carabba, to whom Scalero was forced to clarify her situation:

By no means do I wish to doubt the correctness of Your established and acclaimed publishing house; I merely wish to bring to Your attention the fact that when one works not for pleasure but to make a living — the many translations that carry my name demonstrate that this is my profession, and not a pastime — one must earn one's living through work.<sup>97</sup>

In this letter — dated 28 July 1934 — as in the correspondence with her sisters, father and the authors she collaborated with in the 1930s, Scalero didn't shy away from calling herself a “professional translator”.<sup>98</sup> In doing so she unveiled her new awareness of having become the protagonist of a public space that is defined on the basis of precise linguistic, cultural and editorial skills. Indeed, Scalero had all the characteristics of the “pure editorial translator”, who depended for at least 75% on what she earned through her translations. She didn't expand her editorial work with any other kind of activity, which was rather uncommon, given that the fees — “per sheet”, since royalties in Italy were (and still are) rarely established by contract — were too low to guarantee translators a decent life.<sup>99</sup>

Alessandra Scalero was, then, a pioneer of her profession, so much so that already at the end of 1933, barely a year after she had started working for the *Medusa* series, Mondadori employed her at its own “exclusive service as a translator, with a fixed and very good monthly salary”; as she explained to Liliana, “it wasn't even a flat rate job, for the translations would be paid

<sup>95</sup> A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 22 March 1931 in FAS. Cit. also in E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 15.

<sup>96</sup> Laura Cangemi, *Professione traduttore*, in *Un mondo da tradurre*, p. 16.

<sup>97</sup> A. Scalero to Carabba, 28 July 1934, in FAS.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, the letter to Mario Praz of 13 July 1933, held in FAS. Cit. also by Elisa Bolchi, *Tutta una strada da costruire. Alessandra Scalero e il “mestiere di traduttore”*, in V. Brigatti et al. (ed.), *Archivi editoriali*, p. 166.

<sup>99</sup> L. Cangemi, *Professione traduttore*, pp. 15-16.

around 2000-2500 lire each”.<sup>100</sup> Given the advantageous type of contract and the investment that the biggest Italian publisher was making, Rusca wanted to make it clear that, “given the made agreements, You must reserve all Your time for us”.<sup>101</sup> Although it was without a doubt one of the greatest recognitions that she could have received, Scalero by now knew how things worked in the publishing industry, an unstable sector where “you sometimes work for months in a row without seeing a penny and then you need something to fall back on”.<sup>102</sup> She thus had to develop strategies that would allow her not to loose old and new clients, as at the end of the 1930s, when she started translating for Corbaccio using the pseudonym Rosa Induno.<sup>103</sup>

She was right not to be too trustworthy: by the end of the decade, the political context became less and less favourable to cultural openings, and publishers were forced to gradually reduce the number of translated books within their catalogues, especially after the resurgence of book censorship in 1938 and Italy’s entry into the Second World War. In fact, on 30 July 1941 Luigi Rusca had to renegotiate the initial agreements with the Piedmont translator, as it was becoming increasingly complicated to invest in translations. He therefore had to “reduce the number of publications and use the large amount of material that we had ready”.<sup>104</sup>

Fortunately for her, Scalero never fully respected Mondadori’s claim for exclusivity, guaranteeing other incomes for herself in those difficult years. In fact, she succeeded in being employed as a translator and advisor for both the Nuove Edizioni Ivrea — a publishing company the famous engineer Adriano Olivetti launched in 1941 — and the publishing house founded two years later by Achille Rosa and Ferdinando Ballo, which had an explicit liberal-socialist imprint. She signed numerous translation contracts with both publishers, which anticipated translations that comprised a biographical-critical presentation of each individual work, as for the translation of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *Blithedale Romance*; Rosa and Ballo offered the Piedmont translator the bargain price of 6000 lire.<sup>105</sup>

As early as 1929, Liliana Scalero acknowledged the fact that her sister had outlined a path for herself without financially depending on her family, even during the fluctuating process of building her career, which was all the more difficult in the field of translations, by then still an underestimated and not yet recognised profession:

<sup>100</sup> A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 22 November 1933, in FAS.

<sup>101</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, early February 1934, in FAS.

<sup>102</sup> A. Scalero to R. Scalero, 22 February 1924, in FAS.

<sup>103</sup> E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 15.

<sup>104</sup> L. Rusca to A. Scalero, 5 November 1940, in FAS.

<sup>105</sup> Translation contract of A. Scalero, Fondazione Arnaldo e Alberto Mondadori, Fondo Rosa e Ballo, cartella 20, fasc. 18.

what pleasure I derive from your magnificent activity, from the magnificent results it has already brought and the even more important results it will bring in the future. Bravo! Truly well done, especially knowing that, of us all, you received the least financial support, plus you did everything yourself and — as you say — without any talents, though that isn't true. You had the best talent, to say the least: that of succeeding, which is a lot if you ask me.<sup>106</sup>

Alessandra Scalero not only succeeded in being appreciated and paid for her translations, but she even managed to buy herself “an apartment with a kitchen in Milan, and being the lady of the house she is very attentive to her expenses”.<sup>107</sup> When she was younger, both during the Great War and in the 1920s, when she lived with her aunt and uncle in Rome, Scalero had already managed to support herself without her family's help, first as a nurse and later — as we have seen — as a costume designer. Even when she could count on her parents' financial aid, she used the money rationally and sparingly, with great gratitude but always with a desire for economic independence. In fact, although her mother, Clementina Delgrosso, came from an upper-middle-class Turinese family, the father was, instead, of modest provenance and often “penniless”, at least until he began making his fortune in the United States at the start of the 1930s.<sup>108</sup> Hence, Rosario's overseas fortune eventually coincided with that of his daughter in Milan. In that same period, the latter gradually established herself as a translation expert in the publishing scene of the Lombard capital.

When her business took off, especially after she signed the Mondadori contract, Scalero had only just celebrated her fortieth birthday and was in the bloom of her career. She had reached this stage unmarried and childless.<sup>109</sup> In the early 1920s, she had been romantically involved with Giulio Cesare Silvagni, a scenographer, actor and novelist, but after that story ended badly she in fact threw herself into work, devoting all her time and her letters to her translations. From 1925 onwards, her correspondence with Liliana became filled with cultural discussions and working matters; by then, her private and public life entirely overlapped. This, too, is an important piece of information, as it implies that Scalero went against the renewed ideology of domesticity and maternal centrality that was gaining ground in fascist Italy. As Angela Groppi has highlighted, at the end of the day for many female pioneers of the new professions — and Scalero “boasted of also being a pioneer”<sup>110</sup> — the choice not to marry and have children was a forced condition. Spinsterhood and absent motherhood came to represent the price to be paid by all those

<sup>106</sup> L. Scalero to A. Scalero, 20 October 1929, in FAS.

<sup>107</sup> L. Scalero to R. Scalero, 12 December 1931, in FAS.

<sup>108</sup> L. Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre*, p. 24.

<sup>109</sup> The only sister that got married was the youngest one: Maria Teresa. Contrary to Liliana and Alessandra, Maria Teresa (1901-1990) didn't dedicate her life to translations, but worked as an actress, painter and — for many years — as a librarian at the American Library of Rome.

<sup>110</sup> Cit. in E. Bolchi, *Tutta una strada da costruire*, p. 159.

women who wanted to take on professional activities that were not yet fully formalised, or considered ‘typically male’ professions,<sup>111</sup> because they implied a nearly total investment of their energy in work, at the cost of housework and family care work.<sup>112</sup> All the more so, then, when it came to intellectual activities, where men defended their monopoly with even stronger determination, supported by the school policies that were pursued during the *ventennio*. After all, the Minister of Education Giovanni Gentile himself had sustained that women lacked “that daring originality of thought, as well as the healthy spiritual vigour that are the superior, intellectual and moral forces of mankind”.<sup>113</sup>

The Scalero sisters held entirely different opinions. At the beginning of the 1930s, they even came up with the idea of launching their own magazine, together with the painter Roberto Lemmi — at the time an illustrator and editorial assistant for *Modernissima*:

Let the many Emanuellis flatter his friends or tear them to pieces at will, let him talk about the Italian novel, and I can talk about the contemporary foreign novel, on which I have many ideas and I don’t lack the expertise [...]. Let us hope that the Emanuellis will leave me a space, and not oppress me with their masculine authority. You know that I have too much talent and culture to be considered a ‘woman’, which always comes in handy to men whenever they want to push you aside. It is through my clear and modern ideas that I challenge them all to a duel.<sup>114</sup>

Liliana’s words fully convey the difficulty for young women to make their way in a world — the literary and publishing one — packed with men hiding behind the firm conviction of their own intellectual stature, in virtue of which they necessarily deserved to be considered the protagonists of this world. This makes it easier to understand Liliana’s confident, proud and also bitter tone, a consequence of the angry desire to take on a reality that had always relegated women to a second place. This is demonstrated by the fact that Liliana — all the while rejecting male authority — remained unable to define a female authority, so much so that she claimed to have too much talent and culture to be considered a woman.

The reference, in the letter, to Enrico Emanuelli wasn’t casual; Alessandra Scalero had met him a month earlier and was instantly struck by that “half

<sup>111</sup> It is widely known that, within the more structured professions, like the clerical ones (think of the banking sector), a dismissal because of marriage was a means of facilitating the turnover in the inferior ranks of women’s jobs. See B. Curli, *Dalla Grande guerra alla Grande crisi*, p. 220.

<sup>112</sup> A. Groppi, *Introduzione*, in A. Groppi (ed.), *Il lavoro delle donne*, p. XIII.

<sup>113</sup> Giovanni Gentile, *Il problema scolastico del dopoguerra*, Naples, R. Ricciardi, 1919, p. 8, cit. in Paola Govoni, *Studiosa e scrittrici di scienza tra l’età liberale e il fascismo. Il Caso Bottero e Magistrelli*, “Genesis”, *Esercizi di stile*, 1/2007, p. 86.

<sup>114</sup> L. Scalero to A. Scalero, 5 May 1931, in FAS. Cit. also in E. Bolchi, *Un pilastro della Medusa*, p. 13.

swindler”;<sup>115</sup> with whom she developed an intellectual understanding that would last all her life. Not only did she introduce him to Enrico Dall'Oglio, who would shortly thereafter commission a translation of Jakob Wassermann from Emanuelli, but she also helped him start a collaboration with the magazine *Die Sammlung*, edited by Klaus Mann. Nor did she hesitate to invite the author, journalist and translator from Novara to her literary salon at the Montestrutto Castle, where he became one of the most appreciated guests. Emanuelli was probably one of those “badly rewarded friendships” that Alessandra had — according to Liliana — “with authors and novelists whom she generously gave more than she got back from”.<sup>116</sup>

Notwithstanding the “various Emanuellis”, Liliana Scalero's portrait of her sister offers us — through these unpublished family memories — the image of an independent woman who “played tennis, skied and loved social life”,<sup>117</sup> a free and confident woman who chose to live her life in defiance of prejudice and social conventions. She remained unmarried but without feeling the weight of this condition; instead, she enjoyed the liberty that this condition granted her and, being far from her family, opened the doors of the Montestrutto Castle to friends and intellectuals. Always eager to start new projects, to make new acquaintances and travel abroad, Alessandra Scalero completely devoted her time to her role as cultural mediator, one that she herself had helped shape and with which she fully identified herself. This professional awareness therefore had a bearing on the perception of her own subjectivity, also by others, up to the point that on her tomb she was recognized as an “unparalleled translator”. Contrary to her mother, who died in 1939 and was remembered as “the sweetest wife and mother [who] lived offering generosity indulgence affect”,<sup>118</sup> Alessandra left posterity a memory of her social and public role, in complete contrast with the traditional female image, which remained limited to the private and sentimental sphere.

<sup>115</sup> A. Scalero to L. Scalero, 17 April 1931, in FAS. On the relation between Emanuelli and Scalero I have written elsewhere: *Dal carteggio inedito con la traduttrice Alessandra Scalero. Enrico Emanuelli cosmopolita di vocazione*, “Nuova Antologia”, aprile-giugno 2013, anno 148, pp. 307-326.

<sup>116</sup> L. Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre*, p. 57. The correspondence between Scalero and Emanuelli is interrupted for nearly ten years, and continues again in 1942 with only two last letters, written with a colder tone of voice, in stark contrast with the — at times even sweet — words they had written one another in 1933.

<sup>117</sup> L. Scalero, *Tre figlie e un padre*, pp. 113-114.

<sup>118</sup> Text on Alessandra Scalero and Clementina Delgrosso's tomb at the Moncalieri cemetery near Turin.

## Supplementary women?

Alessandra Scalero's biography certainly merits more attention, just as it would be necessary to examine more in depth the 'hidden iceberg' of all other women translators, using a broader quantitative and qualitative analysis in addition to the examples discussed in the second section of this essay. I have sought to trace a possible research trajectory for a long-term study of women, translation and emancipation through the editorial profession between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Scalero's case is, in fact, exemplary of that 'gender transformation' that affected publishing houses in the period between the two world wars, as evidence of a feminisation of editorial work in a broad sense, and of translation work in a narrow sense. A process of regendering that must be placed in the context of more general qualitative dynamics (i.e. technological, organisational, productive), which modernised the world of labour in industrial societies, and in particular in the service sector. At the start of the 1930s, this process led to a slow but steady rise of women in liberal professions and arts (especially as teachers), the financial sector and insurance companies, and in the transport and communication sectors (where many worked as phone operators).<sup>119</sup>

In Italy, the 1930s marked the point of departure of this process, which continues in the present. It coincided with the so-called decade of translations, when — in full countertendency — office work underwent virilisation. In 1934, for example, in all branches of public administration actual quotas were introduced, though not to incentivise female occupation; they were rather meant to exclude it. The fascist regime thus glorified the image of the male intellectual and, as a counterweight and in a naturally supplementary position, the stereotype of the young secretary — the female icon par excellence of the contemporary age. In fact, discriminating legislation further impeded women's access to those professions that required long years of study and intellectual qualities.<sup>120</sup>

During the aforementioned conference on the "Monopoly of Man", Anna Kulisciuff had been among the first to have identified the intellectual jobs where women's entry represented the biggest threat to male monopoly: those liberal professions that weren't chosen because the woman had to support her family — as might be the case for female rural or factory workers from the lowest ranks of society — and that weren't the public representation of the maternal figure's protective and caring characteristics — like the female (school) teacher, doctor or nurse. In fact, the transition from the modern to the contemporary age implied a change of paradigms in the social construction of the female figure, that is, a transition from a "minority" to a new understanding

<sup>119</sup> B. Curli, *Dalla Grande Guerra alla Grande crisi*, pp. 202-203; 231.

<sup>120</sup> V. de Grazia, *Le donne nel regime fascista*, pp. 262-264.



of gender based on the idea of “difference”, primarily that of a biological kind.<sup>121</sup> If the idea of difference opened up new working opportunities for certain groups of women, such as doctors, teachers and nurses (in view also of the characteristics mentioned above), at the same time growing concerns about the risks for female reproductive health inherent in the various jobs became an excuse for the exclusion of many women from factory work, considered too risky and — following the laws of 1902 and 1907 — also expensive.<sup>122</sup>

Contrary to the figure of the Red Cross nurse,<sup>123</sup> that of the female doctor did not monopolise the image of a ‘typically female’ profession for very long; although it also reflected a care profession, it enjoyed greater economic and social status comparable to that of a lawyer, scientist or academic. For a long time, men had defended the liberal professions as ‘strongholds of virility’, appealing to “intellectual differences (at the expense of women) triviality and vanity, which prevent her from dedicating herself with perseverance and dedication to serious intellectual work”. Further still, as Kulisciuff sarcastically remarked during the above-mentioned conference, “in the struggle for survival they all pull together to build a bulwark against the middle-class woman’s intrusion in the intellectual field”.<sup>124</sup> By 1935, a man of great cultural depth as was Franco Antonicelli still believed in these alleged intellectual differences. He thus told Anita Rho, translator of Mann’s *Buddenbrook* and Musil’s *Der Mann Ohne Eigenschaften*, during the second post-war period: “you are the only woman I would entrust with a job without hesitation, as if I did it myself”. Antonicelli was referring to the preface of a collection of stories by Kafka, to be published in the *Biblioteca europea* of the Turinese publisher Frassinelli.<sup>125</sup>

Like Alessandra Scalerò, Anita Rho also owed her perfect German language skills to her family history; born in Venice, her father Filippo ran the navy’s health unit, precisely in that North-Eastern region of the peninsula where many had daily interactions with the German language. Moreover, for four years Anita Rho had lived among the educated middle classes of Budapest and Bratislava, which predominantly spoke German. Another example is Angela Zucconi, who — prior to the Nazi occupation — won a scholarship and moved to Copenhagen where she learnt Danish, thus specialising in a language that was almost unknown in Italy at the time. Thanks to her expertise, Adriano Olivetti’s publishing house (Nuove Edizioni Ivrea) entrusted her with the trans-

<sup>121</sup> A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell’Italia contemporanea*, pp. 163-167.

<sup>122</sup> A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro e le risorse delle donne in età contemporanea*, pp. 304-307.

<sup>123</sup> A figure transmitted in particular by literature with a high print run: think of Catherine Barkley in *A farewell to arms*, the skilful and courageous — yet docile, erotic and caring — nurse, a perfect icon of Hemingway’s machismo.

<sup>124</sup> A. Kulisciuff, *Il monopolio dell’uomo*, p. 48.

<sup>125</sup> Gianfranco Petrillo, *Zia Barbara e Anita. Due grandi traduttrici dal tedesco: Barbara Al-lason e Anita Rho*, in *rivistatradurre.it*, 2012/01, p. 7.

lation of Kierkegaard after 1941.<sup>126</sup> In the case of mother tongue translation specialists, such as Rachele Gutman, Raissa Olkienzkaja-Naldi, Eva Kühn Amendola or Anna Ruska, the foreign language was, instead, the cultural patrimony that they brought with them to Italy, and which they managed to exploit also at an economic level: as did Gutman, who wasn't only a translator but also taught Russian and who founded — as we have seen — the publishing house Slavia along with her husband.

If in the nineteenth century the daughters of the elites had learnt foreign languages privately, in the first half of the twentieth century this informal and non-institutional way of learning remained the most common one. As is known, even at the dawn of the twentieth century the space reserved for studying foreign languages within educational circles was still very small. The classical high schools offered French but not English, and only very few hours were devoted to foreign language teaching generally, to the full advantage of Greek and Latin. Courses in modern languages, where pupils could learn two foreign languages and which allowed someone like Cesare Pavese to become acquainted with the English language, lasted less than a decade and were abolished by the Gentile reform of 1923. What was defined as 'the most fascist' of all reforms was part of "an abrupt return to order", which restructured education on the basis of rigid social and gender differences:<sup>127</sup> on one side, the traditional — virilised — Classical School regained a leading position; on the other side, the Female School — which was obviously in a secondary position — offered young women who wished to complete their high school education a chance to learn up to three foreign languages, almost as if the latter were a *diminutio*. This is why Elio Vittorini — who often read American and English novels in French translation — asked Lucia Rodocanachi to help him with his translations; although her knowledge of the English language was better than his, she regularly had to accept not seeing her name printed alongside that of the Sicilian author.<sup>128</sup>

Apart from the issue of wage inequality, which meant that female work was generally less expensive,<sup>129</sup> it is partially for the reasons mentioned above

<sup>126</sup> For a biographical profile of Zucconi see Vanessa Roghi, *Una vita nell'utopia. Prime note di ricerca su Angela Zucconi*, "Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica", 2003, n. 2, pp. 235-265.

<sup>127</sup> A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, pp. 221-223.

<sup>128</sup> Guido Bonsaver, *La fortuna del romanzo statunitense*, in A. Ferrando (ed.), *Stranieri all'ombra del duce*, p. 280. On the relationship between Vittorini and Lucia Rodocanachi see Anna Chiara Cavallari, Edoardo Esposito (eds.), Elio Vittorini, *Si diverte tanto a tradurre? Lettere a Lucia Rodocanachi, 1933-1943*, Milan, Archinto, 2016; on Lucia Rodocanachi see Giuseppe Marcenaro, *Una amica di Montale. Vita di Lucia Rodocanachi*, Milan, Camunia, 1991, and Franco Contorbia (ed.), *Lucia Rodocanachi. Le carte, la vita*, Florence, Società editrice Fiorentina, 2006: see, in particular, the essay in the same collection by Andrea Aveto, *Traduzioni d'autore e no: Elio Vittorini e la "segreta" collaborazione con Lucia Rodocanachi*, pp. 153-192.

<sup>129</sup> A. Pescarolo, *Il lavoro delle donne nell'Italia contemporanea*, pp. 242-246.

that editorial work became feminised, especially from the 1930s onwards. The women who were employed by publishing houses as experts in foreign languages and literatures ended up actively participating in the selection of books to be translated for the Italian readership. Obviously, a similar role can by no means be called 'supplementary' if we think of the huge importance the translated book played in the interwar process of making Italy less provincialised. Indeed, this first 'gender transformation' coincided with a second one, namely a change in the Italian cultural field, which was ever more contaminated, influenced and altered by translations of contemporary, foreign literary works. Thus, if at the start of the 1920s texts were translated into Italian mostly from French (58%), Russian (13%) and English (10%),<sup>130</sup> in subsequent decades Paris was gradually surpassed by London, New York and Berlin. Similarly, contemporary literature substituted works of the late modern age and the nineteenth century, thus making the German New Subjectivity novel and the British modernist and experimental novel the hallmark of modern times.

If we put aside the qualitative and cultural implications, many women translated in order to earn a living. Due to the turning points of 1934 and 1938, which considerably reduced women's working opportunities both in the public and the private sphere, the translation profession — which was not very visible, paid at bargain prices and without contracts, hence precarious par excellence — could therefore be considered 'appropriate' for the female gender. Paradoxically, translations were even conducted in the public offices of the Ministry of Popular Culture, where many women were employed to review foreign books. It was there that Eva Kühn Amendola applied for a job some ten years after her husband Giovanni's death, asking "to be employed by the present Ministry in the role of translator of foreign languages, having already done translations from German, English, Russian and French for the Ministry of Grace and Justice [...]".<sup>131</sup> In those years, Amendola found herself "in sad economic conditions",<sup>132</sup> to such an extent that she repeatedly offered to work as an interpreter and translator of articles published in the foreign press. In reality, she had asked "to be employed by the present Ministry to disseminate our propaganda material" already in 1935, when she was still a reader in Italian at the University of Vilnius.<sup>133</sup>

<sup>130</sup> J. Blakesley, *Le traduzioni e l'editoria italiana: uno studio dell'anno 1919*, p. 330.

<sup>131</sup> Eva Amendola to ministero della Stampa e della Propaganda, 30 December 1936, in ACS, Reports, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, b. 27, fasc. Amendola Eva.

<sup>132</sup> Filippo Anfuso (Mae) to Andrea Celesia (Minculpop), 4 January 1939, in ACS, Reports, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, b. 27, fasc. Amendola Eva.

<sup>133</sup> Direzione Generale per i servizi della Propaganda, Appunto per il Signor Capo di Gabinetto, 22 March 1939, in ACS, Reports, Direzione Generale per i Servizi della Propaganda, b. 27, fasc. Amendola Eva. On Eva Amendola see the brief profile on [www.russinitalia.it](http://www.russinitalia.it); some information can also be found in Alfredo Capone, *Giovanni Amendola*, Rome, Salerno Editrice, 2013, pp. 46-47; Giorgio Amendola, *Lettere a Milano: ricordi e documenti. 1939-1945*, Rome,

The case study of Alessandra Scalero and the other women translators that I have mentioned seem to suggest that the decision to leave the study of foreign languages to women — as if this regarded a skill of little cultural and social relevance — eventually boomeranged during the decade of translations and also in the post-war period, as it gave them a means of surpassing not just geographical and literary boundaries, but also gender boundaries in everyday social and working life. In other words, a means women used in anything but a supplementary way.

Like Scalero, probably most of these female intellectuals — contrary to Ada Gobetti, Lavinia Mazzucchetti or Barbara Allason — did not engage in any militant, party or ‘gender’ activities.<sup>134</sup> Yet, in the everyday reality of their lives they were forced to overcome stereotypes, boundaries and ageless social models. In sum, it was the pure necessity of practical life — other than a natural inclination towards self-determination and personal accomplishment beyond the family unit and the private sphere — that pushed women like Scalero to travel, read, study, believe in their own talents and demand to be paid for their own intellectual work, choosing to live alone, renouncing marriage and motherhood. While not all may have been systematic in and conscious about their choices, theirs revealed to be nonconformist decisions. From that moment onwards, though, these translators and editorial mediators — while being a minority and, apparently, secondary group, yet strategically well positioned — ended up occupying a highly cultural public space, one that continues to be characterised by a strong female presence even today.

Editori Riuniti, 1973; Eva Kühn Amendola, *Vita con Giovanni Amendola*, Florence, Parenti, 1961.

<sup>134</sup> In the case of Scalero, for example, her substantial non-involvement in militant politics in a narrow sense seems to be confirmed by the absence of any files about her at the Political Police Unit of the DGPS.

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## Building the Casaccia gamma field. Nuclear energy, Cold War and the transnational circulation of scientific knowledge in Italy (1955-1960)

Francesco Cassata\*

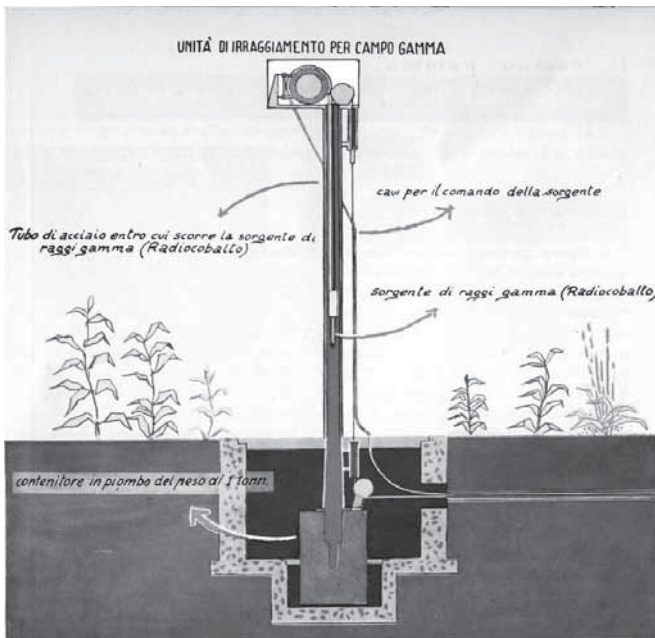
The article will focus on the mutagenesis programme in agriculture implemented by the Italian Atomic Energy Commission, starting from 1955, through the establishment of a specific technological and experimental system: the so-called “gamma field”, a piece of agricultural land with a radioisotope of Cobalt-60 at the centre. The Cobalt-60 would emit constant radiation, which would bombard the specimens planted in concentric circles around the source, inducing genetic mutations. The Italian gamma field went into operation in January 1960 at the Casaccia Laboratory, about twenty miles north of Rome, with a radiation device made available by the US Government for the Atoms for Peace programme. This article will analyse, first of all, how the American experimental model of mutation breeding was translated into the Italian context, becoming instrumental for the establishment of plant genetics within the local academic system; secondly, it will describe how the sociotechnical imaginary embodied by the gamma field was part and parcel of this process of discipline-building and scientific demarcation.

**Key words:** Cold War, Atoms for Peace, Nuclear energy, Agriculture, Plant breeding, Genetics

It was a round-shaped field, covering a surface of some six thousand square metres: at the centre, in a hole made of concrete walls, the radiation unit that the United States had donated in 1958 as part of the Atoms for Peace programme. The unit was composed of a lead cylinder that weighed about a ton, which contained a radioactive source: two Cobalt-60 rings, approximately twenty centimetres long. With the help of a steel tree and a special radio-controlled system, a control cabin placed at the outer edge of the field — a building made of concrete and pot-metal glass — regulated the source’s extraction from its container and the subsequent radiation, 20 hours a day, of the surrounding plants. The field was circumscribed by an earthwork of over five metres high, and could be accessed via an opening in the earthwork, guarded by gates that were operated by a radio-controlled blockage and connected to the movements of the radioactive source. The opening itself was shielded by a high concrete wall.

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Fig. 1 — Luigi Rossi private archive, Cobalt-60 source of the gamma field before its installation (1959)



The gamma field — or “campo gamma”, as it was called in Italian — arose well in the midst of the Roman countryside, and was part of the Laboratory for nuclear energy applications in agriculture. The latter had been created by the Italian Atomic Energy Commission (Comitato nazionale per le ricerche nucleari, hereafter CNRN — later changed in CNEN) at the Casaccia Nuclear research centre in 1960. The area distanced 28 kilometres from Rome and five kilometres from Anguillara, a hamlet on the bank of the Bracciano lake.<sup>1</sup>

No visible trace of the gamma field remains at the Laboratory’s current site, which is managed by the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA), as it was entirely dismantled in the wake of the anti-nuclear referenda of 1987. Hidden by trees and high grass, the site of the former gamma field has become a non-place of collective memory, whose deafening silence clashes with its complex and rich, national as well as international, history.

<sup>1</sup> For a general overview of the Italian nuclear programme, with references also to Casaccia, see in particular: Giovanni Paoloni (ed.), *Energia, ambiente, innovazione: dal Cnrn all’Enea*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1992; Barbara Curli, *Il progetto nucleare italiano (1952-1964). Conversazioni con Felice Ippolito*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2000; G. Paoloni, *Il nucleare in Italia*, Rome, Enel, 2008.

Fig. 2 — Luigi Rossi private archive, transportation – by means of a tractor – of the Cobalt-60 source of the gamma field (1959)



By focusing my analysis on a technological artefact (the gamma field), in this essay I aim to stress its relevance not only for the study of the relationship between nuclear energy and agriculture in post-WW2 Italy, but also for the understanding of broader issues concerning the impact of the Cold War on the Italian scientific research system.

The first part of this essay is related to the watershed represented by the *Atoms for Peace* programme, launched in December 1953 by US President Dwight Eisenhower during a famous speech at the UN General Assembly. *Atoms for Peace* was a polyvalent policy initiative: it was an instrument of American foreign policy and “psychological warfare” (the “struggle for the minds and wills of men” in competition with the Soviet Union), but it also aimed at exerting control over nuclear technologies at an international level and at providing scientific intelligence gathering; as such the promotion of the benign atom placed not only physics and engineering but also biology, medicine and agriculture in a global technological, scientific and socio-political context.<sup>2</sup> The transnational circulation of isotopes, knowledge and technologies linked to the civil applications of nuclear energy recently attracted the attention of historiography, especially in relation to biology and medicine. Existing scholarship has highlighted not only the role of atomic programmes as strategic tools of international diplomacy, but also their impact on the development of a number of scientific areas: from genetics to biochemistry, from ecology

<sup>2</sup> John Krige, *Atoms for Peace, scientific internationalism, and scientific intelligence*, “Osiris”, 2006, n. 1, pp. 161-181.

to the study of cancer.<sup>3</sup> Agriculture, however, has remained a rather neglected territory.<sup>4</sup>

The aim of this essay is to fill this gap and demonstrate how *Atoms for Peace*, as part of the co-produced and consensual process of constructing American hegemony in the fields of Western European science and technology,<sup>5</sup> provided Italian scientific elites with economic, political and social resources that enabled them to pursue their own research agendas while reinforcing their Atlantic connections. From this perspective, I consider the gamma field — and, more generally, the launch of a programme for the use of nuclear energy in agriculture — an essential factor in the process of organising and institutionalising plant genetics in Italy during the second post-war period, as well as in the definition of a research model aimed at bringing “pure” and “applied” research together.

The lack of scholarship on the effects of *Atoms for Peace* for agriculture is even less understandable if we think of the pervasiveness and political effectiveness that marked the expectations raised by nuclear energy applications in the agricultural field: those of achieving control over nature, speeding up evolution and designing plant organisms with precise political, economic and social functions. This Promethean rhetoric leads us to the second historiographical theme of this essay: the gamma field as an example of sociotechnical imaginary in the field of nuclear energy.<sup>6</sup> In the following pages I aim to demonstrate how, from the very start and despite the fact that the mutation breeding programme in Italy largely developed without the direct use of gamma rays, other sources and different methods of radiation being preferred (e.g., x-rays and thermal neutrons radiated on seeds), the gamma field nevertheless emerged as an undisputed protagonist, as the icon of a new era (that of the

<sup>3</sup> Among the many studies on this subject the most essential one is: Angela N.H. Creager, *Life atomic. A history of radioisotopes in science and medicine*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

<sup>4</sup> On this issue see: Helen Anne Curry, *Evolution made to order. Plant breeding and technological innovation in Twentieth-Century America*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2016; Jacob Darwin Hamblin, *Let there be light... and bread: the United Nations, the developing world, and atomic energy's Green Revolution*, “History and Technology”, 2009, n. 1, pp. 25-48; Jacob Darwin Hamblin, *Quickening nature's pulse: atomic agriculture at the International Atomic Energy Agency*, “Dynamis”, 2015, n. 2, pp. 389-408; Karin Zachmann, *Peaceful atoms in agriculture and food: how the politics of the Cold War shaped agricultural research using isotopes and radiation in postwar divided Germany*, “Dynamis”, 2015, n. 2, pp. 307-331; Karin Zachmann, *Risky rays for an improved food supply? National and transnational food irradiation research as a Cold War recipe*, Preprint 2, Munich, Deutsches Museum, 2013; Neil Oatsvall, *Atomic agriculture: Policy making, food production, and nuclear technologies in the United States, 1945-1960*, “Agricultural History”, 2014, vol. 88, n. 3, pp. 368-387.

<sup>5</sup> John Krige, *American hegemony and the postwar reconstruction of science in Europe*, Cambridge, MA., MIT Press, 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Sheila Jasanoff, Sang Hyun Kim, *Dreamscapes of modernity. Sociotechnical imaginaries and the fabrication of power*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2015.



“atomic farmer” or the “atomic garden”), and as the technological infrastructure providing political, economic and cultural legitimacy to the burgeoning field of plant genetics in Italy.

### Speeding up the rhythm of nature

In July 1927 a short article published in the journal *Science*, titled “Artificial Transmutation of the Gene”, became an international news story.<sup>7</sup> The author was the American *Drosophila* geneticist Hermann J. Muller, a collaborator of Thomas Morgan at Columbia University and professor at the University of Texas. Muller claimed that gene mutations could be produced rapidly and artificially in a laboratory through x-ray treatment.<sup>8</sup> Almost simultaneously, the agronomist Lewis John Stadler and the botanist Thomas Harper Goodspeed proved that it was possible to use ionising radiations as mutagens in plant organisms: the former found that the frequency of mutation increased if he radiated seeds of grass plants with x-rays; the latter obtained similar results when he exposed seeds and pollens of tobacco to x-rays.

While still unable to compete with traditional methods of genetic improvement (e.g., cross-breeding, genetic selection) on a productive level, throughout the 1930s the first research programmes on radioinduced mutation breeding began to spread in the United States and Europe. Germany took the lead, with Hans Stubbe’s works on the snapdragon; Dutch scientists studied the cross-breeding of the mutant “Chlorina” in the tobacco plants of Java; in Sweden, a research group directed by Herman Nilsson-Ehle and — subsequently — by his pupil Åke Gustafsson worked to improve barley.<sup>9</sup>

In Italy, the skilful and self-taught agronomist Alberto Pirovano (constitutor of the famous “uva Italia”) began studying — from 1912 onwards — the mutagenic effects of electromagnetic energy, x-rays (to a lesser degree) and radium on plant organisms.<sup>10</sup> After becoming director of the Institute for Fruit Growing and Electrogenetics in 1924 (initially in Belgirate, from 1927 onwards in Rome), Pirovano expanded the range of his experiments, developing his own “electrogenetics” into a more general mutation theory — the so-called *jonolisi*

<sup>7</sup> Hermann J. Muller, *Artificial transmutation of the gene*, “Science”, 22 July 1927, vol. 66, n. 1699, pp. 84-87.

<sup>8</sup> On Muller’s role with regard to eugenics, Lysenkoism and the Cold War, see in particular William deJong-Lambert, *Hermann J. Muller and the biopolitics of mutations and heredity*, in Luis Campos, Alexander von Schwerin (eds.), *Making mutations: objects, practices, contexts*, Berlin, Max Planck Institute for the History of Science, 2010 (Preprint 393), pp. 151-175.

<sup>9</sup> A.M. van Harten, *Mutation breeding. Theory and practical applications*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> See, especially, Alberto Pirovano, *La mutazione elettrica nelle specie botaniche e la disciplina dell’eredità nell’ibridazione*, Milan, Hoepli, 1922. On Pirovano’s electrogenetics see: Luca Iori, *Electrical Hybrids*, in Giuliano Pancaldi (ed.), *Electricity and life. Episodes in the history of hybrid objects*, Bologna, CIS, 2011, pp. 65-92.

— which rejected Morgan’s chromosomal theory, while combining elements from Mendelism, Lamarckism, Weissmanism and Devriesian mutationism.<sup>11</sup>

As the case of Pirovano’s electrogenetics clearly shows, the lack of a mutation breeding programme in interwar Italy rested primarily on the limited reception of Mendelism and chromosomal theory. Notwithstanding the reference to “genetics” in its title, the National Institute of Genetics and Cereal Research of Rome — the most important institution in the area of plant breeding, founded by the Italian agronomist Nazareno Strampelli in 1919 — did not, in fact, contribute significantly to the development of a Mendelian agenda in interwar Italian agriculture. The cultural and scientific weaknesses of Mendelism was exacerbated by the institutional distance between the Faculties of Science, on the one hand, and, on the other, the Faculties of Agriculture and the agricultural experimental stations of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (hereafter MAF), where genetics and statistics courses were often completely lacking. A similar persistent educational deficit contributed to reinforce the tensions between counterposed experimental cultures. Indeed, contrary to the geneticists, Italian plant breeders and agronomists — including those not hostile to Mendelism — considered not the gene but the “variety” the principal unit of analysis and manipulation.<sup>12</sup>

From this perspective, the establishment in Italy of the first chairs in genetics within the Faculties of Science — respectively in Naples in 1944, with Giuseppe Montalenti; in Pavia in 1948, with Adriano Buzzati-Traverso; in Milan, in the same year, with Claudio Barigozzi — marked an important turning point.<sup>13</sup> In fact, the process of institutionalisation of Italian genetics, which occurred between 1948 and 1953, coincided with the tormented construction of an autonomous scientific field, defined by precise epistemological and disciplinary boundaries between “academic” genetics (described as “pure”, “theoretical”, “basic”) and the “applied” research of its “foster parents”, namely eugenics and agriculture.<sup>14</sup> In those same years, this process gained an

<sup>11</sup> On this issue see, in particular: Alessandro Volpone, *Gli inizi della genetica in Italia*, Bari, Cacucci Editore, 2008, pp. 76-77. In his *Mutationstheorie* (1901-1903), Dutch botanist Hugo De Vries (1848-1935) conceived “mutation” as a sudden change that was able to explain, on the evolutionary level, the formation of new species.

<sup>12</sup> For references to other national contexts see Christophe Bonneuil, *Mendelism, plant breeding and experimental cultures: agriculture and the development of genetics in France*, “Journal of the History of Biology”, 2006, vol. 39, n. 2, pp. 281-308; Paolo Palladino, *Between craft and science. Plant breeding, mendelian genetics, and British universities, 1900-1920*, “Technology and Culture”, 1993, vol. 34, n. 2, pp. 300-323.

<sup>13</sup> Francesco Cassata, *The struggle for authority over Italian genetics: the Ninth International Congress of Genetics in Bellagio, 1948-53*, in Bernd Gausemeier, Staffan Müller-Wille, Edmund Ramsden (eds.), *Human heredity in the Twentieth Century*, London, Pickering & Chatto, 2014, pp. 217-228.

<sup>14</sup> On this process of scientific demarcation, for the interwar period see Nikolai Kremenstov, *International science between the World Wars: the case of genetics*, Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2005.

international political dimension, closely connected to the incoming Cold War. Genetics and agriculture soon became a not only scientific point of contention, but also a politico-ideological one. While in 1948 an induced-mutation breeding programme in agriculture was launched at the laboratory of the United States Atomic Energy Commission (hereafter USAEC) of Brookhaven, in the Soviet Union Joseph Stalin formally approved the Michurinist “agrobiology” of agronomist Trofim Denisovich Lysenko: a vitalistic and neolamarckian theory, which openly contradicted the basic tenets of genetics, including Gregor Mendel’s laws, Thomas Morgan’s chromosomal theory and the very concept of the gene as a material unit of heredity. In July and August 1948, the escalating Cold War confrontation was translated into the opposition between two antonymic theories and labels: on the one side, Soviet biology (scientific, materialistic, creative, productive, progressive, Darwinist “Michurinist biology”); on the other, Western biology (anti-scientific, idealistic, scholastic, sterile, anti-Darwinist “Mendelism-Morganism”).<sup>15</sup>

To understand the interdependence between the scientific and disciplinary boundary-work of Italian genetics and the development of the Cold War confrontation, especially in the area of plant genetics, it might be useful to trace the biographical as well as disciplinary trajectories of two main figures of this transition phase. One is the zoologist Carlo Jucci, who in 1954 founded the Italian Society of Plant Genetics (SIGA); the other is the *Drosophila* geneticist Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, one of the architects of Modern synthesis — according to Ernst Mayr’s reconstruction.

As a Rockefeller fellow in 1927, Carlo Jucci had supported the initial steps of Buzzati-Traverso’s career in Pavia. In the early post-war years, particularly after the appointment of Buzzati-Traverso as full professor in Pavia, in 1948, their personal and academic relationship worsened rapidly. The tension materialised in an institutional opposition: Buzzati-Traverso was head of the Institute of Genetics, while Jucci established a Centre of Genetics within the Institute of Zoology, with funds from the CNR. Their research agendas also began to diverge: while Buzzati-Traverso was increasingly engaged in “theoretical” issues of radiobiology and biophysics, Jucci progressively moved towards the field of “applied” genetics. In 1946, he founded *Genetica Agraria* [Plant Genetics], a journal of “genetics *applied* to agriculture”, whose editorial board did not include the three Italian academic geneticists. In April 1950, while Italian academic geneticists eventually left the Italian Society of Genetics and Eugenics (hereafter SIGE) after two years of intense disputes with its President, the statistician and eugenicist Corrado Gini, Jucci — SIGE’s secretary-general ever since 1948 — accepted the presidency over a new SIGE

<sup>15</sup> Between 1929 e il 1935, Lysenko’s agronomic concepts of vernalisation expanded into a broad theoretical doctrine, which the Ukrainian agronomist renamed “agrobiology” or “michurinism”, after Ivan V. Michurin (1855-1935), an amateur plant breeder with the status of a national hero in the Soviet Union in the early 1930s.

section dedicated to “*applied genetics*”, bringing together SIGE agronomists, breeders, entomologists and plant pathologists.

Two months later, in May and June 1950, the refusal of the Italian academic geneticists to join the First Congress of Plant Genetics — which Jucci had organised in Rieti — further underscored the disciplinary fracture in the field of genetics. During the Congress, which had an important international dimension and was dominated — on the national side — by technicians and agronomists rather than by geneticists,<sup>16</sup> Jucci made the following acknowledgment in his closing speech:

As a theoretical geneticist I truly cannot claim to be a hundred percent pure. Thirty years ago I started studying silkworms, and although I have always been fascinated more by the general scientific aspects of the problems than by their practical applications, for at least 15 years now I have felt that it is my duty to gain exact awareness of the problems of Italian sericulture and to try and make a contribution to their resolution (...).

Having extended my interest — and especially that of my School — from silkworms to other work material, including plants (...) I have become ever more conscious of the vital importance of a close collaboration between laboratory research and practical improvement activities, and within the boundaries of my modest possibilities I have actively sought to encourage it, always contesting the excessively individualist mindset that tends to prevail among us as also the shortsightedness of the powers that be who primarily have the important and delicate task to promote the aforesaid collaboration and integration.<sup>17</sup>

By contrast, Adriano Buzzati-Traverso — talking about genetic improvement during a 1949 conference at the Lombard Society of Agriculture — distinguished between “genetics and genetics”, that is, between a “pure”, “theoretical” dimension and an “applied”, empirical approach:

I wish to draw your attention to the fact that, so to say, there is genetics and there is genetics. By this I mostly mean — especially in an agricultural context — any kind of procedure aimed at improving the qualities of seeds or livestock. Man has had recourse to this type of genetic experiments for a very long time now, that is, ever since he started growing specific plants in view of a more secure livelihood; even the practices of selection that have developed especially during the past century and in the first decades of the current one — the only practices to have been applied in Italy — may fall under this generic term. However, from about 1910 onwards a revolution has occurred in biology, thanks to the development of modern genetics (...). I now have the impression that those working on seed improvement in Italy haven’t yet noted this revolution, and therefore continue to use those empirical criteria that once worked fine but will no longer do.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Gustafsson and Akerman arrived from Sweden. Other conference attendees included António Sousa da Câmara, director of the National Agronomic Research Station of Portugal; Thomas James Jenkin, director of the *Welsh Plant Breeding Station* in Aberystwyth; and Ronald A. Silow, from the Agricultural Division of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (hereafter FAO).

<sup>17</sup> Carlo Jucci, *Genetica e agricoltura*, in *Atti del convegno di genetica agraria*, Tipografia del Libro, Pavia 1951, p. 461.

<sup>18</sup> Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, *Il problema attuale delle sementi e il loro miglioramento genetico*, “Società Agraria di Lombardia. Conferenze e relazioni”, 1950-52, p. 3. On Buzzati-

Officials of the Rockefeller Foundation also noticed the ongoing tensions during their visit to Italian laboratories. The report of the meeting in Milan between Buzzati-Traverso and Gerard R. Pomerat, assistant director of the Rockefeller Foundation's Division of Natural Sciences, on 19 November 1950, not long after the First Congress of Plant Genetics, clearly illustrates the context:

GRP spends all of a rainy Sunday morning working in diary and then takes Prof. Buzzati-Traverso to lunch. (...) Of the Genetics Station in Rome B.-T. has no very high opinion and he calls De Cillis "an idiot" who does not really know genetics. Doesn't think anything brilliant will come from that outfit. He is not much more optimistic about the Maize Culture Institute. Says Fenaroli has no training in genetics but was put in charge of preparing hybrid corn in Italy. Spent six months in the US and is now testing hybrid corn seeds which were sent here, but doesn't believe anything can be gained by crossing the best US hybrids with the better Italian varieties so obviously he's no very promising plant breeder (B.-T. than (*sic*) states that Jenkins of the USDA was brought here three years ago by the ECA and recommended that it would be best to send over a lot of US hybrids to be tried here on a large scale for subsequent crossing with Italian corn, especially in central Italy, but nothing much was done about it).<sup>19</sup>

In 1950, the Rockefeller Foundation's general evaluation on the state of plant breeding in Italy was rather pessimistic: "As far as GRP [Gerard R. Pomerat] can uncover — Pomerat himself wrote in his diary — there is no real work on plant breeding done in Italian universities and none of the geneticists now active in university posts seem to be interested in the genetics of economically important plants".<sup>20</sup>

In this context, two "hybrid" scientific figures who moved respectively from botany and agronomy to plant genetics and mutation breeding — Francesco D'Amato (1916-1998) and Gian Tommaso Scarascia Mugnozza (1925-2011) — contributed to fill the gap between "pure" and "applied" genetics, by channelling the economic, political and cultural resources of the Italian nuclear programme during the Cold War into a large-scale research agenda including radiobiology, mutagenesis, cytogenetics and breeding.

Born in 1916 in Grumo Appula (Bari), Francesco D'Amato graduated in natural sciences at the University of Pisa and at the Scuola Normale Superiore in 1939. Initially working side by side with Alberto Chiarugi in research on plant embryology and systematic cytology, from the mid-1940s on D'Amato

Traverso, see especially Francesco Cassata, *L'Italia intelligente. Adriano Buzzati-Traverso e il Laboratorio internazionale di genetica e biofisica (1962-69)*, Rome, Donzelli, 2013.

<sup>19</sup> Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Rg 12.2, Officers' Diaries, Series 905 Pom 1950, Box 68: "19 November 1950 (Milan)", p. 409. Luigi Fenaroli was the director of the Maize Experimental Station of Bergamo; Ugo De Cillis was the director of the National Institute of Genetics and Cereal Research in Rome. On Fenaroli and, more generally, on the history of hybrid corn in Italy see Emanuele Bernardi, *Il mais "miracoloso". Storia di un'innovazione tra politica, economia e religione*, Rome, Carocci, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Rg 12.2, Officers' Diaries, Series 905 Pom 1950, Box 68: "14 November 1950 (Padua)", p. 395.

specialised in the study of the cytophysiological effects of chemical and physical mutagenesis. In this regard, two research visits turned out to be decisive for his training: one in Sweden (1946-1947), at the plant breeding laboratory of the Svalöf experimental station, headed by the plant geneticist Åke Gustafsson; and one in the United Kingdom (1951), at the Department of Cytology and Genetics of the John Innes Horticultural Institution, directed by Cyril D. Darlington.<sup>21</sup>

The scientific collaboration and friendship between D'Amato and Scarascia Mugnozza (hereafter Scarascia) dates back to this early post-war period. Born in Rome in 1925 from a family of southern origins, Scarascia graduated in agrarian sciences at the University of Bari. After receiving a number of grants from the MAF and the CNR, which allowed him to conduct research at the Institute for Fruit Growing and Electrogenetics, in 1950 Scarascia entered in contact with D'Amato and the Botanic Institute of Pisa, where he attended the CNR's local Study Centre for Plant Cytogenetics.

The organisation of the Ninth International Congress of Genetics, held in Bellagio in August 1953, accelerated D'Amato and Scarascia's gradual entry into the circles of "academic" genetics and radiobiology. Two factors fuelled this boundary-work in the field of genetics. On the one hand, the Ninth Congress contributed to deepen the discrepancy between "pure" and "applied" genetics in Italy. In May 1952, in fact, Carlo Jucci — ever more in a collision course with "pure" geneticists — resigned from the presidency of the Congress' executive committee, which was now fully controlled by Buzzati-Traverso, Barigozzi and Montalenti. Furthermore, in February 1953, the "academic" geneticists did not hesitate to reject the proposal — coming from agronomists and breeders (i.e. Ugo De Cillis, Alberto Pirovano, Alviero Dionigi, Alessandro Morettini) — to create an Italian Congress section of "applied genetics":

There is no applied genetics in Italy — Buzzati-Traverso wrote in a private letter directed at Montalenti in February 1953 — and there is no reason to be ashamed of this. What we should, instead, be ashamed of is that we accepted the intervention of one of these guys, who knows as much about genetics as my granddaughter Lalla does, but she doesn't study natural science: she paints. Why not invite her to give a speech? At least she's a rather pretty girl. I believe that it would be preferable not to have any Italians among the speakers, rather than to have a talk of this kind.<sup>22</sup>

This polarisation increased as a result of Carlo Jucci and Alberto Pirovano's participation — a few months later (October-November 1953) — in a tour to

<sup>21</sup> *Curriculum vitae del dott. Francesco D'Amato*, Pisa, Arti Grafiche Pacini Mariotti, 1957. The collaboration with Gustafsson, which focused on the study of mutability through x-rays in barley, marked an intense research period in D'Amato's career as a plant geneticist: from the analysis of the polyploidy of gammaxene and of the mutagenic activity of acridine derivatives up to the development of a metabolic theory of spontaneous mutation in plants.

<sup>22</sup> Buzzati-Traverso to Montalenti, 2 February 1953, in Archivio Montalenti (Università di Roma La Sapienza, Sezione di Storia della Medicina), b. 28, f. 9.

visit Lysenko's Institute of Genetics and other research centres of Soviet agrobiology, organised by the Italy-Soviet Union Association.<sup>23</sup>

On the other hand, though, the Bellagio Congress represented for D'Amato and Scarascia an occasion to strengthen the relations with "academic" geneticists in Italy as well as on the international arena. It is no coincidence that D'Amato — the only Italian plant geneticist in the Congress organisation — was given the task to coordinate the experimental section of "Demonstrations".<sup>24</sup>

In the wake of the Bellagio Congress, Scarascia's move to the Experimental Tobacco Institute of Rome — first as a research fellow and later as the director of the genetics laboratory — coincided with the inauguration of a line of research focused on the application of ionising radiations in agriculture. In fact, in 1954 Scarascia started to study the spontaneous and induced mutability in *Nicotiana Tabacum* (Virginia tobacco), sending the Atomic Energy Research Establishment of Harwell (in the UK) 20 grams of seeds of different varieties for radiation with thermal neutrons. Moreover, Harwell gave the Experimental Tobacco Institute a radioactive Cobalt capsule to be used for the irradiation of seeds and inflorescences in Italy. Thanks to this collaboration, by 1955 Scarascia completed two important publications on the effects of gamma rays and thermal neutrons on germination, on the chromosomal mutability and on the morphology of tobacco.

In conclusion, as Eisenhower's *Atoms for Peace* programme was gaining momentum through the organisation of the First International Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, to be held in Geneva in August 1955, the CNRN could count on only two figures of international scientific relevance in the field of mutation breeding in agriculture: Francesco D'Amato and Gian Tommaso Scarascia Mugnozza.

### **The Italian gamma field between Pisa and Rome**

In the summer of 1955, the CNRN indicated Scarascia as a "technical advisor" for the Geneva Conference, for the sector on agriculture. Far from being obvious, this choice was facilitated by the invitation Scarascia had received directly from Harwell, other than by the personal interest of Felice Ippolito. The latter had, in his turn, been solicited by Emilio Battista, undersecretary for the Ministry of Industry and Commerce, and by the Christian Democrat MP Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza, Gian Tommaso's brother. This is confirmed by a letter from Ippolito, dated 25 June 1955:

<sup>23</sup> For a vivid account of the trip, see Orfeo Turno Rotini, *Taccuino sovietico*, Pisa, Giardini, 1955.

<sup>24</sup> *Curriculum del dott. Francesco D'Amato*, p. 5.

Dear Battista,

I received your [letter] of 30 June regarding Dr. G.T. Scarascia and I will do all that is in my power to support him in his aspirations and to help him with his interesting studies.

For now I am delighted to announce that he has already been included as a “technical advisor” in the Italian delegation at the Geneva International Conference, as per his desire.<sup>25</sup>

Apart from the Christian Democrat pressure, the fact that the doors were opened to Scarascia was mostly in virtue of the broad international vision of Felice Ippolito (soon to become the CNRN’s General Secretary, in July 1956), his efforts to strengthen the nuclear institution, and his friendship and collaboration with the physicist Edoardo Amaldi — vice president of the CNRN from 1956 onwards — and with Adriano Buzzati-Traverso, who had just come back from the United States and was about to launch the CNRN’s radiobiological activities.

In Geneva, agriculture revealed to be one of the fields in which nuclear energy application could have given the most amazing results. According to a number of participants in the 1955 Conference, radioinduced mutation would have “modernised” crops, allowing them to keep up with the changing demands of agricultural production. The peaceful atom in agriculture would have helped increase productivity so as to tackle the growing global demand for food caused by population increase, thus also enabling governments to safeguard national and international security.<sup>26</sup>

Back in Italy, Scarascia wrote a report of over thirty pages long, where he outlined the content of the Geneva communications on the use of ionising radiations and radioisotopes in agriculture. Scarascia’s report gave evidence of the plurality of topics discussed during the Conference, summarising them within a synthetic and broad framework.<sup>27</sup> He reserved ample space for plant genetics; in particular, he analysed the two schools — the American and the Swedish one — that had conducted the most “interesting and wide-ranging research” on the use of radioinduced mutation breeding for the improvement of field and tree crops. With regard to both the American and the Swedish research programmes of mutation breeding, Scarascia mostly stressed two aspects. In first instance, the importance of radioinduced mutagenesis in the production of mutants with “utilitarian characteristics” from an agronomic and economic perspective: for example, the new lines of rust-resistant oat obtained in Brookhaven, or the so-called barley mutant “erectoides” from the Swedish programme, high yielding and highly lodging-resistant cultivars. The second

<sup>25</sup> Ippolito to Battista, 25 June 1955, in Archivio Scarascia (Accademia Nazionale delle Scienze detta dei XL, Rome), b. 93.

<sup>26</sup> H.A. Curry, *Evolution made to order*, pp. 192-193.

<sup>27</sup> Gian Tommaso Scarascia, *Isotopi radioattivi*, “La ricerca scientifica”, gennaio 1956, a. 26, n. 1, pp. 199-209. Topics included: land and fertilisers; plant nutrition and metabolism; plant genetics; herbicides; parasitology; zootechnical problems; absorption of fission products and ecological problems; food conservation.



fundamental aspect was the close interconnection between pure and applied research, especially in the analysis of the physiological and genetic effects of different types of radiation in relation to the produced mutations.

Scarascia's report concluded by underscoring the "concurring favourable assessment" that had been expressed in Geneva with regard to "applying ionising radiations to plants for mutagenesis in crop improvement". Mutation breeding could, in fact, turn out to be useful both for the introduction of new, convenient mutant varieties and for the potential re-use of radioinduced mutants in subsequent hybridisation programmes:

A similar method ultimately allows to increase the variability of the agriculturally useful species, so that — even if the production of positive mutations is extremely limited compared to the totality — the multiplication of the mutability will also raise the possibility of obtaining useful mutations, whose acquisition is by now no more than a question of time and efforts<sup>28</sup>.

In September 1955, following the Geneva Conference, the dean of the University of Pisa — Enrico Avanzi, Professor of agronomy and Francesco D'Amato's father-in-law — sent the CNRN's President Francesco Giordani the project of a gamma field to be built in Pisa, under the joint direction of the Institute of Agronomy and Herbaceous Crops, directed by Avanzi himself, and the Institute of Genetics, headed by D'Amato.<sup>29</sup> The initiative anticipated Scarascia's involvement from an early stage on, who was described as the "only Italian biologist in Geneva":

In a meeting held at the headquarters of the Institute of agronomy (which I direct) we have highlighted the opportunity to create, at this university, a radiation field with gamma rays; and, as we concluded this meeting, I felt it was appropriate to entrust the aforementioned Dr. Scarascia (...) with the task of preparing a project for this purpose (...).<sup>30</sup>

Elaborated by Scarascia and D'Amato, and designed in collaboration with the physicist Marcello Conversi and the technical office of the University of Pisa, the Pisan gamma field project entailed the use of a 100-curie Cobalt-60 source to be provided by Harwell. The field — a vast circular area with a radius of 150 metres, for a total of seven hectares and a perimeter of nearly a thousand metres — would be located within the state property of San Rossore, about five kilometres from Pisa, in a place known as "Banditine" that had been rented out to the University of Pisa's Faculty of Agrarian sciences a decade earlier.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> G.T. Scarascia, *Isotopi radioattivi*, p. 205.

<sup>29</sup> Avanzi to Giordani, 8 September 1955, in Archivio D'Amato (not inventoried, D'Amato family).

<sup>30</sup> Avanzi to Giordani, 8 September 1955, loc. cit. a nota 27.

<sup>31</sup> *Progetto di "campo gamma" con sorgente di cobalto 60 dell'attività di 100 curie*, n.d. (in reality 1956), in Archivio D'Amato.

In Avanzi's presentation, the recourse to radioinduced mutagenesis was justified by the need to obtain an increase in the available genetic variability.<sup>32</sup> The primary goal of the gamma field was, then, to put into effect a research programme aimed at genetically improving crop varieties of high agricultural interest, "like cereals, grain legumes, fodder, horticultural and floury-type varieties". An additional purpose was that of experimenting with the induction of mutations in spontaneous species, "prone to provide — through the structural change of their hereditary patrimony — beneficial characteristics to be exploited in genetic combinations that are agriculturally useful, under different perspectives, such as: qualitative and quantitative productivity, resistance to parasites and unfavourable environmental conditions, the adaptability to specific edaphic situations, etc."<sup>33</sup>

Moreover, applied research in mutation breeding should have been complemented by a broad pure research activity in the field of plant cytogenetics and animal biology. With regard to plant cytogenetics, D'Amato was indicated as the main responsible of a series of research projects on the genetic, biochemical and physiological effects of gamma radiation on seeds and other plant organs.<sup>34</sup>

In mid-March 1956, Avanzi drew Francesco Giordani's attention to the D'Amato-Scarascia project.<sup>35</sup> However, it is precisely in those months that Pisa's candidacy started to suffer the competition of a similar — albeit vaguer — proposal coming from the MAF's General Direction for Agricultural Production and from its network of agricultural experimental stations. The news emerged clearly from the correspondence between Avanzi and Giordani, causing some preoccupation:

According to news from the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (General Direction for Agricultural Production), it appears that, while no initiative has been taken with regard to the creation of a gamma field at one of the experimental stations that depend on it, there is nevertheless a desire to do so.<sup>36</sup>

To fend off the MAF's attack and defend the priorities of the Pisan gamma field project, Avanzi adopted a twofold strategy. In first instance, thanks to the

<sup>32</sup> E. Avanzi, F. D'Amato, *Progetto di un campo gamma per ricerche di genetica applicata all'agricoltura*, 6 febbraio 1956, p. 1, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>33</sup> E. Avanzi, F. D'Amato, *Progetto di un campo gamma per ricerche di genetica applicata all'agricoltura*, 6 febbraio 1956, pp. 1-2, loc. cit. a nota 30.

<sup>34</sup> E. Avanzi, F. D'Amato, *Progetto di un campo gamma per ricerche di genetica applicata all'agricoltura*, 6 febbraio 1956, p. 3, loc. cit. a nota 30. Mario Benazzi, director of the Institute of zoology and comparative anatomy in Pisa, would conduct research on experimental mutations aimed at understanding the chromosomic cycle, the sex genetics and the embryogenesis of Planarias and Tritonias.

<sup>35</sup> Avanzi to Giordani, 9 February 1956; letter from Giordani to Avanzi, 20 February 1956, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>36</sup> Avanzi to Giordani, 1 June 1956, in Archivio D'Amato.

mediation of the CNRN and of Felice Ippolito, the university dean intensified the scientific collaboration with the USAEC's Division of biology, headed by Paul B. Pearson. In early June 1956, Pearson met Avanzi and D'Amato in Pisa in order to discuss the gamma field project and to visit the locations that were to host it:

The day I spent at the University of Pisa with you and professor D'Amota (*sic*) was one of the most stimulating and interesting of my entire trip. (...)

I was especially pleased to see the detailed plans Professor D' Amota (*sic*) has prepared for the gamma radiation field. I am very hopeful that this can become a reality for the University as I think it would broaden the scope of research of several of the Institutes. I was especially impressed with the extensive native forest dating back to the thirteenth century and the unusual opportunity this affords for ecological studies.<sup>37</sup>

Only a few days after Pearson's letter — and thanks also to Ippolito's personal interest in the matter — D'Amato obtained a USAEC grant for a four-month research visit at the Brookhaven National Laboratory.<sup>38</sup> If we consider not only the transfer of scientific and technological knowledge but also the international circulation of mutants that followed from this American research trip, we can safely argue that it was of seminal importance for the launch of the Italian programme on the radioinduced mutagenesis of durum wheat. It was, in fact, in Brookhaven that D'Amato had the opportunity to irradiate large numbers of "Cappelli" durum wheat seeds with x-rays and thermal neutrons, whose subsequent generations he then studied on his return to Italy: first at the University of Pisa (1956-59) and later at the Casaccia Centre for Nuclear Studies (from 1960 on).<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the internationalisation process that focused on the privileged relationship with the United States, Avanzi also sought to strengthen the project at a local and national level. In those same months, he thus took on the direction, in Pisa, of the Regional Institute for Cereal Agriculture, an agricultural experimental station relying on the MAF.<sup>40</sup> This twofold strategy — via the special relation with the USAEC (thanks to D'Amato's mediation) at the international level and, at the national level, through Avanzi's role in the MAF network — reinforced the candidacy of the Pisan project in the eyes of the CNRN, as it suggested the possibility of a potential "nationalisation" of the Pisan gamma field through a "special agreement" with the MAF's experimental stations and with other university institutes.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Pearson to Avanzi, 13 June 1956, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>38</sup> Ippolito to Avanzi, 8 June 1956, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>39</sup> Other than the "Cappelli", he also irradiated two other cereal varieties ("Brescia" soft wheat and "Arno" corn) and four fodder varieties. See E. Avanzi and F. D'Amato, *Programma di ricerche sul miglioramento genetico di piante agrarie con l'impiego di radiazioni ionizzanti*, 7 September 1957, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>40</sup> Avanzi to Giordani, 1 June 1956, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>41</sup> Avanzi to Giordani, 1 June 1956, loc. cit. a nota 38.

In December 1956, the CNRN — legally renewed in the summer of 1956 and rapidly growing as an organisation — promoted the establishment of ten Commissions for the study of nuclear energy applications in Italy. The Study commission for the application of radioisotopes was led by Vincenzo Caglioti, Professor of inorganic chemistry at the University of Rome, and was composed of three subcommissions: respectively biology, medicine and agriculture.

The makeup of the subcommission dedicated to agrarian sciences neatly mirrored the dichotomous division of the interests at stake. In fact, on the one hand, it hosted exponents of Buzzati-Traverso's "transnational elite", connected to the CNRN: in addition to Buzzati-Traverso, D'Amato and Scarascia, it included Elio Baldacci, plant pathologist at the University of Milan; Sergio Tonzig, botanist at the University of Milan; and Giambattista Marini Bettolo, biochemist at the Higher Health Institute. On the other hand, the subcommission included members from the more domestic network of the MAF research institutes and agricultural stations: Ugo De Cillis, director of the National Institute of Genetics and Cereal Research in Rome; Ottaviano Bottini, an agricultural chemist at the University of Bari; Mario Scapaccino, general director of the MAF's agricultural production; and the officials Francesco Curato and Innocenzo Fiori, representing the MAF and the Development Fund for the South of Italy (*Cassa per il Mezzogiorno*) respectively.

In view of a similar composition, it comes as no surprise that the subcommission's first meeting — held on 22 December 1956 — was traversed by rather evident tensions. In particular, the competition between the University of Pisa (what we could call the Avanzi-D'Amato-Scarascia group) and the MAF emerged very clearly. In fact, according to the meeting's minutes, two distinct gamma field projects were under the CNRN's consideration. The first to be proposed during the meeting was that by Ugo De Cillis: it had a predominantly national dimension, was focused on the National Institute of Genetics and Cereal Research in Rome and could count on the "substantial economic means" of the MAF and its network of experimental stations. The proposal came directly from the Ministry, as Caglioti specified during the debate.<sup>42</sup>

The second project was, instead, centred around the CNRN and internationally supported by the USAEC, thanks to the direct relations between D'Amato and Pearson. Just back from Brookhaven, D'Amato himself underlined — in clear contrast with De Cillis — this international dimension, also anticipating that Italy would soon be able to benefit from a radioactive Cobalt source provided by Washington:

<sup>42</sup> Cnrn. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della prima riunione, 22 dicembre 1956, p. 5, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 93.

Prof. D'Amato furthermore gives an account of the experience he acquired during his three-month stay in Brookhaven and during a trip on behalf of the CNRN to various American research centres for the application of atomic energy to plant biology. With regard to gamma fields, the position that currently prevails in the United States is that which foresees the use of not excessively powerful sources; indeed, the USAEC recently fabricated five units of gamma radiation, complete with a container and mechanisms to move the source, equipped with a 200-curie radioactive Cobalt source. According to news provided by Prof. D'Amato and by Dr. Pearson, head of the USAEC's Biology Branch who has already examined the project of the University of Pisa, it is expected that one of the aforementioned facilities may be adopted in Italy.<sup>43</sup>

Throughout the discussion, Adriano Buzzati-Traverso insisted that he was strongly in favour of the Pisan gamma field project, stressing the necessity to include Italy in an international research context and advocating the organisation of training courses for the application of radioisotopes in biology and agriculture; these could help amend the "nearly total absence in Italy of young experts in plant genetics".<sup>44</sup>

In the presence of two contrasting gamma field projects, the subcommission closed its first meeting with a diplomatic proposal: on the one hand, President Caglioti was to organise a summit meeting between the Minister of agriculture (the Christian Democrat Emilio Colombo), the president of the CNRN (Senator Basilio Focaccia) and the dean of the University of Pisa, Enrico Avanzi, to settle the matter of the gamma field site.<sup>45</sup> On the other hand, Buzzati-Traverso, D'Amato, Scarascia and De Cillis were entrusted with the task of preparing a research programme that would carefully consider "the international context in terms of facilities and scientific achievements".<sup>46</sup>

The subcommission's second meeting took place on 26 March 1957. The previous day, Avanzi had sent a letter to Caglioti where he claimed Pisa's primacy in the elaboration of the gamma field project. This was both a chronological and a scientific primacy: the project dated back to September 1955 and the local Faculty of Agrarian sciences was highly esteemed. It is no coincidence that, in his letter, Avanzi stressed Pisa's existing relations with the MAF as much as with the USAEC:

I must add that Pisa even hosts the headquarters of the Regional Institute of Cereal Agriculture, which functions as a joint experimental station and depends on the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

<sup>43</sup> Cnrn. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della prima riunione, 22 dicembre 1956, p. 5, loc. cit. a nota 40.

<sup>44</sup> Cnrn. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della prima riunione, 22 dicembre 1956, p. 7, loc. cit. a nota 40.

<sup>45</sup> Cnrn. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della prima riunione, 22 dicembre 1956, p. 5, loc. cit. a nota 40.

<sup>46</sup> Cnrn. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della prima riunione, 22 dicembre 1956, p. 7, loc. cit. a nota 40.

Either way, let me point out that genetic and agronomic research is being conducted at the above-mentioned institutes, on agricultural plants taken from seeds that have been subjected to different radiations at the American laboratory of Brookhaven.<sup>47</sup>

During the meeting of 26 March, Caglioti presented the content of Avanzi's letter in an attempt to mediate between the two opposed gamma field projects. On one side, the Commission's president for the application of the radioisotopes — evoking the examples of Frascati's synchrotron and Ispra's reactor — stressed “the opportunity to concentrate the research units in a few locations”, and highlighted the fact that many research institutes were connected to the MAF, “around which and in collaboration with which the new Research centre could arise”. On the other, Caglioti confirmed the immediate availability of a 200-curie radioactive Cobalt source that the USAEC was ready to donate to Italy, announcing the intention to entrust the scientific management of the gamma field — wherever it would arise — to Francesco D'Amato, “an internationally renowned and highly esteemed scholar”.<sup>48</sup>

In spite of the mediation efforts, the subsequent debate among members of the subcommission formalised the lack of agreement. D'Amato stressed the importance of locating the gamma field in Pisa, “where we could benefit from a possible location near the city, and where research in the field of radiation applications for the study of genetics is already on the way”.<sup>49</sup> Conversely, Scapaccino and De Cillis said being in favour of the establishment of a gamma field “in the surroundings of Rome” and certainly within the MAF's network of institutes and stations of agrarian experimentation.<sup>50</sup> Those who supported, instead, the Pisan option — albeit in a rather diplomatic manner — were Buzzati-Traverso, who explained his position mainly through his concern that “the best possible conditions for efficiency and management” be created, and Bottini, who hoped that the future Centre would be guaranteed “highly qualified staff”.<sup>51</sup> At the end of the discussion, a partial compromise was nevertheless obtained: in the absence of objections, the Commission accepted the decision to entrust the scientific management of the future Centre to D'Amato, while the issue concerning “the gamma field and its potential insertion in a wider complex, dedicated to research on the application of radioisotopes in agriculture, would once more be postponed

<sup>47</sup> Avanzi to Caglioti, 25 March 1957, in Archivio D'Amato.

<sup>48</sup> Cnrr. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della seconda seduta, 26 marzo 1957, pp. 2-3, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 93.

<sup>49</sup> Cnrr. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della seconda seduta, 26 marzo 1957, p. 3, loc. cit. a nota 46.

<sup>50</sup> Cnrr. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della seconda seduta, 26 marzo 1957, pp. 3-4, loc. cit. a nota 46.

<sup>51</sup> Cnrr. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della seconda seduta, 26 marzo 1957, p. 4, loc. cit. a nota 46.

to the joint political decision of the Minister of Agriculture and the CNRN's president".<sup>52</sup>

In subsequent months, between March and October 1957, the Avanzi-D'Amato-Scarascia project gradually gained ground (with the support of Buzzati-Traverso), pursuing with even more vigour that strategy of internationalisation and "Americanisation" that had been launched in the spring-summer of 1956.

The first stage of this process was Buzzati-Traverso's intense American tour across the USAEC's laboratories in June 1957: the USAEC's Division of Biology and Medicine in Washington; the Biology Division at Oak Ridge, run by Alexander Hollaender; the two laboratories — Brookhaven National Laboratory in Long Island and the Blandy Experimental Farm at the University of Virginia — linked to the research activities of the geneticist Ralph W. Singleton; and finally, the Division of Biology and Medical Research at Argonne National Laboratory.

At the end of the tour, in a letter-report sent to Caglioti from La Jolla (California), Buzzati-Traverso outlined what should have been the CNRN's future Division of Biology, structured on the basis of the American model.<sup>53</sup> Following the example of Brookhaven, Buzzati's project anticipated the creation of two biology laboratories of the CNRN: a main one at Frascati's synchrotron, and a minor one at Ispra's reactor.<sup>54</sup> Other than the laboratories, and again with the USAEC's support, in Buzzati's view the CNRN would have had to finance the organisation of a training programme in genetics and radiobiology for young researchers and foster research conducted at university level in this sector:

Independently from the activities that may be conducted at the two laboratories of the DB, it will be useful to keep aside sufficient funds for research at university institutes. This will enable a growing interest of the academic world in problems related to radiobiology. The current Italian conditions are extremely embarrassing, as only very few people have previously worked in the field of radiation biology.<sup>55</sup>

In relation also to the future structure of the gamma field, Buzzati's tour across the USAEC's laboratories — and especially his personal relations with Pearson and Singleton — allowed him to obtain detailed information on the costs, architectural modalities and safety risks. Other than the Cobalt-60 source and the mechanism behind its functioning, a new model of gamma field, borrowed

<sup>52</sup> Cnrn. Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie). Verbale della seconda seduta, 26 marzo 1957, p. 4, loc. cit. a nota 46.

<sup>53</sup> Buzzati-Traverso to Caglioti, 9 June 1957, p. 1, in Archivio Edoardo Amaldi (Università di Roma La Sapienza, Dipartimento di Fisica), sc. 198, fasc. 1, sfasc. 2 "Divisione Biologica (Documenti e corrispondenza)".

<sup>54</sup> Buzzati-Traverso to Caglioti, 9 June 1957, p. 2, loc. cit. a nota 51.

<sup>55</sup> Buzzati-Traverso to Caglioti, 9 June 1957, p. 3, loc. cit. a nota 51.

from Singleton's laboratory project in Brandy (Virginia), was also arriving from the United States. Singleton's Brandy model was a source of inspiration for CNRN's nuclear ambitions. Conceived as a circular depression protected by a surrounding hill, it was, in fact, not only a cheaper solution, but also a less invasive one from the point of view of territorial expansion:

With regard to the most convenient arrangement of the source, I have received very interesting information from Prof. Singleton, who has set up the first gamma field in Brookhaven and is now preparing another one, with an identical source as the one intended for Italy, at the agricultural experimental station of the University of Virginia. Singleton claims that it is too risky to place this source in the full field, even in case of a wide buffer zone. In view of these considerations, Singleton is installing the Cobalt source in a kind of circular depression, with a diameter of about nine metres wide and protected all round by a small circular hill, obtained by digging up earth. He believes that the available space is entirely sufficient for the radiation of a large number of plants or seeds. Given the strong population density of our country and the low level of prevailing crop, it seems to me that Italy, too, needs to consider installing a gamma radiation source like that of Singleton. This would also have the benefit of considerably bringing down the cost of the structure as we wouldn't need to reserve a large plot of land for this purpose. On my return to Italy I will bring along details of the Brandy plant in Virginia.<sup>56</sup>

In addition to Buzzati-Traverso's "American pilgrimage" (to use his own words), the second decisive initiative at this stage for the internationalisation of the gamma field project was Scarascia's participation — between March and June 1957 — in the OEEC-EPA Mission 396, dedicated to "Atomic Energy in Agriculture". In parallel to the establishment of the European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) in March 1957, through this initiative the *European Productivity Agency* (EPA) — an integral part of the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OEEC) — promoted a transatlantic exchange of managerial and scientific-technological knowledge of nuclear energy applications in agriculture.<sup>57</sup>

From August 1956 onwards, the CNRN and the University of Pisa vigorously supported Scarascia's nomination as a member of the Italian delegation, thus opposing the resistance of the Experimental Tobacco Institute of Rome, where Scarascia was employed. Although the dispute was apparently motivated by budget problems (namely the need to cover Scarascia's travel expenses in the United States), it more likely reflected the already outlined tensions between institutions and disciplinary fields. On 9 August, Avanzi himself indicated Scarascia's name to the National Productivity Agency. The young researcher did not hesitate to express his gratitude:

I wish to (...) thank you from the bottom of my heart for having proposed my name to the Italian Productivity Agency for a research visit to the US. My Institute has received a similar

<sup>56</sup> Buzzati-Traverso to Caglioti, 9 June 1957, pp. 2-3, loc. cit. a nota 51.

<sup>57</sup> Bent Boel, *The European Productivity Agency and transatlantic relations, 1953-1961*, Copenhagen, Museum Tusulanum Press, 2003.



request but, without my knowledge, they replied mentioning budget problems and time issues that would make my participation impossible. I hope, supported by Your nomination, to be able to overcome such resistance.<sup>58</sup>

In the same period, the CNRN approached the Tobacco Institute, offering its availability to fully bear the travel expenses. In a “personal and reserved” letter, Scarascia’s brother — the Christian Democrat MP Carlo Scarascia — solicited Carlo Russo (undersecretary of the Presidency of the Italian Council) to intercede in the National Productivity Agency and convince the latter to cover his brother’s travel expenses to the United States:

You have already realised the importance this experience in the American laboratories could have for everyone, so I am certain that you will do whatever is necessary to avoid, as I told you in person, that the lack of funds becomes *no more than an excuse to conceal other matters*.<sup>59</sup>

In the end, 21 researchers from nine European countries joined the EPA Mission 396.<sup>60</sup> For Italy, Alberto Malquori — Professor of forestry and agricultural chemistry at the University of Florence — participated in addition to Scarascia. The goal of the mission was to enhance the exchange of knowledge between the United States and Western Europe in relation to the applications of atomic energy in the fields of agriculture, zootechnics and food conservation. The programme of planned visits — what Scarascia defined, not by chance, a true “interplanetary journey” — foresaw a packed tour (from 28 March to 29 June 1957),<sup>61</sup> which included lectures, observations and demonstrations at the most relevant American research centres in the fields of radiation biology and mutation breeding: the National Agricultural Research Center of Beltsville, in Maryland, and the local University of Maryland, College Park; the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College; the Isotope Program of Kansas State College; the Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts; the Quartermaster Food and Container Institute of Chicago; the

<sup>58</sup> Scarascia to Avanzi, 26 August 1956, in Archivio D’Amato.

<sup>59</sup> Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza to Russo, n.d. [in reality in August 1956], in Archivio Scarascia, b. 94; italics mine.

<sup>60</sup> A Dutchman (Adriaan Cornelis Schuffelen), four Portuguese (Luis Rodriguez Balbino, Reinaldo Rodrigues, Antonio Leto, Jose de Almeida Alves), four Danes (Paul Erik Jacobsen, Erik Stendberg Knudsen, Carl Goran Lamm, Victor Middelboe), four Germans (Karl-Heinz Menke, Manfred Wilhelm Mussgay, Walter Partmann, Bernhard Ulrich), three Greeks (Theocazis Metakides, Catherine Papadopoulou, Athanassios Hatizkakidis), one Belgian (Arthur Riga), one Swiss (Alfred F. Schurch) and an Icelander (Bjorn Sigurbjornsson).

<sup>61</sup> Riga to Scarascia, 30 July 1957, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 94; in his letter, Riga attributes the expression to Scarascia. On the centrality of travel in the circulation of scientific-technological knowledge during the Cold War, see J. Krige (ed.), *How knowledge moves: writing the transnational history of science and technology*, Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press, 2019.

Colleges of Agriculture at the University of Wisconsin and at Michigan State University; the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor; the MIT's Department of Food Technology in Cambridge (Massachusetts); the Brookhaven National Laboratory; the New York State College of Agriculture at Cornell University; the Oak Ridge Institute in Tennessee; the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington DC.<sup>62</sup>

In their concluding report, which was published in *La Ricerca scientifica* (the organ of the Italian National Research Council, CNR), Scarascia and Malquori accurately described the radioisotopic applications in the soil and fertilisation sector, in the field of growth and herbicide regulators, in food conservation, and in research on plant genetics, zootechnics and microbiology. After illustrating how the USAEC's research was organised, Scarascia and Malquori's report summarised the measures to be adopted for the development, in Italy, of "agricultural research with the use of radioisotopes or ionising radiations". Three elements, in particular, were stressed: first, the need for government support for public and private projects aimed at the application of atomic energy in agriculture; second, the urgency to provide training for scientific staff with the help of all resources made available by the USAEC, the EURATOM, the OECE-EPA and the UNESCO; finally, the importance of keeping together applied and pure research, and of setting up cross-cutting and interdisciplinary research groups.<sup>63</sup>

At the start of September, D'Amato and Scarascia drew the attention of the CNRN's subcommission for agrarian sciences to a project aimed at "exploiting for the purpose of genetics and biology research the nuclear facilities soon to be constructed in Italy".<sup>64</sup> D'Amato and Scarascia, ever more confident after the "experience gained during their recent training trips in the United States of America" and probably expecting a long timeframe for the establishment of the gamma field,<sup>65</sup> requested that specific structures be installed close to the CP5 reactor that was being built at Ispra, for the purpose of plant genetics research. In particular, they requested a thermal pillar for the exposure of biological material (i.e. seeds, root cuttings, cultures of microorganisms, spores) to thermal and fast neutron fluxes, and a supervised greenhouse placed at the end of one of the reactor's canals, for acute or chronic exposures to the neutron flux

<sup>62</sup> International Cooperation Administration in collaboration with U.S. Department of Agriculture and Land-Grant Colleges, Program and Itinerary, for PI0-60036-OEEC-EPA "Atomic Energy in Agriculture", 4 agosto 1957, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 94.

<sup>63</sup> Alberto Malquori, Gian Tommaso Scarascia, *Le applicazioni delle scienze nucleari in agricoltura e alimentazione negli Stati Uniti*, "La ricerca scientifica", marzo 1959, a. 29, n. 3, p. 464.

<sup>64</sup> *Proposta per uno sfruttamento a fini di ricerca genetica e biologica delle attrezzature nucleari di prossima realizzazione in Italia, presentata da G.T. Scarascia e F. D'Amato alla Commissione "Applicazione dei Radioisotopi (Scienze Agrarie)" del CNRN*, 2 settembre 1957, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 93.

<sup>65</sup> *Proposta per uno sfruttamento a fini di ricerca genetica e biologica delle attrezzature nucleari di prossima realizzazione in Italia*, loc. cit. a nota 62.

of larger-sized organisms. Moreover, with an eye to the future D'Amato and Scarascia suggested that accelerators of particles be created, to be used as the source of particularly pure, fast neutron fluxes.<sup>66</sup>

Avanzi and D'Amato made a further funding request to the CNRN on behalf of the University of Pisa, for a three-year research project aimed, on one side, at continuing the genetic screening and cytogenetic analysis of the mutants of the nine species D'Amato and Scarascia had radiated in previous years, in Sweden, the United States and the United Kingdom; on the other, the project sought to further radiate “Cappelli” durum wheat seeds and “Brescia” soft wheat so as to obtain, “through mutagenesis, some further, good agricultural characteristics”.<sup>67</sup> Other than Avanzi and D'Amato, the research group was composed — for the genetics side — of Scarascia, Silvana Avanzi (a MAF research fellow for cytogenetics) and Alessandro Bozzini (one of D'Amato's recent graduates in agrarian sciences at the Collegio Antonio Pacinotti of Pisa), and on the agricultural side of Ranieri Favilli (full professor of agronomy at the University of Pisa), Enrico Moschini (university lecturer and research assistant at the Institute of agronomy) and Vittoria Nuti-Ronchi (MAF research fellow for agronomy).<sup>68</sup>

On 7 October 1957, the final meeting of the Commission for the study of radioisotope applications was held in a joint session of the two sub-commissions dedicated to agriculture and biology. From a geographical perspective, it was by now evident that the negotiations between the CNRN and the MAF tended towards the positioning of the gamma field not in Pisa but “in the proximity of Rome”.<sup>69</sup> The possibility — developed in the summer of 1957 — of using an area located seven kilometres from Pisa (in the town of “Bufalotti”), which was linked to the future installation of an experimental swimming pool reactor by the Centre for military nuclear energy applications (CAMEN), was thus suspended. Yet, the victory — on a scientific level — of the “Pisan” line represented by Avanzi-D'Amato-Scarascia was overwhelming:

<sup>66</sup> *Proposta per uno sfruttamento a fini di ricerca genetica e biologica delle attrezzature nucleari di prossima realizzazione in Italia*, loc. cit. a nota 62.

<sup>67</sup> Enrico Avanzi and Francesco D'Amato, *Programma di ricerche sul miglioramento genetico di piante agrarie con l'impiego di radiazioni ionizzanti*, 7 settembre 1957, pp. 5-6, in Archivio D'Amato. The project was sent to the CNRN on 12 September.

<sup>68</sup> E. Avanzi, F. D'Amato, *Programma di ricerche sul miglioramento genetico di piante agrarie con l'impiego di radiazioni ionizzanti*, 7 settembre 1957, p. 4, loc. cit. a nota 65.

<sup>69</sup> Ippolito to Franzini (CAMEN, Livorno), 24 October 1957, in Archivio D'Amato. Ippolito replied to Franzini's proposal to host the gamma field near the future location of the CAMEN experimental reactor, decided on the basis of an agreement between the Ministry of Defence and the University of Pisa: “The proposal — Ippolito wrote — is nevertheless very interesting for this Committee. Regrettably we aren't currently able to give a definitive reply due to the ongoing negotiations with the Minister of Agriculture, the Honourable Dr. E. Colombo, as to the granting of a plot of land in the proximity of Rome for the creation of the Campo Gamma”. The discussions concerning this issue between Avanzi, dean of the University of Pisa, and Franzini, scientific director of the CAMEN, date back to July 1957: Avanzi to Franzini, 27 July 1957 and 20 August 1957; Franzini to Avanzi, 5 August 1957; Franzini to Buzzati-Traverso and Avanzi, 21 October 1957, in Archivio D'Amato.

D'Amato would obtain the future scientific management of the gamma field; the Avanzi-D'Amato research project was approved; the scientific management of the CNRN's newborn Biology service (the future Biology Division) went to Buzzati-Traverso; Scarascia was nominated secretary of the agricultural sciences section.<sup>70</sup> Finally, Åke Gustafsson — a long-time friend and collaborator of D'Amato, as we have seen — was indicated as an external advisor to the CNRN Biology Division in the field of atomic energy application to agriculture.<sup>71</sup> Francesco D'Amato closed the circle when he obtained, in 1959, the chair in genetics in the Faculty of Agrarian sciences at the University of Pisa, the first one in the Italian university system. When, a few years later, Carlo Jucci died (in 1963),<sup>72</sup> D'Amato would take on the direction of the Italian Society of Plant Genetics, actually relaunching it by changing its statute and goals.

To conclude, the Cold War political context, the launch of a national and international programme for nuclear energy application to agriculture and the development of a scientific, transnational network focused on mutation breeding turned out to be decisive not just in giving research on radioinduced mutagenesis in Italy a new stimulus, but also in defining the scientific and disciplinary boundaries of plant genetics, promoting its institutionalisation at the academic level.

### The gamma field as reality and as sociotechnical imaginary

In May 1958, the CNRN's journal announced that the future gamma field would be built on land offered by the Ministry of agriculture in Monterotondo, in the town of Tor Mancina, in the area of the Zootechnical Experimental Station in Rome.<sup>73</sup> The Casaccia area was probably spotted towards the end of the year. In his autobiographical reconstruction, Scarascia dates the decision moment at the end of October 1958:

<sup>70</sup> Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie e scienze biologiche), verbale della riunione comune, 7 ottobre 1957, pp. 2-4, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 93.

<sup>71</sup> Commissione di studio per l'applicazione dei radioisotopi (Scienze agrarie e scienze biologiche), verbale della riunione comune, 7 ottobre 1957, all. n. 1, *Elenco di consulenti stranieri per lo sviluppo delle attività di ricerca del Servizio di biologia del CNRN*, loc. cit. a nota 68.

<sup>72</sup> Importantly, since April 1958 Jucci directed the radiobiology-genetics section of the Institute of Nuclear Studies for Agriculture, which was chaired by the Christian Democrat MP Achille Marazza. The Institute had been established to "promote research on the application of atomic radiations and radium elements in the agricultural and zoological field" as also to "establish an information centre for nuclear research on a specifically practical level, in such a way as to progressively include the research results in the enhancement plans of agricultural firms and zootechnical firms" (art. 3 dello Statuto, "Agricoltura d'Italia, Organo ufficiale dell'Istituto di studi nucleari per l'agricoltura", aprile 1958, p. 10). Alberto Pirovano was the director of the electrogenetics section of the Institute. See Jucci's obituary in "Il Corriere di Roma": Giuseppe A. Diffidenti, *Ha commosso la scienza la morte di Carlo Jucci. Un grave lutto per l'Istituto di studi nucleari per l'agricoltura*, "Il Corriere di Roma", 4 novembre 1962, p. 8.

<sup>73</sup> G.T.S. (Gian Tommaso Scarascia), *Nota*, "Notiziario Cnrn", maggio 1958, a. IV, n. 5, p. 271.

At the end of October 1958 we made a last inspection: I remember Adriano Buzzati Traverso was there, Umberto Belliazzi, myself, representatives of the Milanese study that was supposed to develop the centre's urban project. The area was adequate, also because the hilly elevations, the isolated position and the presence of a small watercourse in themselves already guaranteed some degree of safety, even from a gamma field perspective. Oddly, this choice was encouraged by the fact that Buzzati Traverso found a lucky clover precisely on the small hill where the reactor would have arisen; we conserved it for a long time in a small frame in the office of the then Division of biology in Rome.<sup>74</sup>

In December 1958, the CNRN's journal mentioned, for the first time, the "Bracciano zone at 23 km from Rome between the via Anguillarese and the via Claudia".<sup>75</sup> The name "Casaccia" referred to a modest farm whose lands had belonged to the Chigi family ever since the seventeenth century.

In April 1959, at km 1,3 of the Anguillarese country road, works began for the construction of the Centre for Nuclear Studies; it was meant to gather, in a single location, some of the laboratories and research groups that CNRN had previously funded by academic sources. The Laboratory for Agricultural Applications (subsequently Laboratory of Plant Genetics) — with the attached gamma field — was inaugurated in January 1960,<sup>76</sup> even if some preliminary activities had been conducted as of July 1959.<sup>77</sup> Scarascia was nominated Laboratory director, whereas D'Amato acted as scientific advisor.

Fig. 3 — Luigi Rossi private archive, bird's-eye view of the gamma field, 1960



<sup>74</sup> A colloquio con G. Scarascia Mugnozza, in G. Paoloni (ed.), *Energia, ambiente, innovazione: dal Cnrn all'Enea*, p. 185.

<sup>75</sup> *Attività del Comitato*, "Notiziario Cnrn", dicembre 1958, a. IV, n. 12, p. 863.

<sup>76</sup> G.T.S. (Gian Tommaso Scarascia), *Nota*, "Notiziario Cnrn", gennaio 1960, a. VI, n. 1, pp. 4-9.

<sup>77</sup> *Il Centro di Studi Nucleari della Casaccia*, Rome, CNEN, 1962, p. 6.

Fig. 4 — Luigi Rossi private archive, presentation of the planimetry of the Casaccia Nuclear research centre (no date)



Loaded in Brookhaven in May 1958, the radioactive Cobalt-60 source was stored for over two years in a storage room of the Termini railway station in Rome. The correspondence between D'Amato and Pearson — who had, in the meantime, moved from the USAEC to the Ford Foundation — gives us an impression of the concerns that accompanied the long negotiations (from 1955 to 1960) for the construction of the Italian gamma field and the subsequent identification of its location, first in Pisa and then in Rome:

I am glad to know that you are continuing your activities with the CNRN and that you share the major responsibility for developing the genetics programme at Casaccia. With your leadership I am sure that the gamma field will be actively used. I realize of course that this facility has some limitations. As you know, I was most concerned that it took more than three years to cut through the red tape so that the gamma field could finally be shipped to Pisa. Even so, I take some satisfaction in knowing that this has finally been accomplished.<sup>78</sup>

Between 1960 and 1963, the Casaccia Centre for Nuclear Studies inaugurated other laboratories: the laboratories of the Division of Biology and Health Protection;<sup>79</sup> the Applied Nuclear Physics Laboratory, linked to the

<sup>78</sup> Pearson to D'Amato, 25 February 1960, in Archivio D'Amato,

<sup>79</sup> The Division of biology and health protection occupied five buildings, which hosted: the Laboratory of Agricultural Applications; the Laboratory of animal radiobiology; the Laboratory of dosimetry, standardisation and applied nuclear instrumentation; the Laboratory for environmental radioactivity; the Applied meteorology section; the Laboratory for sanitary engineering; the Sanitary physics section; and the Medicine and health section. See: *Il Centro di Studi Nucleari della Casaccia*, pp. 41-50.

RC-1 (Triga Mark II type) reactor that the General Atomic had obtained in 1958; the Reactor Engineering and Servomechanisms Laboratory; the Physics and Reactor Calculus Laboratory, linked to two other nuclear reactors; the Electronics Laboratory; the laboratories of the Division of materials (industrial chemistry, metallurgy, ceramic technology and hot operation) and those of the Geology-Mining Division.<sup>80</sup>

*Fig. 5 — Luigi Rossi private archive, reproduction of the gamma field at the EUR, during the Sixth International Electronics and Nuclear Congress (1959)*



South of the gamma field, four hectares of experimental fields were used for the breeding, selection and multiplication of materials treated with physical and chemical mutagenesis and of their progeny. The fields were also used for the multiplication of genetically homogeneous lines of species to be used in radiobiological research. To the north, instead, a group of greenhouses (covering some five hundred square metres) was used for experiments in conditions that were monitored for temperature, humidity and lighting.

In the temporal limbo that lasted from the start of the construction works for the Casaccia Centre for Nuclear Studies — at the end of 1958 — to the launch of an actual research programme in the field of mutation breeding, in the early 1960s, the CNRN organised an impressive communication campaign, which served to legitimise the use of nuclear energy in agriculture through the symbolic transformation of the gamma field into an iconic and laical place of modernity, progress and peace. At that time, this rhetoric had wide

<sup>80</sup> *Attività del Comitato*, “Notiziario Cnrn”, giugno 1960, a. VI, n. 6, pp. 531-541.

transnational resonance, and it was frequently adopted by the USAEC, the FAO, the EURATOM and, subsequently, by the International Atomic Energy Agency. In the Italian context, however, it assumed an additional meaning: on the one hand, it evoked the specific dynamics of the ongoing economic boom by depicting the “charm of the atom” as an important step in the process of innovation and industrialisation of Italian agriculture; on the other hand, the very reference to agriculture and, in particular, to durum wheat — hence, to pasta — contributed to popularise the image of the “practical” atom waiting to satisfy the Italians’ new food necessities.<sup>81</sup>

In this sociotechnical imaginary, attuned to the romantic notes of the “atomic sublime”,<sup>82</sup> the gamma field became — in first instance — synonymous with unstoppable modernity: a derelict farm turned atomic laboratory hosting a group of young researchers in their 30s, who stood out because of their informal, American-like style, with no ties and “their shirts hanging over their rolled-up trousers”.<sup>83</sup> In August 1959, while the construction site in via Anguillarese was still open, Turin’s daily “La Stampa” sketched the pastoral landscape of a cowshed ready to host a nuclear amphitheatre:

The “Gamma field” is located at the Casaccia, some twenty kilometres from Rome, among the tufts of pine trees in via Anguillarese. Basic offices arise across 65 hectares of hilly terrain, located in the rooms where the herdsman’s family once lived, as well as a tower where labourers — working even at night, illuminated by a spotlight — are constructing the new nuclear reactor, which is to start working by October. Just behind the old barns, the “Gamma field” spreads out, circumscribed by a 4 metre-high wall, so as to contain the radiations of the Cobalt source, nowadays still lying quietly in its lead cylinder.<sup>84</sup>

Only a few years later, in October 1962, the mutation was completed. The daily “l’Unità” — the organ of the Italian Communist Party — narrated the evocative story of a site that had radically changed from a farm to a nuclear laboratory, from an agricultural firm to an atomic garden:

For some years now, in the meadows along the road that leads to Anguillara — on the Bracciano lake — you no longer see the cows and calves of the La Casaccia farm, the ancient property of a family of papal aristocracy. The farm’s central building still exists and hasn’t been changed from the outside, but surrounding it, instead of the stables and the barns, modern concrete and glass buildings rise up, a very high chimney, and on one side an earth-

<sup>81</sup> For a comparative analysis of the imaginary of the “peaceful atom” in Italy, France and United States, see: Laura Cigliani, *Culture atomiche. Gli Stati Uniti, la Francia e l’Italia di fronte alla questione nucleare (1962-68)*, Rome, Carocci, 2020, pp. 283-89; 352-54.

<sup>82</sup> Peter B. Hales, *The atomic sublime*, “American Studies”, 1991, vol. 32, n. 1, pp. 5-31; David E. Nye, *American technological sublime*, Cambridge (MA) and London, The MIT Press, 1994, pp. 234-35.

<sup>83</sup> Enrico Altavilla, *Le radiazioni d’una centrale di cobalto potranno modificare le specie vegetali*, “La Stampa”, 4 agosto 1959, p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> E. Altavilla, *Le radiazioni d’una centrale di cobalto potranno modificare le specie vegetali*.



work with a kind of low pillbox. You can also see trees, bushes, little plants but of very diverse species, like in a normal garden, not in an agricultural firm.

In fact, the Casaccia is no longer a farm, but for two and a half years now it hosts a Nuclear research centre whose main characteristic — namely that which establishes a new relation between technical-scientific progress and nature — is the “Gamma field” (...).<sup>85</sup>

The control of nature through the management and acceleration of the evolutionary process was the distinctive mark of this modernity. Again, Enrico Altavilla — in an article published in “La Stampa” in the summer of 1959 — described the gamma field as a

mysterious open-air laboratory where young alchemists, with the help of a Cobalt source that acts as a philosopher’s stone, are getting ready to violate nature by forcing it to become perfect, to make the kind of progress it was unable to make over thousands of years in only few years time, to generate flowers with new forms and unimagined colours, plants that are more resistant to diseases, grasses capable of better exploiting fertilisers, early peas, more solid firs, more oily peanuts.<sup>86</sup>

Although they were conscious of the principle *Natura non facit saltus*, “the young Fausts” of the Casaccia — the article continued — were nevertheless getting prepared, “with the crude determination that is typical of scientists, to produce abnormal plants, small dwarf trees that would delight Japanese gardeners and gigantic shrubs even more peculiar than the Soviet two-headed dog”. Next to the “plant monsters”, though, for once nature would have said “yes to the scientists”: “Ceres and Pomona will agree to show more zeal, to give us better plants and fruits”.<sup>87</sup> An aura of youthful, Promethean enthusiasm accompanied the description of the Casaccia researchers, starting from Scarascia: “They stand out because of their very young age — almost all are in their early thirties — and their relaxed dress code, shirts hanging over their rolled-up trousers as when they were practicing in the American atomic laboratories”. In response to the journalist’s concluding question, Goethically hinting at the possibility that nature might rebel against whoever would have attempted to “exert violence on her”, Scarascia shook his shoulders and smiled. “The sorcerer’s apprentices — the journalist remarked — do not fear the old lady”.<sup>88</sup>

In the same period, in a number of radio interviews — respectively with Antonello Marescalchi for RAI’s third radio programme, in May 1959,<sup>89</sup> and

<sup>85</sup> f.p., *Grano “gamma” alla Casaccia*, “l’Unità”, 23 ottobre 1962, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> E. Altavilla, *Le radiazioni d’una centrale di cobalto potranno modificare le specie vegetali*.

<sup>87</sup> E. Altavilla, *Le radiazioni d’una centrale di cobalto potranno modificare le specie vegetali*.

<sup>88</sup> E. Altavilla, *Le radiazioni d’una centrale di cobalto potranno modificare le specie vegetali*.

<sup>89</sup> *Intervista con Rai III programma (Dr. A. Marescalchi)*, 30 maggio 1959, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 95.

with Anna Keel for Radio Zurich — Scarascia himself reassured the audience, providing details on the safety of the gamma field and explaining the important — theoretical as economic — reasons behind the use of nuclear energy for the transformation of agricultural plants:

– What kind of results do you expect to obtain from the Gamma field experiments?

The field is intended for research on plant radiobiology and genetic improvement of agricultural plants; much of our work is aimed at this objective. It would be of particular interest for Italian agriculture to improve cereals, especially durum wheats, fodder and fruit plants, flowers and vegetable plants, flax flowers.

The types of radiations that will be adopted for this purpose include: gamma radiation, x-rays, and fast and slow neutron fluxes produced by the reactor that will start working in the same Research centre in the next autumn.<sup>90</sup>

To give a measure of the applicative potentials of mutation breeding in agriculture, he once again made reference to the successes obtained in Sweden and the United States:

– How many generations will it take to establish whether changes in a plant reflect an advantageous mutation?

I'll give you an example: in 1946, Gustafsson — a Swedish pioneer in our field — radiated seeds of the Bonus barley variety; its descendants were subjected to rigorous exams and comparative tests, and it wasn't until 1958 that one of the mutants was acknowledged as being, in fact, equipped with better traits than the original types, especially with regard to lodging resistance and greater response to nitrogen fertilisation. It was given the name of Pallas. Moreover, in Sweden they have varieties of peas, rapeseed, mustard seeds with better characteristics than the original types. In America they have obtained improvements in oats, peanuts and beans.<sup>91</sup>

No less important were the possibilities offered by the only TV channel: other than the dissemination of films by the USIS and the USAEC, such as *I piccoli giganti. L'agricoltura dell'era atomica* (1959) or *La magia dell'atomo* (1962-1964),<sup>92</sup> there were also original documentaries — for example, *Atomo pratico* and *Italia nucleare*, both directed by Giordano Repossi — that were made in collaboration with the CNRN and the Casaccia scientific staff.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to its communication campaign, the CNRN also made efforts to transform the gamma field into an exhibit artefact — a three-dimensional icon

<sup>90</sup> *Conversazione Prof. Scarascia - Anna Keel (Radio Zurigo, Svizzera)*, 18 giugno 1959, p. 3, in Archivio Scarascia, b. 95.

<sup>91</sup> *Conversazione Prof. Scarascia - Anna Keel (Radio Zurigo, Svizzera)*, 18 giugno 1959, pp. 3-4, loc. cit. a nota 85.

<sup>92</sup> *I piccoli giganti n. 4, L'agricoltura dell'era atomica*, 31 ottobre 1959, in Teche RAI, identificate teca C38; *La magia dell'atomo. Il contadino dell'era atomica*, 27 aprile 1962, in Teche RAI, identificatore teca C1668; *La magia dell'atomo. La serra atomica*, 10 marzo 1964, in Teche RAI, identificatore teca C4525.

<sup>93</sup> The episodes dedicated to the Casaccia Centre are, in particular, that of 24 January 1961 of *Italia nucleare* (Teche RAI, identificatore teca C669), and that of 10 March 1964 of *Atomo pratico*, titled *Il contadino dell'era atomica* (Teche RAI, identificatore teca C4525).

of peaceful nuclear energy applications to be promoted on various exhibition occasions. The first public appearance occurred in June-July 1959, during the Sixth International Electronic and Nuclear Exhibition in Rome, at the EUR's Congress palace. The CNRN prepared a miniature model of the gamma field in the pavilion of the MAF, which visually summarised the essential parts of the structure: the radiation unit, the protective earthwork, the control cabin, and the safety and control systems.<sup>94</sup>

*Fig. 6 — Interactive miniature model of the gamma field at the CNRN's pavilion at the Trade Fair of Milan in 1959: see Fiera di Milano 1960, April 1960, p. 157*



Still in 1959, the Milan Trade Fair inaugurated a new sector, significantly called Salon of Nuclear Energy Applications (hereafter SNEA). The SNEA hosted no less than 50 exhibitors from nine countries (other than Italy these included the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, France, the German Federal Republic, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland), on a surface of 6200 square metres, 4000 of which indoor.<sup>95</sup> In April 1959 and in the next year, during the Milan Trade Fair's 37th and 38th editions, again a scale model of the gamma field was presented, with attached a “small farming field” where

<sup>94</sup> *Notizie Italiane*, “Notiziario Cnrn”, luglio 1959, a. V, n. 7, p. 469.

<sup>95</sup> *Barometro della congiuntura economica: il mercato campionario milanese*, “Fiera di Milano”, aprile 1959, a. XI, p. 9.

the visitors could directly observe — next to the miniature wheat plants that hadn't been irradiated — some examples of radioinduced mutants.<sup>96</sup>

*Fig. 7 — Drawing of the radiation unit adopted in the gamma field. G.T. Scarascia Mugnozza, L'energia nucleare al servizio dell'agricoltura, Bologna, Cappelli, 1963, p. 27 (original sketch)*



The same scale model was exhibited again at the EUR, on the occasion of the Seventh International Electronic and Nuclear Exhibition, held from 15 to 29 June 1960. In the CNRN's journal, a photograph showed Edoardo Amaldi, vice president of the CNEN, as he was about to show the model to the President of the Republic, Giovanni Gronchi.<sup>97</sup>

Hence, even before coming into operation, the gamma field had already become an icon: the symbol of a modernity made of “peaceful atoms” and “atomic farmers”.

## Conclusion

From the end of the 1960s to the first half of the 1970s, the Casaccia Laboratory of Plant Genetics released new cultivars of durum wheat, which

<sup>96</sup> Gaetano Mannino Patané, *Possibilità presenti e future delle applicazioni dell'energia nucleare*, “Fiera di Milano”, aprile 1960, a. XII, pp. 149-158; G. Mannino Patané, *Sbalorditive le pratiche applicazioni consentite dall'energia nucleare*, “Fiera di Milano”, aprile 1961, a. XIII, pp. 133-36; *Notizie italiane*, “Notiziario Cnrn”, maggio 1960, a. VI, 5, pp. 406-410.

<sup>97</sup> *Notizie italiane*, “Notiziario Cnrn”, luglio 1960, a. VI, n. 7, p. 625. In September 1960, the CNEN set up a similar pavilion in Bari, on the occasion of the Twenty-fourth Levante Trade Fair.

resulted from the direct selection of mutants or — as in the case of the most successful wheat variety, the “Creso” — from continued cross-breeding with these mutant cultivars or with other mutant lines.<sup>98</sup> The international success of the Casaccia mutagenesis programme has given rise — in the reconstructions and testimonial accounts of its protagonists — to a retrospective reading mostly marked by two elements: on the one side, a linear, nonconflicting and teleological interpretation of the historical process, a kind of *whig history* that can be summarised in the words “from Strampelli to the Green Revolution”;<sup>99</sup> on the other, a reading focused on the centrality of the gamma field, in all its technological materiality and iconographic force.

Drawing the attention on the politico-institutional and scientific-disciplinary genesis of the gamma field in Italy, in this essay I have tried to deconstruct this retrospective narrative by offering a different interpretation.

First, I have considered radioinduced mutagenesis as “hybrid knowledge”,<sup>100</sup> in which the transnational circulation of scientific knowledge was strictly linked to the asymmetric dimension of the coproduction of US hegemony in Western Europe. My reconstruction of the Pisan origins of the gamma field — and of the relations with the USAEC — bridges the international Cold War context and the local dynamics of discipline-building with regard to plant genetics in Italy.

Second, the essay demonstrates that the centrality of the gamma field was largely “constructed”: that is, it was a symbolic and iconic rather than a scientific-technological centrality. The main wheat mutants that were patented at the Casaccia were obtained through x-rays and thermal neutrons radiated on seeds, not through gamma rays. Yet, the gamma field was always there: the centre of gravity of a scientific community and of a network of researchers who made reference to it, and at the same time the iconic synthesis of a technological artefact and a research model that was repeatedly immortalised in the CNEN’s magazines and documentaries. If, on the one hand, the gamma field materialised the *Atoms for Peace* programme by making the political as well as scientific connection with the United States visibly tangible, on the other hand it announced a new modernity for Italy during the economic boom, placing nuclear energy at the service of agriculture and food science, in a powerful combination of tradition and futurism. Humans expanded their control over nature: spaghetti were becoming “atomic”.

<sup>98</sup> Luigi Rossi, *Il miglioramento genetico del grano duro in Casaccia. Il grano Creso*, “Energia, ambiente e innovazione”, 2010, n. 6, pp. 46-52.

<sup>99</sup> For example, G.T. Scarascia Mugnozza, *The contributions of Italian wheat geneticists: from Nazareno Strampelli to Francesco D’Amato*, in Roberto Tuberosa, Ronald L. Phillips, Mike Gale (eds.), *In the wake of the double helix: from the Green Revolution to the Gene Revolution*, Bologna, Avenue media, 2005, pp. 53-75.

<sup>100</sup> John Krige, *Hybrid knowledge: the transnational co-production of the gas centrifuge for uranium enrichment in the 1960s*, “British Journal for the History of Science”, 2012, vol. 45, n. 3, pp. 337-357.

“We were the only ones in Europe”,<sup>101</sup> is the proud statement that resurfaces in the voices and memories of the protagonists of the time. It doesn’t entirely reflect the truth, though. Italy was certainly the first among the six member states of the EURATOM, but at the start of the 1960s other gamma fields were active in Sweden, the UK, Spain and Czechoslovakia. Yet, in the midst of this inconsistency a creative amnesia seems to emerge, where the political centrality and the symbolic force of the Italian gamma field resurface like the visible traces of a story still largely unknown.

<sup>101</sup> Author’s interview with Alessandro Bozzini, Basilio Donini and Luigi Rossi (Rome, FIDAF headquarters, 23 October 2017).

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## The Carter administration and the “communist question” in Italy. The political development and action, 1976-1978

Alice Ciulla\*

Jimmy Carter was elected President of the United States in November 1976. A few months earlier, the Italian elections marked an extraordinary result for the Italian Communist Party (PCI), and some of its members obtained institutional roles. During the electoral campaign, members of Carter’s entourage released declarations that seemed to prelude to abandoning the anti-communist veto posed by previous governments. For a year after the inauguration, the US administration maintained an ambiguous position. Nonetheless, on 12 January 1978, the United States reiterated its opposition to any forms of participation of communists in the Italian government. Drawing on a varied set of sources and analysing the role of non-state actors, including think tanks and university centres, this article examines the debate on the Italian “communist question” within the Carter administration and among its advisers. Such discussion will be placed within a wider debate that crossed America’s liberal culture.

**Key words:** Carter Administration, Eurocommunism, Cold War, American Liberalism, Italian Communist party, United States and Italy

In the elections of 1976, the Italian Communist Party (Partito comunista italiano, hereafter PCI) obtained the highest consensus of the post-war period. A few months later, General Secretary Enrico Berlinguer met his French and Spanish counterparts in Madrid, at the first public event of the Eurocommunist phase. Linked to the dynamics of détente and a reason for alarm for both Washington and Moscow, Eurocommunism represented the attempt to develop a European “third road” between Soviet socialism and social democracy, which had been under construction for some years thanks precisely to Berlinguer’s international protagonism.<sup>1</sup> In November 1976, Democrat Jimmy Carter was

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<sup>1</sup> See Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, Turin, Einaudi, 2006; Maud Bracke, *Which Socialism, Whose Détente? West European communism and the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968*, Budapest, Central European University Press, 2007 and Silvio Pons, Michele Di Donato, *Reform communism*, in Juliane Fürst, Silvio Pons, Mark Selden (eds. by), *The Cambridge history of communism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2017, pp. 151-177.

elected into the White House. His administration had to develop a strategy on Eurocommunism and — in particular — against its Italian derivation; the latter undoubtedly worried Washington most, given the concrete possibility of the PCI entering the government. Already during the presidential election campaign, future members of Carter's administration had given signs of discontinuity with the closure to Italian communists, which had marked the Nixon-Ford administrations. Their declarations raised both criticism and hopes in Italy and in the United States, where a debate about the evolution of Italian Marxism and the PCI's democratic legitimacy had been ongoing for about a decade.

The by now rich historiography of Carter's foreign politics, in particular on the American front, has dedicated little or no space to both the "communist question" in Italy and to Eurocommunism.<sup>2</sup> In fact, American politics concerning these matters have mainly been studied in the political historiography of Republican Italy, the latter being located precisely in the international dynamics imposed by the Cold War,<sup>3</sup> and more specifically in studies of Berlinguer's communist politics throughout the years.<sup>4</sup> The issue of American politics under Carter in relation to Italy has also been discussed in works devoted to the history of Italy-US relations, which are analysed within the broader frame of transatlantic relations — unavoidable, really, to understand the dynamics that marked the 1970s.<sup>5</sup> Although Eurocommunism is addressed in these studies, it isn't their main object of investigation. In fact, the studies that focus exclusively on the Carter administration's politics on Eurocommunism

<sup>2</sup> See Scott Kaufman, *Plans unraveled. The foreign policy of the Carter administration*, Dekalb, Northern Illinois University Press, 2008; Timothy P. Meiga, *The world of Jimmy Carter: US foreign policy, 1977-1981*, West Haven (Conn.), University of New Haven Press, 1994; Betty Glad, *An outsider in the White House: Jimmy Carter, his advisors, and the making of American foreign policy*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2009; Robert A. Strong, *Working in the world: Jimmy Carter and the making of American foreign policy*, Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University, 2000; John Dumbrell, *The Carter presidency. A Re-evaluation*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995; Herbert D. Rosenbaum, Alexej Ugrinsky (eds.), *Jimmy Carter foreign policy and post-presidential years*, New York, Greenwood Press, 1994. For an analysis in Italian see Umberto Tulli, *Tra diritti umani e distensione. L'amministrazione Carter e il dissenso in Urss*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Guido Formigoni, *Storia d'Italia nella guerra fredda*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2016, especially pp. 492-518; see also Roberto Gualtieri (ed.), *Il Pci nell'Italia repubblicana*, Rome, Carocci, 1999 and Roberto Gualtieri, *L'Italia dal 1943 al 1992: Dc e Pci nella storia della Repubblica*, Rome, Carocci, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> On Berlinguer see S. Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*; Francesco Barbagallo, *Enrico Berlinguer*, Rome, Carocci, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> See Lucrezia Cominelli, *L'Italia sotto tutela. Stati Uniti, Europa e crisi italiana degli anni Settanta*, Milan, Mondadori, 2015; Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, *L'Italia sospesa. La crisi degli anni Settanta vista da Washington*, Turin, Einaudi 2009 and Umberto Gentiloni Silveri, *Gli anni settanta nel giudizio degli Stati Uniti: "Un ponte verso l'ignoto"*, "Studi Storici", Oct.-Dec. 2001, vol. 42, n. 4, pp. 989-1020.



remain few, and not even the most recent ones<sup>6</sup> — now supported by abundant archival sources — have developed much beyond the interpretations offered by Olav Njølstad and, especially, Irwin Wall, in their essays of 2002 and 2009 respectively. In his study, Njølstad claims that Carter’s Italian politics remained focused on the objective to stem the communists’ rise to power, in continuation with what had happened at the dawn of the Cold War. In his opinion, the Democrats followed the same line as the Nixon-Ford administrations but using different means, therefore remaining loyal to the principle of “non interference” in the internal affairs of other countries.<sup>7</sup> Wall, by contrast, highlights the presence of different opinions regarding the European “communist question” among members of Carter’s administration. Initially playing a waiting game, with the aim of verifying the extent to which the three Italian, French and Spanish parties would have evolved, they would subsequently have moved towards a more rigid position, due to the détente between the United States and the Soviet Union wearing out.<sup>8</sup> The above-mentioned works seem unanimous in stating that, either way, Washington nurtured no desire whatsoever to actively legitimate the PCI’s role in Italian politics. According to certain historiographical interpretations, however, some of the communist leaders of the time disseminated an opposite reading; they attributed a wrong meaning to the dialogue that had been established with a number of representatives of the *liberal* world,<sup>9</sup> several years back, and to some of their public stances.<sup>10</sup>

It is difficult to assess whether the PCI leadership was truly united in the development of a politically motivated strategy capable of approaching the élite

<sup>6</sup> See, among others, Frédéric Heurtebize, *Le Pêril Rouge. Washington face à l’Eurocommunisme*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France, 2014 and Alessandro Brogi, *Confronting America: The Cold War between the United States and the communists in France and Italy*, Chapel Hill, North Carolina University Press, 2011, pp. 325-346. For a detailed reconstruction see also Riccardo Diego Portolani, *Stati Uniti e l’eurocomunismo 1976-1980*, Doctoral thesis, Università di Tor Vergata, discussed in the academic year 2013-2014.

<sup>7</sup> Olav Njølstad, *The Carter administration and Italy: keeping the communists out of power without interfering*, “Journal of Cold War Studies”, Summer 2002, vol. 4, n. 2, pp. 56-94.

<sup>8</sup> Irwin Wall, *L’amministrazione Carter e l’eurocomunismo*, “Ricerche di Storia Politica”, 2006, n. 2, pp. 181-196. The presence of different opinions within the administration also emerges from the ex-ambassador Richard N. Gardner’s memoir, and is mentioned in Silvio Pons, *Berlinguer e la fine del comunismo*, pp. 162-163. By now, historiography widely agrees on the different interpretation of the détente, namely as a “static” process for the superpowers and as a “dynamic” process for Europe. Among the many studies on this matter, see Jussi M. Hanhimäki, *The rise and fall of Détente. American foreign policy and the transformation of the Cold War*, Washington D.C., Potomac Books, 2013.

<sup>9</sup> See Valentine Lomellini, *When hopes come to naught. The question of Italian communists’ participation in government and the failure of a particular strategy, 1974-1978*, “Journal of European Integration”, 2012, vol. 20, n. 2, pp. 233-244 and Valentine Lomellini, *The Pci and the Usa: rehearsal of a difficult dialogue in the era of détente*, “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, 2015, vol. 20, n. 3, pp. 346-360.

<sup>10</sup> See, among others, Peter Lange, *What is to be done: about Italian communism?*, “Foreign Policy”, Winter, 1975-1976, n. 21, pp. 224-240.

overseas, or if certain individual proponents — albeit in important positions — were pushing in this direction, based on personal convictions rather than real shared strategies. What is certain is that, if there was a possibility that the project of “opening up” to the Italian communists could have political consequences for the United States, it was only with Carter’s entry into the White House — a short Democratic pause in 16 years of Republican rule. Various actors, all but united, sought to guide the Democrats in the way they handled the “communist question” in Western Europe. As suggested by the archives of the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and also by Donald L.M. Blackmer’s personal archive, held at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), the network of people who tried — occasionally with success — to influence the politics of Carter’s administration is composed of different elements, on which we must place the proper amount of importance. In Italy, the debate on the “communist question” developed within liberal culture, which could very roughly be described in terms of a conflict between the most conservative and the most progressive fringes: the former sustained that, had the PCI remained outside the government, it could more easily have obtained a turn towards social democracy; among the latter, some argued that the very entry into government would have favoured such an outcome, whereas others claimed, instead, that the PCI was *de facto* similar to the parties of the European socialist Left. The liberals’ fragmentation in the 1970s, although by no means a novelty, was significant, since in those years the neoconservative turn was accomplished, which had consequences also for interpretations of European communism.

If we expand our perspective from the American sources to the PCI archives, held at the Fondazione Istituto Gramsci of Rome, the range of protagonists participating in the debate on the “communist question” in Italy widens considerably. These come to include a series of university centres, among which Columbia University’s Research Institute for International Change, as well as individual representatives of the academic world and of the think tanks that, in one way or another, attempted to insert themselves into the debate. In some cases, as the sources of the James E. Carter Presidential Library demonstrate, political scientists and politicians developed personal relationships that were not free from predominance and role inversions; at times, rather than a real relationship, there was a direct influence on the other’s way of acting and thinking. The picture that we have before us therefore requires a by no means easy balancing act.

Still today, when asked about the actual influence on Carter’s administration of those who sustained the necessity to abandon the PCI’s traditional “*conventio ad excludendum*” from government, the political scientist Robert N. Putnam — who had studied Italian communism at the start of his career and who became an American government consultant in 1977 — replies that it is

a “hard question”.<sup>11</sup> Focusing on the two-year period of 1976-1978, this article aims to reply to this question, or at the least seeks to develop more in-depth analyses as opposed to those that have thus far been advanced.

### **Prior to the election: the Trilateral Commission, the Council on Foreign Relations and the PCI**

Carter’s path towards nomination by the Democratic convention initiated in 1974. Harvard’s Sovietologist Zbigniew Brzezinski, also former electoral advisor to John F. Kennedy and advisor to Lyndon Johnson, asked Carter to join the Trilateral Commission, an informal network of entrepreneurs, political representatives, scholars and journalists from the United States (and Canada), Western Europe and Japan. The previous year, Brzezinski had helped set up the network together with his friend David Rockefeller, banker and heir to the powerful American family. The theoretical premises for the Trilateral’s creation resided in the conviction that, at a time when ideologies were losing their force and deindustrialisation of the most advanced economies was enhancing global interdependence, the guarantee of global equilibria could no longer be an exclusive prerogative of the United States. Rather, it became necessary to involve the other economically most developed, parts of global capitalism.<sup>12</sup> The entry into the Trilateral Commission allowed Carter to gain greater knowledge of foreign politics and to establish relationships with many of those who were to join his administration: the same Brzezinski became his National Security Advisor, Walter Mondale was nominated vice president, and Cyrus Vance Secretary of State.<sup>13</sup>

The Trilateral’s most famous report is probably “The Crisis of Democracy”, co-authored in 1975 by the French sociologist Michel J. Crozier, by the American political scientist Samuel Huntington and by the Japanese sociologist Joji Watanuki. A little over 70 pages long, this document analysed the capacity of democratic regimes to endure the ongoing economic crisis and social challenges that emerged in the 1960s. According to the rapporteurs,

<sup>11</sup> Robert N. Putnam, interview with author, 4 April 2017. Putnam’s works on the PCI include *The Italian communist politician*, in Donald Blackmer and Sidney Tarrow (eds.), *Communism in Italy and France*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 173-220 and *Interdependence and the Italian communists*, “International Organization”, 1978, vol. 32, n. 2, pp. 301-349.

<sup>12</sup> On the foundation of the Trilateral Commission, see Dino Knudsen, *The Trilateral commission and global governance: informal elite diplomacy, 1972-82*, New York, Routledge, 2016, p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> See Vance’s account in Cyrus Vance, *Hard choices. Critical years in America’s foreign Policy*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1983, pp. 26-39. On the criticism of Carter’s poor experience in foreign politics, see S. Kaufman, *Plans unraveled*. A total of 22 members of the administration were part of the Trilateral Commission.

the main threat to democratic stability was no longer represented by national communist parties (neither in Western Europe nor in Japan) but by the radical phenomena that might emerge — and that were indeed emerging — in the fragmented socio-cultural context of the time.<sup>14</sup> In search of a spokesperson who could guarantee stability and control over the masses, the European section of the Trilateral Commission established a relationship with Sergio Segre, director of the PCI's foreign branch. We know very little about this relationship; some information is contained in the autobiography of one of the network's members, Richard N. Gardner, who was appointed American ambassador to Italy in 1977, and who played a fundamental role — as we will see further ahead — in the development of American politics regarding the PCI.<sup>15</sup> This is also implied by Dino Knudsen, although he doesn't cite any primary sources. Knudsen goes so far as to claim that the Italian party “became affiliated with the Trilateral Commission”,<sup>16</sup> where Eurocommunism was internally promoted by some of its members (including Gianni Agnelli) and inserted into a wider debate about the European Left. Segre met Brzezinski precisely on the occasion of a gathering organised by the Trilateral's European section, which took place prior to the American elections of November 1976. The future National Security Advisor informed Segre that Carter could not, for the moment, “push further ahead” in public declarations about the “communist question” in Italy, but that he was “open to discussion” and that, in any case, “the staff that surround him are following the course of Italian politics and of the PCI with great attention”.<sup>17</sup>

The Trilateral wasn't Segre's only interlocutor, though. A number of American liberals had started approaching him in 1973, including Professor Alan A. Platt, a scholar of American foreign politics in Italy<sup>18</sup> as well as a pupil of Roger Hilsman, former director of the Bureau of Intelligence Research (INR) in the State Department of Kennedy's administration. Platt also served as a State Department official and as advisor to Senator Edward Muskie, who would substitute Cyrus Vance as Secretary of State after the latter stepped down in 1980.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, Segre established a relationship with Joseph

<sup>14</sup> Michel J. Crozier, Samuel Huntington Joji Watanuki, *The Crisis of democracy. Report to the governability of democracies to the Trilateral Commission*, New York, New York University Press, 1975, pp. 55-56.

<sup>15</sup> Richard N. Gardner, *Mission: Italy. Gli anni di piombo raccontati dall'ambasciatore americano a Roma 1977-1981*, Milan, Mondadori, 2004.

<sup>16</sup> D. Knudsen, *The Trilateral Commission*, pp. 149-150.

<sup>17</sup> Confidential note to Berlinguer from Segre, 24 September 1976, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Note alla Segreteria, mf. 243, p. 427X, V bim. 1976.

<sup>18</sup> Alan A. Platt, Silvio Leonardi, *American foreign policy and the postwar Italian left*, “Political Science Quarterly”, Summer 1978, vol. 93, n. 2, pp. 197-215.

<sup>19</sup> Note for Berlinguer, G.C. Pajetta, Segreteria, 29 April 1975, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 204, p. 543, II bim. 1975.

LaPalombara, an Italianist and political scientist at Yale who was nominated as cultural *attaché* of the American embassy in via Veneto, and an “advisor to the Democratic Party” from 1976 onwards.<sup>20</sup> Other than institutional contacts,<sup>21</sup> in fact, for some time now Segre also maintained contacts with a network of academics and experts. In 1975, Stanley Hoffmann and Zygmunt Nagorski, the directors of the Center for European Studies at Harvard University and the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) — the think tank founded in New York in 1921 — respectively, invited Giorgio Napolitano and Segre to the United States for a cycle of conferences. The refusal of the State Department under Henry Kissinger to grant an entry visa (in accordance with the 1950 McCarran Act) meant nothing came of it. Nevertheless, the *querelle* drew the attention of the Italian and American press, which sided against the State Department’s decision, and encouraged a number of influential names on the American political scene to intervene. Kennedy’s former advisor, Arthur Schlesinger jr., called it an “absurdity”,<sup>22</sup> while the political scientist Richard Holbrooke — subsequently nominated as State Department advisor in Carter’s administration — argued, on the pages of “Foreign Policy”, that this represented a violation of the decrees regarding freedom of movement contained in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975.<sup>23</sup>

With Ford’s defeat and Carter’s entry into the White House, the possibility of a dialogue between the PCI and the United States seemed to materialise. The opening declarations and contacts liberal representatives established with the Italian party’s leadership were the outcome of a theoretic elaboration, which counted among its main protagonists precisely the CFR, the Trilateral and the university research centres, predominantly those in the north-east. In the mid-1970s, the CFR launched a research project on communism, in collaboration with the Bologna-based International Affairs Institute (Istituto Affari Internazionali, hereafter IAI), the most renowned centre for the elaboration of Italian foreign politics.<sup>24</sup> The premises of this project were similar to those that had inspired political scientists involved in the Planning Group of the American Political Science Association (APSA) a few years earlier. They were advanced, in particular, by the Italianist and State Department advisor as

<sup>20</sup> Note for Berlinguer, Chiaromonte, Napolitano, Peggio, 30 April 1976, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 228, p. 791X, II bim. 1976.

<sup>21</sup> For example, the Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy. V. Lomellini, *The Pci and the Usa*, p. 353.

<sup>22</sup> R. Brancoli, *Gli Usa e il Pci*, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Holbrooke, *Dateline: a little visa problem*, “Foreign Policy”, Winter 1975-1976, n. 21, p. 247.

<sup>24</sup> On the IAI see Piero Graglia, *Altiero Spinelli e la genesi dello Iai: il federalismo, il gruppo de “il Mulino” e la dimensione internazionale del lavoro culturale*, in Daniela Preda (ed.), *Altiero Spinelli e i movimenti per l’unità europea*, Padova, Cedam, 2010, pp. 245-277.

well as a professor at MIT, Donald L.M. Blackmer;<sup>25</sup> the end of the communist movement's monolithic rule, and the attempts of Western European parties to free themselves from Moscow's control were by now irreversible, as events such as the Sino-Soviet dispute and the invasion of Czechoslovakia following the "Prague Spring" of 1968 had demonstrated. The interpretation of the latter incident was perhaps too bold, but it nurtured the conviction that it was necessary to study the relations between different communist parties more closely. A debate was launched within the CFR, which ran parallel to that of the APSA, and in September 1974 the proposal was made to form an ad hoc discussion group. Participants included Brzezinski, the historian and Sovietologist at MIT William E. Griffith, his colleague and future advisor to Carter Donald Zagoria, and Raymond Garthoff, a former State Department advisor.<sup>26</sup> Emblematic of the group's objectives was a meeting held in Bologna in November 1976, on the initiative of Cesare Merlini, the IAI's director and a Trilateral Commission member, co-organised with Zygmunt Nagorski, director of the CFR. On this occasion, an explicit request was made to include someone from the "Carter people" in the guest list.<sup>27</sup> The conference outcomes were summarised by Arrigo Levi, a journalist of "La Stampa", also member of the Trilateral's European section and a member of the IAI since its establishment, in the "Newsweek" issue of 6 December 1976.<sup>28</sup> Levi's article ended as follows:

To me, one thing seems clear: a refusal on the part of American officials to meet Western communist leaders or to allow them entry in the U.S. makes just about as much sense as it does for the ostrich to hide the head in the sand in times of danger.<sup>29</sup>

This pragmatic course of action, according to which a closure to any legitimation of the Western European communists — typical of American politics during the Nixon-Ford era — made little sense, seemed to prevail within the

<sup>25</sup> Donald L.M. Blackmer, Paper Presentation, 1968, American political science association (APSA), in Massachusetts institute of technology libraries, Institute archives and special collections, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Donald L.M. Blackmer Papers, Box 4, MC 715.

<sup>26</sup> Discussion group on intercommunist relations, 18 September 1974, in Department of rare books and special collections, Princeton university library, Public policy papers, Council on foreign relations records: Studies Department series, Box 210, Folder 3.

<sup>27</sup> In the end, they chose Richard Holbrooke, a "left-wing" liberal who collaborated with the State Department when it was directed by Cyrus Vance. Wilfried L. Kohl to Zygmunt Nagorski, 22 July 1976, in Department of rare books and special collections, Princeton university library, Public policy papers, Council on foreign relations meeting records, 1920-1995, Box 569, Folder 5.

<sup>28</sup> Préparation et Fondation de l'Istituto affari internazionali (IAI), Istituto affari internazionali: Comitato direttivo e soci, 15 February 1976, in Historical archives of the European union, Altiero Spinelli Fonds, AS 46, 01/05/64-03/02/66; The members list of the Trilateral Commission in 1973 is contained in Triangle Paper n. 1, Towards a renovated world monetary system, 22-23 October 1973, [http://trilateral.org/download/doc/world\\_monetary\\_system\\_19731.pdf](http://trilateral.org/download/doc/world_monetary_system_19731.pdf) (last accessed 14 June 2018).

<sup>29</sup> Arrigo Levi, *Consider the Ostrich*, "Newsweek", 6 December 1976, p. 15.

new Democratic administration. In an interview with the weekly magazine “Time”, published on 22 December 1976, Brzezinski confirmed that, although the United States and allied governments should not favour the communists’ rise to power in Europe, “the fact that Eurocommunism is heading towards destalinisation and, subsequently, deleninisation, is something very welcome”. He added that, in the long run, this process would have contributed to weaken “Soviet control” over the European communist parties.<sup>30</sup> Likewise, Vance — speaking from the pages of the weekly magazine “Newsweek” — noted that the communists’ entry into Western European governments could upset the relations between the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe far more than it might destabilise the NATO.<sup>31</sup> Vance and Brzezinski’s positions on Eurocommunism were therefore similar: the détente started, or accelerated, processes such as those in which the PCI, the French Communist Party (PCF) and the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) played a primary role. Its potentials therefore had to be exploited if the United States was to destroy the Soviet enemy in view of an attempt to assimilate these parties to democratic systems and avoid coming to a violent “confrontation”.

In the same year of the conference co-organised by the CFR, Segre published an article in the think tank’s official magazine “Foreign Affairs”, entitled *The Communist Question in Italy*. This wasn’t the first time that an Italian politician made himself heard in this magazine. The leader of the Italian Socialist Party (Partito Socialista Italiano, hereafter PSI), Pietro Nenni, had done the same — albeit after a period of stalling — during the political phase of the “opening to the Left”,<sup>32</sup> following the invitation in 1956 of the then director of “Foreign Affairs”, Hamilton Fish Armstrong.<sup>33</sup> William P. Bundy, the magazine’s new director, invited Segre to write the article, in a letter where he suggested that Segre should discuss the points that raised most doubts in him about his party’s role in Italian politics, focusing on the PCI’s foreign politics, in particular. Furthermore, Bundy was keen for Segre to include a brief historical excursus on the PCI as well as explicit references to the importance of Antonio Gramsci’s philosophy for Italian Marxism.<sup>34</sup> Segre’s piece seems to have respected these guidelines, which were quite reasonable in

<sup>30</sup> Rodolfo Brancoli, *Spettatori interessati: gli Stati Uniti e la crisi italiana, 1975-1980*, Milan, Garzanti, 1980, p. 158 and Bino Olivi, *Carter e l’Italia. La politica estera americana, l’Europa e i comunisti italiani*, Milan, Longanesi, 1978, p. 116.

<sup>31</sup> As Vance sees it, “Newsweek”, 13 December 1976.

<sup>32</sup> Pietro Nenni, *Where the Italian socialists stand*, “Foreign Affairs”, January 1962, vol. 40, n. 2, pp. 213-223. In that same year Altiero Spinelli had published a piece in the magazine. Altiero Spinelli, *Atlantic pact or European unity*, “Foreign Affairs”, July 1962, vol. 40, n. 4, pp. 542-552.

<sup>33</sup> Leopoldo Nuti, *Gli Stati Uniti e l’apertura a sinistra. Importanza e limiti della presenza americana in Italia*, Bari-Rome, Laterza, 1999, pp. 86-88.

<sup>34</sup> Letter from William Bundy to Sergio Segre, 18 December 1975, in Department of rare books and special Collections, Princeton university library, William P. Bundy Papers, Box 3.

light of the ongoing debate in the American intellectual panorama. The author took advantage of the occasion to clarify certain aspects of the “historical compromise” Berlinguer had launched in 1973. In his analysis of the communist strategy in foreign affairs, Segre insisted on the importance of supporting the détente and the integration of Western Europe, two objectives that could only be obtained if existing alliances remained in place. He mentioned the Soviet Union only once, when he recalled Berlinguer’s public criticism of Moscow in 1976, and he stressed that the PCI’s relationship with the United States was a healthy one, even if not without criticalities caused by attempted interferences in Italian internal politics, of which part of the American establishment had given evidence over time.<sup>35</sup> Segre had undoubtedly adapted his words to an educated and informed audience; for this purpose, he included not only quotes from Gramsci (five of a total of approximately 800 words),<sup>36</sup> but also continuous references to political representatives or famous exponents of the Italian, non-communist ruling class who had opened up to his party, such as Umberto Agnelli, Altiero Spinelli, Luigi Granelli, Francesco De Martino and Pietro Nenni.

During one of the presidential debates of 1976, Carter’s challenger, Gerald Ford, accused him of having “looked with sympathy” at a possible entry of the communists into the governments of the NATO member countries.<sup>37</sup> Carter limited himself to call his challenger’s statement “ridiculous”, and made an important observation, on suggestion of his collaborators. In the debate’s preparatory notes, his staff highlighted the fact that Eurocommunism wasn’t a real and unitary phenomenon but that, quite the contrary, various national parties existed with different political objectives. While not in favour of a communist party entering a Western government, the United States, the document continues, would have adopted a wait-and-see policy in this regard.<sup>38</sup> The novelty — which in reality ended up being insufficient in leading to a turn of the Americans — lay in the rejection of the “domino theory”, which had

<sup>35</sup> Sergio Segre, *The “Communist question” in Italy*, “Foreign Affairs”, July 1976, vol. 54, n. 4, pp. 691-707.

<sup>36</sup> It was precisely in this period that Gramsci’s oeuvre, which had already been translated into English some years before, started to exert fascination and to be disseminated. See David Forgacs, *Le edizioni inglesi di Gramsci*, in Derek Boothman, Francesco Giasi, Giuseppe Vacca (eds.), *Gramsci in Gran Bretagna*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2015; Keith Nield, John Seed, *Waiting for Gramsci*, “Social History”, 1981, vol. 6, n. 2, pp. 209-227; Frank Rosengarthen, *John Cammett’s writings on Antonio Gramsci and the Pci*, “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, March 2015, vol. 16, n. 1, pp. 195-210 and Leonardo Paggi, *Dear John, where is the world we lost?*, “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, March 2015, vol. 16, n. 1, pp. 170-178.

<sup>37</sup> Gerald Ford Presidential Campaign Debate, 6 October 1976, available online at: [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=6414](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=6414) (last accessed 30 October 2014).

<sup>38</sup> Briefing Book, 28 September 1976, in James E. Carter Presidential library, Records of the 1976 Campaign committee to Elect Jimmy Carter, Dave Rubenstein’s Subject Files, Box 45, Briefing Book, 9/28/76 [1-2]. See also R. Portolani, *Stati Uniti e l’eurocomunismo 1976-1980*, pp. 83-84.



been applied to the expansion of communism in Europe: a reading shared by many political scientists, among which Stanley Hoffmann, to name the most famous one.<sup>39</sup> It stressed the differences between the various states “at risk” of communist influence, rather than highlighting what they had in common, thus allowing for a wider range of political strategies to be developed in a distinct way, based on national cases.

### **Gardner in via Veneto: the pressure to adopt an official stance**

Jimmy Carter was elected president of the United States on 2 November 1976. When the news of the Democrats’ victory in the United States spread, *L’Unità* published an article on the front page, entitled ‘Carter elected new American president. The will to change triumphed in the US’. A comment by Segre and a declaration by Berlinguer on the outcome of the American vote accompanied the article. For both, Carter’s presidency could represent an important change of pace, as well as the hope to develop “solid friendship relations with the great American nation”.<sup>40</sup> After all, the PCI had never been so close to entering the government; following the extraordinary results of the 1976 elections, the exclusively Christian Democratic government run by Giulio Andreotti had been made possible by the communist abstention, in exchange for a number of institutional positions.

When the new administration began nominating the diplomatic staff in Europe, the first ambiguities emerged from the wait-and-see policy that took inspiration from the “non-interference and non-indifference” principle. When they reached their respective headquarters, the ambassadors and their

<sup>39</sup> During a hearing before one of the House committees, Hoffmann clearly stated that Eurocommunism “did not exist and would never have existed”. Western Europe in 1978: Political Trends and U.S. Policy, Hearings before the subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the Committee on international relations house of representatives Ninety-Fifth Congress Second Session July 12, 17; and August 3, 1978. Printed for the use of the Committee on international relations, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978, p. 77. Moreover, for Hoffmann, the growth of the Communist parties in Western Europe was more a problem for Moscow than it was for Washington. Stanley Hoffmann, *Primacy or world order: American foreign policy since the Cold War*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1980, pp. 82-83.

<sup>40</sup> *Dichiarazione di Berlinguer*, “L’Unità”, 4 November 1976; see, in the same edition, *Carter nuovo Presidente americano. È prevalsa negli Usa una volontà di cambiamento* and Sergio Segre, *I riflessi di una scelta*. See also *Jimmy Carter esclude interferenze contro i comunisti al governo*, “L’Unità”, 17 September 1976 and Antonio Rubbi, *Il mondo di Berlinguer*, Milan, Napoleone, 1983, p. 55. After all, the PCI had used similar tones during the electoral campaigns. See Alberto Jacoviello, *Kissinger non è tutto*, “L’Unità”, 5 May 1976; *Carter: “nessun muro contro l’Italia se vince il Pci”*, “L’Unità”, 4 May 1976; *Carter, Brown e Church concordati: è un “errore” la chiusura al Pci*, “L’Unità”, 2 June 1976; *Giudizi di Carter sul voto in Italia*, “L’Unità”, 24 June 1976; *Jimmy Carter esclude interferenze contro i comunisti al governo*, “L’Unità”, 17 September 1976.

collaborators found themselves having to answer politicians, journalists and public opinion about the new administration's stance on the "communist question". Nevertheless, thanks to different actors putting pressure on the State Department, it waited about two and a half months after Carter took office in the White House — on 6 April 1977 — before it publicly expressed itself on Eurocommunism. These actors included the new ambassador to Italy, Richard N. Gardner, who took up service in via Veneto in March 1977.<sup>41</sup> Gardner, a law professor at Columbia University and a Trilateral Commission member, had worked as a lawyer for companies of the likes of Fiat (this position allowed him to get to know Gianni Agnelli personally). He had various personal connections with journalists such as Arrigo Levi, Ugo Stille and Furio Colombo, with the President of the Bank of Italy, Guido Carli, and with one of the economists of the Club of Rome, Aurelio Peccei.<sup>42</sup> "L'Unità" called the choice of the new ambassador who was stationed in Rome "interesting", given his past experiences in diplomatic contexts, where he had contributed to develop a policy of "non-interference" in the internal affairs of other countries.<sup>43</sup>

When Gardner took office, the sole indication he had received concerning the "communist question" was that he should expand contacts with PCI representatives at all levels. These guidelines were issued by the State Department and regarded the countries with the most influential communist parties: Italy, France and Spain. In Rome, in addition to Segre, Luciano Barca and Giancarlo Pajetta, Emanuele Macaluso also started having regular contacts with the diplomatic official Martin Wenick, who had already been employed during John Volpe's mandate (1974-1976), and with the political secretary and director of the embassy in via Veneto, Alan Ford.<sup>44</sup> The strategy of expanding contacts wasn't a novelty in itself, nor was it in any way specific to the Italian situation.<sup>45</sup> It more likely represented a means of playing for time while analysing the single national contexts and trying to establish a collaboration with the

<sup>41</sup> Memorandum for the President, from Zbigniew Brzezinski, Swearing-in of Ambassador Gardner, 18 March 1977, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, Italy, Box 38.

<sup>42</sup> R.N. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>43</sup> Gardner *rappresenterà gli Stati Uniti a Roma*, "L'Unità", 7 January 1977, p. 12.

<sup>44</sup> Sergio Segre cited in A. Rubbi, *Il mondo di Berlinguer*, p. 57; see also Michael Ledeen, *West European communism and American foreign policy*, New Brunswick and Oxford, Transaction Books, 1987, p. 79; R. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, pp. 124-126 and Emanuele Macaluso, *50 anni nel Pci*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2004, p. 208.

<sup>45</sup> The first archival reference is dated 1973. Note to Berlinguer and Novella, from Sergio Segre, 9 June 1973, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 065, p. 1403X, IV sem. 1973; nevertheless, Luciano Barca and Antonio Rubbi had been meeting with diplomatic officials as of 1967. See Luciano Barca, *Cronache dall'interno dei vertici del Pci*, vol. II, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2006, pp. 601-603, and the reconstruction of Mario Margiocco, *Stati Uniti e Pci*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1981.

non-communist political forces of the various countries. In other words, Washington possibly hoped to have more time than it actually had so as to take a decision on the politics to adopt with regard to the “communist question”. In fact, from the very beginning, Carter’s administration was pressured to take a stance more rapidly; in March 1977, the Italian-American lobby — headed by an entrepreneur from the food industry, Jeno Paolucci — insisted on bringing Prime Minister Andreotti to the United States, precisely with the purpose of forcing the American government to make a public declaration on Italian politics.<sup>46</sup> Likewise, the Italian ambassador in Washington, Roberto Gaja, appears to have insisted that the Carter administration take a position on the PCI (expressing his disapproval of the communists entering the government).<sup>47</sup> At the same time, two influential conservative columnists of the *Washington Post* (Rowland Evans and Robert Novak) raised a controversy when they accused Gardner of having caused resentment among the DC leadership, following his encounter with the communist Pietro Ingrao.<sup>48</sup> In reality, he had received Ingrao in via Veneto in his institutional role as president of the Chamber of Deputies. Hence, to the background of the Carter administration’s silence on the Italian “communist question” even an — in itself irrelevant — incident prescribed by protocol could raise an uproar (nurtured also by part of the Italian press).

Gardner sent a formal request to Washington to intervene in the matter, but National Security Advisor Brzezinski merely suggested some possible replies that would appease the tensions. If the Carter administration hadn’t yet expressed itself on the “communist question”, Brzezinski wrote, this was because its politics regarding the PCI hadn’t changed from that of the previous administration. At the same time, though, the White House didn’t want to “cause embarrassment” to the Christian Democracy (Democrazia Cristiana, hereafter DC) by intervening directly in its support, an attitude that would not respect the guidelines of the “non-interference” policy set out by Washington.<sup>49</sup> Either way, about a week later, on 6 April 1977, the State Department’s spokesperson made a public statement about the American stance on Eurocommunism. He declared that the United States attributed “great importance” to its “capacity to work with the Countries of Western Europe on questions of vital interest”, but that these capacities

<sup>46</sup> Memorandum for Brzezinski and Bill Hyland, from David Aaron, 15 March 1977, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, Italy, Box 38. The actual influence of the Italian-American lobby in the politics of those years remains a topic open for research.

<sup>47</sup> I. Wall, *L’amministrazione Carter e l’Italia*, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, *Carter’s Dilemma With ‘Eurocommunists’*, “The Washington Post”, 31 March 1977; see also R. Brancoli, *Spettatori interessati*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>49</sup> Memo to Richard Gardner, from Brzezinski, 31 March 1977, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, Italy, Box 38.

[m]ight be weakened if similar governments were to be *dominated* [my italics] by political parties whose specific traditions, values and actions are unrelated to the fundamental democratic principles and shared interests that form the basis of our relations with Western Europe.<sup>50</sup>

Gardner read the text “in disbelief”,<sup>51</sup> and sent another memorandum, this time to the State Department, whose words he criticised for being too weak and ineffective for the Italian context.<sup>52</sup> In reality, the ambiguous wording of the April memorandum had been deliberate. In fact, when Gardner again rang the alarm bells, the State Department replied dryly and in a far less concerned manner than its interlocutor; in just two points, Vance’s telegram to Gardner explained that to speak of a communist party’s “dominion”, rather than of its “participation” in the government of any Western country, proved to be more functional to Washington’s politics at that time. The announcement made reference, indeed, to all the parties of Eurocommunism, not just the Italian case. The text therefore had “an intentional ambiguity, since it leaves the judgement of specific future events in our hands”.<sup>53</sup> The State Department suggested Gardner solve the situation by making it clear to Italian political leaders — “during private conversations” — that the United States did not support the “historical compromise” and that it would have done nothing to promote it.<sup>54</sup> In other words, the fact that the Italians — as the ambassador emphasised — did not consider the statement of 6 April a stance on the “communist question” on behalf of the American administration was precisely what Washington expected. In making this choice, contrary to what had previously been declared and as proof that the federal government’s politics were not coherent in this matter, Carter’s administration adopted the regional approach to the “communist question”. In view of the upcoming French local elections, while his government didn’t want to compromise the “non-interference” policy, at the same time it didn’t want to irritate the French President Giscard d’Estaing even further; the latter had asked Washington to express itself on a possible victory of the Left in France.<sup>55</sup>

To avoid tying his hands in one direction or another, for some months Carter continued to speak in vague terms. For example, when Vittorio Zucconi of *La Stampa* interviewed him during a press conference for European journalists,

<sup>50</sup> R. Brancoli, *Spettatori interessati*, pp. 180-181.

<sup>51</sup> R. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, p. 88.

<sup>52</sup> Telegram to Department of State and Brzezinski, from Rome, 8 April 1977, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, Italy, Box 38.

<sup>53</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State to Embassy of Rome, April 1977, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, Country File, Italy, Box 38.

<sup>54</sup> Telegram from Secretary of State to Embassy of Rome, April 1977, loc. cit. a nota 53.

<sup>55</sup> Frédéric Heurtebize, *Washington face à l’Union de la gauche en France, 1971-1981*, “Revue française d’études américaines”, deuxième trimestre 2010, pp. 91-94.

at the end of April 1977, he reaffirmed that the United States preferred for NATO countries to be governed by democratic parties, and that no “totalitarian element” could ever become “influential or dominant”.<sup>56</sup> Once again he was thinking of the French case, where the Socialist Party (PSF) had three times the consensus of the PCF. What Carter always forgot to specify is what would have happened if his administration were to be confronted with Western government formations involving communist-led ministries. By avoiding this issue, the White House resident in fact left open the possibility to dialogue and collaborate, in the near future, with any type of government. Hence, the distinction between national cases resided not so much in the nature of the communist parties as in that of the other parties: whether the latter were capable of managing, from a position of power, the entry of Western communist parties into the governments of the respective countries.

### **Signs of dialogue, the CFR and the Research Institute for International Change**

In May 1977, the CFR organised a conference with Carlo Maria Santoro. As a historian, an expert in international relations and a member of the PCI’s economic commission, Santoro wasn’t new to encounters with the American intellectual world. Already in November 1976, when he was a regional councillor in the Veneto region, he had had the opportunity to travel overseas on a research trip and meet “men from the business world, university professors, bankers, some politicians, famous journalists”.<sup>57</sup> These had questioned him about his party’s positions, specifically its links with Moscow and the credibility of its economic politics. In a note to Berlinguer, Santoro underlined the fact that many of the people who gravitated around the CFR were critical of Kissinger’s politics on Eurocommunism, especially with regard to visas. In this sense, Carter’s election — according to the historian — could have marked a change of pace. He nevertheless warned not to be overwhelmed by easy and premature enthusiasm. Until that moment, the declarations of the new resident of the White House certainly hadn’t given much evidence of any significant opening up to the communists of Western Europe. More importantly, it was precisely because of the nature of the presidency that had only just taken office — “heir to that missionary and spiritual tradition that passed from Wilson via

<sup>56</sup> Jimmy Carter European Newspaper Journalists - Question-and-Answer Session, 25 April 1977, available online at: [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7435&st=&st1=](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=7435&st=&st1=) (last accessed 4 July 2018).

<sup>57</sup> Letter from the Communist Party Veneto federation to Berlinguer. Venice, 9 December 1976, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 281, p. 475X, VI bim. 1976.

Roosevelt to Kennedy and even Johnson” — that the United States couldn’t be expected to relinquish its role as world power, responsible as it was (viewed from a Wilsonian perspective) for the safeguarding of power relations in the global arena.<sup>58</sup>

After the leadership’s approval, Santoro participated in the conference the CFR organised in 1977. On his return, he sent the PCI’s administrative office a note in which he listed the peculiarities of the CFR’s invitation, offering a lucid and accurate analysis of the meeting. Thus, it was the first encounter to have an essentially political meaning (Santoro had been allowed to travel “as a communist” thanks to a waiver to the McCarran Act, granted by the embassy in Rome). It was organised by the CFR, which counted among its members a number of political representatives of the time, including Vance and Brzezinski. What is more, the majority of Santoro’s interlocutors on this occasion represented the economic and financial sectors of the American ruling class: the president of Morgan and Stanley, Frank Petito; David Lund, the economist that directed the Department of Commerce; and John Diebold, president of the consulting firm of the same name.<sup>59</sup> Despite the meeting’s positive outcome, Santoro complained that from the American side only “areal” readings of communism had emerged, rather than an analysis of the specific Italian case. The CFR’s interlocutors — much like the members of the administration, the industrials and the bankers Santoro met at the conference — tended to read Italian political events in light of their relevance in the Mediterranean area, or within the dialectic between East and West. Or further still, they would assimilate the PCI to European social democracies, utterly failing to grasp the peculiarity of the Italian political tradition *vis-à-vis* the continent it was a part and parcel of.<sup>60</sup> Whether it was to challenge Santoro or — what is more likely — to tackle the concern raised by the Union de la Gauche in France, in view of the 1978 elections, the traditional fear of communist contagion in Western Europe resurfaced once again.

The debate didn’t end here. Still in 1977, the communist Lucio Libertini travelled overseas and met certain “friends of Columbia University”.<sup>61</sup> This meeting was organised by Professor Seweryn Bialer, one of the best known American Sovietologists and director of the Research Institute for International Change

<sup>58</sup> Letter from the Communist Party Veneto federation to Berlinguer. Venice, 9 December 1976, loc. cit. a nota 57.

<sup>59</sup> Note to Berlinguer, Pajetta, Napolitano, Administrative Office. From Sergio Segre, 18 July 1977, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Note to Administrative Office, mf. 299, p. 205X, IV bim. 1977.

<sup>60</sup> Note to Berlinguer, Pajetta, Napolitano, Administrative Office. From Sergio Segre, 18 July 1977 loc. cit. a nota 59.

<sup>61</sup> Note to Berlinguer, Pajetta, Napolitano, Chiaromonte, Administrative Office, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 298, p. 598X, III bim. 1977.

(a research centre affiliated with the City University of New York), which had been directed also by Brzezinski. Two State Department advisors also participated in the Columbia University meeting, as well as a columnist of the “New York Times”. On this occasion, Bialer suggested to Libertini that they should organise a series of research seminars, to be sponsored by Columbia University and the Gramsci Institute.<sup>62</sup> Bialer was convinced that the PCI had initiated the transition to a social democracy, and that it was in a more advanced stage than its Western European counterparts. Moreover, he stressed the ideological distinctions inherent in the currents and, specifically, the potential distance between the leaders’ moderation and the maximalism of part of the electorate. As he wrote in 1977, if the danger was that a social communist victory might unleash reactionary forces in Italy and strengthen the most “hard-line” positions among communists, it remained necessary to study the actual state of the debate within the PCI while continuing to observe the entire panorama of Italian parties.<sup>63</sup> His approaching the communist leadership was therefore part of a wider project that probably also represented an attempt to support the party’s more moderate section, in view of a transition to social democracy, at a point in which the dialogue between the European social democratic parties was becoming ever more intense, though not more effective or linear.<sup>64</sup>

Initially, Bialer’s proposal remained unheard, and it wasn’t until 18 January 1978 — after the publication of the State Department’s Memorandum, which I will discuss in the next section — that the PCI’s leadership returned to the issue. It was Libertini who put it back on the table, in a letter to Gerardo Chiaromonte: “the atmosphere has probably changed, certain things have taken a turn to our detriment. Still, if we want, we can try to use the channel that had opened”.<sup>65</sup> Apparently there were three meetings, held between 1978 and 1980, which brought together the leaders of the Italian and Spanish communist parties, in addition to exponents of the European social democratic Left, as well as representatives of Columbia, Princeton, MIT, the City University of New York, various research centres of the old continent and the IAI.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Note to Berlinguer, Pajetta, Napolitano, Chiaromonte, Administrative Office, loc. cit. a nota 61.

<sup>63</sup> Note to Berlinguer, Pajetta, Napolitano, Chiaromonte, Administrative Office, loc. cit. a nota 61.

<sup>64</sup> For an in-depth reconstruction of the relationships between the European social democratic parties and the PCI, see Michele Di Donato, *Il Pci e i rapporti con le socialdemocrazie, (1964-1984)*, Rome, Carocci, 2015.

<sup>65</sup> Letter from Libertini to Chiaromonte (Administrative Office) of 18 January 1978, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 316, p. 258, I bim. 1978.

<sup>66</sup> Antonio Bronda, *Sull’Europa tre giorni di dibattito alla “Columbia”, “L’Unità”, 3 October 1978*, p. 14. See also: Note from Ledda to Berlinguer and Pajetta, 28 January 1980, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Lavoro, mf. 440, p. 912, I bim. 1980 and Letter from Ledda to Berlinguer, 9 May 1980, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci,

Although the dialogue between a part of the American elite and the PCI continued, and even got stronger within the framework of debates among the European Left, any space for potential political implications seemed to have closed completely.

### **Towards the Memorandum of 12 January**

On 20 June 1977, in the midst of the Italian “national solidarity” season, the parties of the extended majority (i.e. including the PCI) signed a political agreement on a number of issues concerning the country’s internal affairs. To the Americans’ relief, foreign politics remained external to the agreement. Shortly after signing it, Andreotti travelled to Washington. As Italian prime ministers were accustomed to do, he went to “reassure” the American administration of the new government’s stability and Atlantic loyalty. In this specific case, Andreotti wanted to clarify that the political agreement wasn’t meant to legitimise the PCI’s institutional presence; on the contrary, directly involving the latter in governmental decisions was a strategy to weaken its social foundations.<sup>67</sup> It became evident that the positions within the State Department, which still followed a wait-and-see policy with regard to the “communist question” in Italy,<sup>68</sup> were different from those of the National Security Council (NSC), which was pushing for a definite closure.<sup>69</sup>

A similar debate was also taking place within the Trilateral; in 1977, the Trilateral Commission’s task force on East-West relations held a meeting in Bonn. The task force had been created in 1975, with the aim of providing the governments of the Western Bloc with the necessary analytical tools to establish relations with the communist countries, in the new political phase that seemed to be looming at the horizon. In fact, with Soviet activities resuming again in Africa, the détente seemed to be coming to an end. The Trilateral members therefore wanted to examine if, and how, the process of easing international tensions could resume again: they specifically focused on commercial flows between the two blocs; the concrete effects of the implementation of new human rights policies; the relations between superpowers and the coun-

Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Lavoro, mf. 467, p. 895, III bim. 1980.

<sup>67</sup> Guido Formigoni, *L’Italia nel sistema internazionale degli anni Settanta: spunti per riconsiderare la crisi*, in Agostino Giovagnoli, Silvio Pons (eds.), *Tra Guerra Fredda e Distensione. L’Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta* (Conference proceedings, Rome, November and December 2001), vol. I, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2003, p. 292.

<sup>68</sup> Memorandum from Cyrus Vance to the President, 18 July 1977, James E. Carter Presidential library, National security affairs, Brzezinski Material, VIP Visit File, Italy: Prime Minister Andreotti, 7/26-27/77, Briefing Book, Box 7.

<sup>69</sup> Memorandum from Zbigniew Brzezinski to the President, 23 July 1977, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, VIP Visit File, Italy: Prime Minister Andreotti, 7/26-27/77, Briefing Book, Box 7.



tries of the so-called Third World; and the relations between the countries of the Trilateral, the United States, Western Europe and Japan, on the one hand, and communist countries on the other. In this regard, political developments in Eastern Europe and its governments' relations with communist parties in Western Europe had to be taken into consideration.<sup>70</sup> For the whole of 1977, the research group met in Bonn, Tokyo, Washington and Paris. Jeremy Azrael, of the University of Chicago, was the rapporteur of the July meeting, which was held in the United States. Scholars such as Alexander Dallin, Gordon Skilling and Donald Zagoria participated in this meeting, as well as Samuel Huntington — who acted as an advisor to the NSC — and various members of the American government, among whom Robert Hunter of the NSC's European Desk.<sup>71</sup>

During a subsequent meeting at the end of October 1977, David Rockefeller invited Gardner as well, though only as a listener. In fact, as prescribed by internal regulations, Gardner had stepped down from the Trilateral Commission the moment he was nominated ambassador to Italy. Although he had joined the meeting as an external listener, Gardner was allowed to speak. He expressed his concern about the NATO's hold in the eventuality of the PCI's entry into government, and severely criticised the draft on Eurocommunism that the German politician Richard Löwenthal (close to the SPD) had prepared for the meeting. In his memoir, the ambassador reported that Löwenthal's draft expressed the certainty that the French and Italian communists would have supported the NATO in case of a clash between the blocs. Since the latter reading received consensus among the Trilateral's members, Gardner thought it was appropriate to raise the issue and convey his doubts about this specific aspect. He wasn't the only one, though, to show his reservations about the tone of the first draft of the Trilateral's report; Gardner was joined by the Italian ambassador in Washington, Egidio Ortona, and a number of Republicans who had just entered the Trilateral Commission, such as Henry Kissinger, Bill Brock, Caspar Weinberger and George Bush.<sup>72</sup> If we look at the final version, published in 1978, it is clear that the pressure this mixed group put on the Commission sufficed to change the initial draft.

<sup>70</sup> Memorandum from Christopher Makins to Zbigniew Brzezinski, George Franklin, Charles Hech, 15 December 1975, in Rockefeller Archive Center, The Trilateral Commission (North America) records, Series 2: Task Force Reports/Projects; File: Report #15: An Overview of East-West Relations, East-West TF – memos, correspondence, 1973, 1975, 1976, FA420, Box 109, Folder 1267.

<sup>71</sup> East-West Experts' Meetings, Wash. D.C., 28-29 July 1977, in Rockefeller Archive Center, The Trilateral Commission (North America) records, Series 2: Task Force Reports/Projects; File: Report #15: An Overview of East-West Relations, FA420, Box 109, Folder 1265. The European archive of the Trilateral Commission, which is held in Paris, is not accessible to scholars.

<sup>72</sup> R. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, pp. 157-159.

Published in the form of a pamphlet, the report now contained a description of the economic conditions of France and Italy, which were judged — according to an old frame of mind — essential elements for an understanding of the electoral force behind the two countries' communist parties, followed by an analysis of their political programmes. The PCI, the report sustained, had repeatedly condemned the Soviets' politics ever since Chruscev's government. Likewise, the PCF too had distanced itself from the Soviet party model, albeit with some delay. The PCE and the Japanese Communist Party were added to the group. All these political formations had moved away from the Leninist party model as well as from the "proletarian doctrine", committing themselves to defend individual freedom and democracy. In sum, there was no reason to believe that they wouldn't have remained faithful to their commitments if they had gained positions of power.<sup>73</sup>

Although the Trilateral didn't doubt the development of Western European communist parties, it nevertheless had reservations about the stability of both the NATO and the European Community in the eventuality communist representatives entered the French and Italian governments. This was not so much because of the PCI's and PCF's political programmes; rather, there was a possibility that — in the fragile context of European political integration, threatened as it was by the economic crisis of the 1970s — the Soviets might take the opportunity to infiltrate the continent via communist formations they remained connected to, albeit less than previously.<sup>74</sup> The Trilateral thus returned to a "Cold War-like" analysis, based on the assumption that the true key to a stable world balance resided in the economic conditions of the old continent. As we have seen, various people held different views, including Löwenthal; as an ideologist of the SPD, he was trying to facilitate the dialogue between European social democracies and the PCI.<sup>75</sup> However, a new and varied coalition had emerged, which involved conservatives and that part of the liberals that had won the debate.

Ambassador Gardner continued to publicly support the policy of rigidity, up to the point that it became Washington's official policy.<sup>76</sup> After the PCI had opened the crisis by claiming seats in the government, and following the positive response to this request by Ugo La Malfa of the Italian Republican Party (Partito Repubblicano Italiano, hereafter PRI), Brzezinski decided to intervene.

<sup>73</sup> Jeremy R. Azrael, Richard Löwenthal, Tohru Nakagawa, *An overview of East-West relations. Report of the Trilateral task-force on East-West relations to the Trilateral commission*, Triangle Paper n. 16, 1978, p. 20.

<sup>74</sup> J.R. Azrael, R. Löwenthal, T. Nakagawa, *An overview of East-West relations*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>75</sup> M. Di Donato, *I comunisti italiani e la sinistra europea*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>76</sup> F. Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge*, pp. 264-265 and Leo J. Wollemborg, *Stelle strisce e tricolore. Trent'anni di vicende politiche fra Roma e Washington*, Milan, Mondadori, 1983, pp. 262-265.

He sent the following warning message to President Carter: “The Italian situation is continuously worsening [...] and the Christian Democrats’ willpower to keep the communists away from any direct intervention in institutional affairs is weakening”.<sup>77</sup> On 9 December, following a meeting of the NSC, it was therefore decided that the time had come to express a stronger and clearer position on the Italian question. Gardner, who had supported this solution, appears to have been its main coordinator. In a meeting with Andreotti on 12 December 1977, Gardner expressed his concerns about the Italian political and economic developments, and asked the prime minister’s opinion on the strategy the United States ought to adopt; in particular, he asked if Andreotti deemed it necessary for the American government to make a public declaration on the PCI’s role in Italian institutions. Andreotti replied that Washington’s position was sufficiently clear. If anything, he suggested Gardner invite the Italian-American representatives of the Congress of the United States to make public statements in this respect, following the example of the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, Joseph Califano, a few days earlier.<sup>78</sup> Notwithstanding Andreotti’s disapproval, Gardner decided to persist in the direction he had chosen to take. It was a delicate historic moment, and the risk of the PCI’s direct involvement in order to solve the government crisis was becoming ever more concrete, considering the opinions that were circulating among certain representatives of the DC, the PSI and the PRI.<sup>79</sup>

From early January onwards, the American ambassador started sending telegrams to Washington where he stressed the need for President Carter to take a public position on the PCI. According to Gardner, the White House had to make its disapproval of any kind of communist involvement in the Italian government known, and should ask the members of the Italian-American caucus within the Congress to publicly express their opinion on the matter.<sup>80</sup> The ambassador also phoned Robert E. Barbour of the State Department’s Western European Affairs office, in order to uphold his cause. Contrary to his interlocutor, who deemed an explicit declaration to be “beyond current political limits”, Gardner believed that it was necessary to make an official statement. Additionally, he requested that the following words be included in the text:

<sup>77</sup> F. Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge*, pp. 266-267.

<sup>78</sup> Telegram from Rome to State, 13 December 1977, in Central Foreign Policy Files, created 7/1/1973-12/31/1979, documenting the period 1973- 12/31/1979, Record Group 59, Electronic Telegrams, 1977. Claudio Gatti, *Rimanga tra noi, L’America, l’Italia, la “questione comunista”: i segreti di 50 anni di storia*, Milan, Leonardo, 199, p. 170.

<sup>79</sup> Alberto Rapisarda, *Governo di crisi? Solo Fanfani ha fretta*, “La Stampa”, 12 December 1977; Gardner also describes a meeting he had with Fanfani, in which the DC leader was very explicit about the necessity to grant the PCI more space by allowing PCI-related “technical” ministers to enter the government. R. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, pp. 178-181.

<sup>80</sup> Telegram from Rome to State, 5 January 1978, in Central foreign policy files, created 7/1/1973-12/31/1979, documenting the period 1973-12/31/1979, Record Group 59, Electronic Telegrams, 1978. See also F. Heurtebize, *Le péril rouge*, pp. 270-272.

“every further step made to include the PCI in the governmental process would be received negatively, and would have a negative impact on our relations with the NATO alliance”.<sup>81</sup>

Gardner’s pressure on the American government added to the criticism part of the national press was directing at Carter’s foreign politics. The resident of the embassy in via Veneto recalled — in the journal *Businessweek* — that in autumn 1977 Brzezinski was subjected to “a trial” made up of accusations of various nature, including that of not taking to heart the threat of the Western European Left.<sup>82</sup> Moreover, the general attitude of the United States had stiffened with regard to the Soviet Union, especially in view of the choices the latter made and which were gradually demonstrating the fragility of the bipolar détente. For Washington, an unequivocal public statement about the communists’ entry into government was becoming necessary. In the United States itself, conservatives, on the one hand, and neoconservatives, on the other, had managed to reawaken American public opinion in view of the alleged communist threat in Western Europe. In first instance, ex-president Ford picked the matter up again; he predicted disastrous situations in which Eurocommunist parties tried to grasp power, and openly criticised Carter’s actions during a public speech at Westminster College (in Fulton, Missouri), which recalled the language Winston Churchill had used in his famous “Iron Curtain speech”. This time, however, the “curtain” closed off the area all the way from the Adriatic to the Atlantic.<sup>83</sup> Ford, whose arguments would soon also be reiterated by Kissinger, was backed up by the neoconservative press, especially the journal “Commentary”, where the Georgetown University professor Michael Ledeen published numerous harsh articles that condemned the “liberal softness” towards communism.<sup>84</sup>

In January 1978, in the midst of the government crisis, Gardner decided to go to Washington and personally intervene before the members of the State Department, White House, NSC, the US Departments of Defence and Treasury, the Joint Chief of Staff and the CIA, so as to arrange a public declaration on Italian politics. The necessity of making a public statement was no longer in doubt. During an official visit to France in early January, Carter had already told the Palais de Congrès of Paris that “it is precisely when democracy is faced with difficult challenges that its leaders must give proof of determination in resisting the temptation to seek solutions in non-democratic

<sup>81</sup> Telegram, 6 January 1978, in National archives and records administration, Records General 59, Records of Warren Christopher 1977-1980, Box 18.

<sup>82</sup> R. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, pp. 116-118.

<sup>83</sup> Graham Hovey, *Ford urges firm stand against West Europe’s Reds*, “The New York Times”, 30 October 1977.

<sup>84</sup> I. Wall, *L’amministrazione Carter e l’eurocomunismo*, p. 11; Ledeen’s articles were also published in the Italian press. Achille Albonetti, *Gli Stati Uniti e il Pci da Kissinger a Carter*, Rome, Circolo Stato e Libertà, 1980, p. 21.

forces”.<sup>85</sup> It is likely that Carter made this statement to please President Giscard D’Estaing in view of the upcoming general elections in March.<sup>86</sup> To remain in silence before the Italian developments would have been interpreted as an approval of the formulation of whatever decision taken by the DC and the parties involved in the government agreement in force as of 1977. It was necessary to clarify what the United States hoped for Italy; there was a danger that the DC would allow “technical” ministers close to the PCI into the government — even if they were not officially part of the government — in order to solve the crisis. The idea of expressing a preference for new elections, in the hope to see communist consensus diminish, was soon abandoned as the DC leadership was against it. The only option was to make a statement but to avoid accusations of interference in the internal affairs of another country, and in doing so involving other European partners as well. As Gardner informed Congress of the established procedure, the State Department’s spokesperson, Hodding Carter, was charged with the task of releasing the public statement.<sup>87</sup>

On 12 January 1978, Hodding Carter publicly read the text that had been agreed upon the previous day during a meeting of the Presidential Review Committee — one of the committees Brzezinski had set up in order to address foreign politics. By giving voice to the State Department’s official position, Carter expressed the American administration’s disapproval not only of the PCI’s “dominion” in the government, but also, and more generally, of any form of communist “participation” in the Italian government:

We believe it is our duty to clearly express our point of view to our friends and allies [...]. Our position is clear: we are not in favour of a similar participation and we would like to see communist influence in the countries of Western Europe diminish.<sup>88</sup>

This version of the earlier statement of 6 April 1977, revised and corrected following recent events and the change in balance of power within the administration, was partially directed at the DC, partially at Carter’s opponents in the United States. Nevertheless, the day after its publication, Ford and Kissinger participated in a TV programme broadcast on the American channel NBC, where they stated that they saw “a lot of communism and not much Europe” in the old continent as a result of Carter’s passiveness on the matter.<sup>89</sup> The

<sup>85</sup> Jimmy Carter, “Paris, France remarks at the Palais des Congres.”, 4 January 1978. Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American presidency project*. Available at: [www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29883](http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29883) (last accessed 10 July 2018).

<sup>86</sup> Frédéric Heurtebize, *The Union of the Left in France, 1971-1981: a threat to Nato? The view from Washington*, “Journal of Transatlantic Studies”, 2011, vol. 9, n. 3, pp. 244-246.

<sup>87</sup> Presidential Review Committee Meeting, 11 January 1978, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, Donated Historical Material, Zbigniew Brzezinski Collection, Subject File, Meetings, Box 24, PRC 12, 4/14/77.

<sup>88</sup> The text of the statement can be found in R. Gardner, *Mission: Italy*, pp. 201-203.

<sup>89</sup> R. Brancoli, *Spettatori interessati*, pp. 222-223; B. Olivi, *Carter e l’Italia*, p. 126.

message directed to the DC, by contrast, hit the nail on the head; Andreotti's diplomatic advisor, Umberto La Rocca, expressed his resentment to Gardner, explaining how both he and the prime minister felt the statement would have fuelled the debate on Washington's interference in Italian politics.<sup>90</sup> The United States, however, now wanted to detach itself from a controversy it had no interest being involved in, even more so given the internal debate that was affecting Carter's administration. Conservatives and neoconservatives teamed up with fledgling groups such as the Committee on the Present Danger in order to accuse the Democrats of being excessively "soft" with regard to the expansion of communism. While the United States was negotiating a new agreement on the limitation of arms with the Soviet Union (Salt II), Moscow had resumed its expansionist policies in Africa. The growing Soviet influence in Somalia and Ethiopia (and the clashes between opposite factions fuelled by the USSR) had caused the United States reason for concern about the Horn of Africa, as well as internal disagreement among members of the administration: Vance wanted to address the issue by keeping it limited to the territories and actors involved, whereas Brzezinski remained convinced about the necessity to challenge the opponent on a wider scale, for example by linking the Salt agreement terms to a retreat of Soviet forces. In the deadlock the federal government found itself in, the "communist question" in Western Europe became the piece in a bigger puzzle and a further element of fragility of Carter's foreign politics. From 1978 onwards, the president embraced Brzezinski's conviction and decided to harden his position on the Soviet Union, thus completing the process of normalising the relations with China and Vietnam that the Nixon administration had initiated.<sup>91</sup>

## Conclusion

With the Memorandum of 12 January 1978, the Carter administration put an end to the ambiguous politics on Eurocommunism of previous years, and asserted a clear and unequivocal position on the matter. The statement was the endpoint of a debate that had been ongoing for a decade and was part and parcel of a more general (and profound) revision of liberal culture, which was being challenged by (neo)conservative and progressive pressures. With regard to the politics concerning the "communist question" in Italy, on the

<sup>90</sup> Note from Umberto La Rocca to the president, 13 January 1978, in Archivio Storico Istituto Luigi Sturzo, Fondo Giulio Andreotti, Pratica 323, Stati Uniti, Sottoserie 2, Personalità, Richard Gardner, b. 598.

<sup>91</sup> On the different positions held within the process of normalisation of relationships with Vietnam see, among others, Steven Hurst, *The Carter administration and Vietnam*, New York, St. Martin's, 1996; on China see S. Kaufman, *Plans unraveled*, pp. 129-138.

one hand there were those who sustained “opening” positions towards the PCI, in the belief that early Cold War anti-communism was by now out of date. They also acknowledged that Italian Marxism had managed to set in motion certain reforms and that, if it received support (for example by entering the Italian government), it could contribute to the transition towards a social democracy. This conviction explains the meetings organised by the CFR and, later on, by the Research Institute for International Change, along with the CESPI and the Institute for international political and economic cooperation (Istituto per la cooperazione politica e economica internazionale).<sup>92</sup> On the other hand, there were those who — although Berlinguer’s transformation of the Italian Communist Party had convinced them — were not willing to grant the communist party a political space; rather, they trusted in the control of Italy’s economic ties and in the intervention capacity of other European governments to keep the party out of institutions, as the internal debates of the Trilateral Commission demonstrate. In between these positions, finally, there were those who didn’t deem a transition to social democracy necessary for a legitimation of the PCI in Italy; not by chance, the supporters of a similar position weren’t involved in politics, and their interference fuelled the debate even if they had little chance of changing Washington’s political line.<sup>93</sup>

In the end, the second of the two positions prevailed, for four reasons. First of all, the lack of an agreement about the strategy to adopt in relation to the “communist question” in Italy (and in Western Europe) created a void that was filled by the only actors who seemed truly interested in developing a political line on Italy: the embassy in Rome, directly involved in diplomatic decisions and current political controversies, and the National Security Council, its counterpart in Washington. Secondly, internal developments within Italian politics meant that a part of the DC’s leadership resigned itself for the first time to partially relinquish the traditional anti-communist veto, while another part — which could certainly benefit from an American connection — was decidedly inclined to conserve it. Thirdly, in relation to the internal political debate in the United States, a varied coalition — composed of representatives of the Italian-American community, of the former State Secretary Kissinger and, especially, of the ever more influential neoconservatives — insisted that the Carter admin-

<sup>92</sup> These meetings continued until 1980. During the last meeting, held in Rome, the topic of discussion was the European Left’s approach to the issue of security on the continent. Letter from Ledda to Berlinguer, 9 May 1980, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 467, p. 895, III bim. 1980. The minutes of the meeting are included in CESPI: Seminar on international relations, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Fondo Giorgio Napolitano, Documentazione 1978-1989, b. 10, fasc. 186.

<sup>93</sup> One example was Peter Lange, who was admonished twice for the inconvenience of an article he had published in “Foreign policy”: first by Washington, under the Ford administration, then by the American embassy in via Veneto, under the Carter administration. Peter Lange, interview with author, 12 May 2017.

istration expressed Washington's disapproval of the legitimization of the communists' role in Western Europe. A fourth and central reason was the international political context, marked by the end of *détente* and by the relaunch of a politics of "confrontation" — also in an ideological sense — between the United States and the Soviet Union.

On 16 March 1978, the day the Andreotti IV Cabinet obtained confidence, Aldo Moro was abducted by exponents of the Red Brigades; Italian terrorism thus again became the Americans' main focus of attention. Indeed, as Guido Formigoni has highlighted, 1978 politically defused the "communist question".<sup>94</sup> Subsequently, some Italian communist leaders continued to cross the Atlantic in order to confront themselves with large university audiences and small groups of experts. Giorgio Napolitano's first, famous trip took place precisely in April 1978, and was followed by a very similar visit four years later, when Ronald Reagan had already taken office in the White House.<sup>95</sup> The CFR and the academic community that had established relationships with a number of communist leaders still considered the PCI a theoretical point of reference for the European Left, but the purely political issue of the role the communists had to play in Italy had, in the meanwhile, been solved. If there had been any need to reaffirm Washington's position in this regard, the Memorandum of 12 January 1978 counted as a guideline.<sup>96</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Guido Formigoni, *L'Italia nel sistema internazionale degli anni Settanta*, in A. Giovagnoli, S. Pons (eds.), *L'Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta*, p. 297.

<sup>95</sup> See the account in Giorgio Napolitano, *Dal Pci al socialismo europeo. Un'autobiografia politica*, Bari-Rome, Laterza, 2005, pp. 159-169. On his second visit see Note from Napolitano to the Administrative office and the Department of international politics, 11 May 1982, in Fondazione Istituto Gramsci, Archivio del Partito comunista italiano, Estero, mf. 512, p. 1903, anno 1982 and "Relations between Italian Communist Party and the Soviet Union"; 30 April 1982, in Department of rare books and special collections, Princeton university library, Public policy papers, Council on Foreign Relations Meetings Records, Box 494, Folder 13. Santoro, instead, returned to the Council on Foreign Relations three times, between April 1978 and 1979. See Eurocommunism after the French Election, Eurocommunism #1, CFR; 3 April 1978, in Department of rare books and special collections, Princeton University Library, Public policy papers, Council on foreign relations digital sound recordings, Box 736; Eurocommunism: Hope or threat for the West; 28 April 1978, in Department of rare books and special collections, Princeton University Library, Public policy papers, Council on foreign relations digital sound recordings, Box 736. and "Communist party and the Italian political system"; 30 October 1979, in Department of rare books and special collections, Princeton University Library Council, Public policy papers, Foreign relations meetings records, Box 488, Folder 6.

<sup>96</sup> During the visit of the new Prime minister Cossiga to the United States in 1980, Brzezinski asked the president to continue making reference to the statement made on the PCI in 1978. Briefing Book, Memorandum from Brzezinski to the President, 24 January 1980, in James E. Carter Presidential Library, National Security Affairs, Brzezinski Material, VIP Visit File, Italy, Prime Minister Cossiga, Box 8.



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# The European Economic Community's regional policy during the 'age of disorder'. From 'harmonious development' to market-oriented policies (1972-1987)

Antonio Bonatesta\*

This article examines the transformation of the European Economic Community's (EEC) regional policy paradigms from the early 1970s, when negotiations for the creation of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) began, until the approval of the Single European Act. The article identifies this period as the beginning of a deep transition from demand-side "interventionist" and "neo-mercantilist" models — typical of certain regional policies used up to that time by member states (primarily by Italy) — towards more openly neoliberal models. My analysis of the harsh conflicts within the Regional Policy Committee (the national technocracies' representative body in charge of managing the ERDF) and between the committee and the European Commission demonstrate that this outcome was not at all taken for granted. It was determined, above all, by the overload of objectives of EEC regional policy in a context of scarce resources, and by the progressive lack of trust in the role of public intervention.

**Key words:** Community regional policy, European Community, European Commission, Regional Policy Committee, extraordinary intervention

## Introduction

When the Treaty of Rome was signed in 1957, with the inclusion of the Protocol on Italy, the 'harmonious development' of a Common Market permanently became part of the wide range of objectives set out by the European Economic Community (hereafter EEC). Throughout the 1960s, the development of a regional policy at European level that could prevent further disparities between 'central' and 'peripheral' areas of Western Europe, following the elimination of internal borders and the integration of continental markets, hinged on the guiding and intermediary function of the European Commission and on the operating role of the European Investment Bank (hereafter EIB).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr. Antonio Varsori, *La politica regionale europea: prime forme di solidarietà*, in Michel Dumoulin (ed.), *La Commissione europea 1958-1972. Storia e memoria di un'istituzione*, Lussemburgo, Ufficio delle pubblicazioni dell'Unione europea, 2007, pp. 427-442:

Counting among its governing bodies the economic and financial ministers of member states as well as figures whose nomination depended on the central banks, the EIB had the task of collecting savings from international financial markets and investing these in ways compatible with capitalist productive expansion, for the benefit of areas that were still scarcely integrated into the European market.<sup>2</sup>

This specific model of European regional policy demonstrated a certain ability among national authorities and Western central banks to regulate and control world currency's production and circulation as well; at the same time, it gave proof of a relatively low level of class conflict inside individual countries. Nevertheless, this model gradually revealed to be insufficient as the first signs of what Giovanni Arrighi dubbed the 'signal crisis' of the American accumulation cycle emerged.<sup>3</sup> In fact, between the late 1960s and the early 1970s a series of wide-ranging phenomena — like the expansion of the Euro-dollar market, the growing competition for investment capital among national economies, the end of fixed exchange rates, the first oil crisis of 1973 and the ensuing processes of productive reorganization — anticipated a 'fierce' transition from a Fordist and collaborative type of equilibrium to a new "age of disorder", based on conflictual relations between regional areas across the world.<sup>4</sup>

From Arrighi's viewpoint, the end of a hegemonic cycle is generally marked by the transition from a material expansion phase to a financial one, through which the capitalist "centre" seeks to relaunch the accumulation dynamic. Scholars have observed that — from the 1970s onwards — one of the main effects of this process has been that of an increased economy and global finance 'marketisation', as a result of processes such as progressive liberalisation of economic activities, reduction of regulation mechanisms and resource allocations through the market in place of state.<sup>5</sup> In these conditions, it is possible that the same pressures that affected the forms of embedded liberalism that we have inherited from the post-war Keynesian order equally impacted upon European regional policy.

This essay offers a first reconstruction of the changes that marked this field of communitarian activities in the period between 1972 — the year in

<https://op.europa.eu/it/publication-detail/-/publication/86829f82-a34f-4e2d-bb5c-8e0e1473a4a6/language-it>; Eric Bussière (ed.), *The Bank of the European Union. The EIB, 1958-2008*, Luxembourg, European Investment Bank, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr. Antonio Bonatesta, *The European Investment Bank and the 'Mezzogiorno' in the context of regional development (1958-1973)*, EUI Cadmus, HEC Working Paper (ADG subseries), 2019.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. Giovanni Arrighi, *Il lungo XX secolo. Denaro, potere e le origini del nostro tempo*, Milan, il Saggiatore, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Cfr. Tommaso Detti, Giovanni Gozzini, *L'età del disordine. Storia del mondo attuale. 1968-2017*, Bari, Laterza, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. Colin Crouch, *Europe and problems of marketization. From Polanyi to Scharpf*, Firenze University Press, 2013.

which the establishment of a European Regional Development Fund (hereafter ERDF) was decided at the Paris summit — and the mid-1980s, when a first significant reform of structural funds was developed in the wake of the Single European Act (1987).<sup>6</sup> According to a common interpretation in legal and economic scholarship, this crucial phase implicated a progressive and unavoidable 'Europeisation' of national intervention policies in lagging-behind regions. The emphasis on the Europeisation category probably brought to an evolutionary-linear approach, that has partially influenced historiography, placing excessive emphasis on EEC regional policy's governance institutional aspects, when we need a more in-depth understanding of changes into national authorities' and European technocracies' intervention paradigms.<sup>7</sup>

The fact is that maintaining a focus on EEC regional policy's national roots may be useful, if anything, to understand the exact point of departure of this Community's specific sector. I am referring, in first instance, to the 'interventionist' or 'neo-mercantilist' character of national politics after the Second World War, especially in Italy; here, any efforts for Southern lagging-behind regions' development hinged on the public apparatus and the 'extraordinary intervention' regulating function, aimed at a "conscious use of State politics to expand the market".<sup>8</sup> From the end of the 1950s onwards and during most of the following decade, the *Protocol on Italy* as well as the existence of a "French-Italian connection" within the European Commission perhaps represented the main vector of a European interest in regional imbalances. Further still, these elements determined a sort of 'imprinting' into the EEC regional policy, as demonstrated by the initial 'development poles' technique centrality in European discussions, as well as by the respect that Bruxelles authorities showed for the intangibility of State prerogatives in this sector.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Gian Paolo Manzella, *Una politica influente. Vicende, dinamiche e prospettive dell'intervento regionale europeo*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Laura Grazi, *Origini e sfide della politica regionale comunitaria: dagli studi preliminari all'Atto unico europeo (1957-1986)*, "Memoria e Ricerca", 2009, n. 30, pp. 45-57. For a historical overview of European integration see, in particular, Barbara Curli, *Storici italiani e integrazione europea*, "Il Mestiere di Storico", 2011, n. 2, pp. 99-105; Arianne Landuyt, *Il "valore aggiunto" di un approccio storico allo studio delle politiche comunitarie*, "Memoria e Ricerca", 2009, n. 30, pp. 5-16; Antonio Varsori, *La storiografia sull'integrazione europea*, "Europa Europe", 2001, n. 1, pp. 69-93.

<sup>8</sup> As is known, Fabrizio Barca has differentiated between 'regulations' and 'regulatory' forms of State intervention in Italy; the former refers to the establishment of equal rules that are valid for everyone, the latter reflects a policy aimed at safeguarding the interests and demands of specific social groups on a case-by-case basis. See Id., *Il capitalismo italiano. Storia di un compromesso senza riforme*, Rome, Donzelli, 1999, qui pp. 55-65. For a conceptual explanation of the "interventionist" or "neo-mercantilist" nature of Italian post-war economic politics see, in particular, Carlo Spagnolo, *La stabilizzazione incompiuta. Il piano Marshall in Italia (1947-1952)*, Rome, Carocci, 2001 e Rolf Petri, *Storia economica d'Italia. Dal fascismo al miracolo economico (1918-1963)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> With regard to the characteristics of the "French-Italian connection" within the Commission see François Denord, *Néo-libéralisme et «économie sociale de marché»: les*

At the same time, I am convinced that, at least throughout the entire 1970s, the foundations of the European economic model in matters of regional imbalances can be deduced by studying power relations between regional and competition policy.<sup>10</sup> As is known, competition was one of the traditional strongholds of German ‘ordoliberalism’, aimed at a regulating the market by means of a precise role for the State, where this latter had to limit itself to the establishment of a legal framework for competition, otherwise refraining from any possible form of distortion.<sup>11</sup> This kind of ‘bipolarity’ — deeply rooted in the Treaty of Rome, which had created a co-presence between the ‘harmonious development’ mandate and the rules of Articles 92-93 on state aid — was upset by the dramatic changes of the early 1970s.

One of the main purposes of this essay is, then, to reconstruct the European debate about theoretical and operative tools in support of regional policies. In particular, I aim to understand how national states and EEC institutions used the Community arena to negotiate — also in the context of regional policies — a transition from interventionist models to ‘neoliberal’ visions. In doing so, I will consider neoliberal patterns chiefly in terms of politics aimed at promoting the marketisation process as well as forms adaptation to it.

My point of departure for an understanding of changes in European regional policy is the collapse, at the turn of the 1970s, of the post-war expansion phase, as well as the accumulation of an enormous amount of resources “beyond the normative authority of any country and any organism”: in other words, the return in private hands of the control over global finance.<sup>12</sup> This explains — at least in part — the necessity for European countries to fall back upon a further instrument like the ERDF, which pointed out the evident insufficiency of the previous EEC regional policy model — exclusively based on the EIB’s activity of capital drainage and lending — and was much more based on member states’ finances. It must nevertheless be stressed that, this greater reliance on the role of public resources and national administrative systems — which overlapped the previous EIB-based model — has more convincingly advanced the theme of what Wolfgang Streeck has called the State’s “crisis of legitimacy”. Streeck defines this crisis in terms of a necessity for the political-economic system to respond to the expectations not just of people — or perhaps better, of

*origines intellectuelles de la politique européenne de la concurrence (1930-1950)*, “Histoire, Économie & Société”, 2008, n. 1, pp. 23-33.

<sup>10</sup> Antonio Bonatesta, *L’Italia e gli squilibri regionali nella Comunità a Sei*, in Sante Cruciani, Maurizio Ridolfi (eds.), *L’Unione Europea e il Mediterraneo. Relazioni internazionali, crisi politiche e regionali (1947-2016)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2017, pp. 67-88.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. Katja Seidel, *DG IV and the origins of a supranational competition policy: establishing an economic constitution for Europe*, in Wolfram Kaiser, Brigitte Leucht, Morten Rasmussen (eds.), *The history of the European Union. Origins of a trans- and supranational polity 1950- 72*, New York-London, Routledge, 2009, pp. 129-147.

<sup>12</sup> J.A. Frieden, *Banking on the words. The politics of American international finance*, New York, Harper&Row, 1987.

“those who depend on a salary” — but also, and especially, of the “company owners who depend on the profits obtained from capital” and on its administrators.<sup>13</sup> In the context of regional policies, these expectations revolved around the means of creating and managing economic infrastructures as well as governance networks capable of guaranteeing the geographical mobility of capital and labour force — all necessary elements to maintain material expansion.<sup>14</sup> If, all over the 1960s, the EIB's bank criteria had protected Western financial capital owners who decided to invest in its bonds, now this came down to state authorities, ever more conscious of the dramatic erosion of their ability to control liquidity and financial circulation.

This essay will pay particular attention to two typical instruments aimed at guaranteeing capital and labour mobility: infrastructures and State aids for productive investments. In this perspective, changes in EEC regional policy during the 1970s and 1980s can be interpreted as the outcome of a similar search for legitimacy, with traditional public intervention models — which had been developed in previous decades — crumbling away. It thus becomes important to linger over the main points of strain of the State's role in territorial imbalances matter, with respect to the challenges posed by the international economic context. Nonetheless, here too we must act with caution and take Laurent Warlouzet's suggestion into consideration, when he stresses that Europe, following the oil crisis of the early 1970s, experimented with a number of economic solutions; it only arrived at 'neoliberalism' after it had tried out all other options.<sup>15</sup>

Given the limited space available, I have chosen to focus my analysis on a privileged observatory: that of the Regional Policy Committee, founded in 1975 as part of the ERDF. The uniqueness of this organism resides in the fact that it functioned as a kind of European advisory board, comprising all general directors of the various national committees on regional policies. Consequently, in order also to give value to rarely used documents, actors such as the European Parliament and its commissions, as important as they may be, will not receive the due attention in this essay. Likewise, the growing importance of local autonomies, which interweaves with the emergence — in the second half of the 1970s — of a regionalist narrative and the start of regionalisation and decentralisation processes in many member states, deserves more consideration. The issue of regionalism will, however, remain to the background of this reconstruction, for at least two reasons. First, until the end of the 1980s, that is, until the creation of the Integrated Mediterranean Programmes and the first forma-

<sup>13</sup> Cfr. W. Streeck, *Tempo guadagnato. La crisi rinviata del capitalismo democratico*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2013.

<sup>14</sup> D. Harvey, *Geografia del dominio. Capitalismo e produzione dello spazio*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2018.

<sup>15</sup> Laurent Warlouzet, *Governing Europe in a globalized world. Neoliberalism and its alternatives following the 1973 oil crisis*, London, Routledge, 2017.

tions of the Regional Policy Committee, ‘bottom-up’ participation by the institutional subjects of the ‘meso-government’ remained largely trapped in significant negotiational mechanisms created at a national level, as well as in the construction of lobbying networks at European level. That is to say, for at least a decade after 1975 these actors were forced to continue funding communitarian resources without having any real influence on European regional development policies. Second, I believe that the problem of activating regional actors at the European level puts us before a combination of complex forces and intertwined scales of observation that require a specific methodology, namely a case study analysis and a comparative approach — for obvious reasons, a similar methodological approach exceeds the scopes of this essay.<sup>16</sup>

The Regional Policy Committee’s documentation only covers the years between 1975 and 1982, and is held at the Historical Archives of the European Union. It is currently being declassified, along with other important archives (such as the documents of the Irish Commissioner for Competition, Peter Sutherland), and the original institute needs to integrate the documentation. Nonetheless, these archival sources offer a spitting image of the main dividing lines that affected regional policies, primarily the way in which national authorities linked infrastructural processes to the management of state aid, over a period of two decades in which the European economy manifested an urgent need for renewal.

### **The European negotiations for the European Regional Development Fund (1972-1975)**

The three years that separated the Hague Summit, of December 1969, from that one held in Paris in October 1972 witnessed a renewed interest in the regional issue among the EEC, which was considered as an indispensable ‘infrastructure’ of the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). The Werner plan of October 1970 had already recognised the dangers inherent in forms of monetary union being launched without solving the problem of regional disparities, whose persistence was a premonition of inflationist pressures and discrepancies in financial statements capable of threatening the stability of exchange rates.<sup>17</sup> In Paris, the heads of State and government ratified this

<sup>16</sup> In this regard, allow me to refer to an article of my own (only by way of example), *The ERDF and the Mezzogiorno: The case of Apulia (1972-1992)*, “Journal of European Integration History”, 2/2017, pp. 227-244. For a useful theoretical overview of this theme, see Romain Pasquier, *La capacité politique des régions. Une comparaison France-Espagne*, Presses Universitaires, Rennes, 2004. A political analysis approach can be found in Silvia Bolgherini, *Come le regioni diventano europee. Stile di governo e sfide comunitarie nell’Europa mediterranea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> On the Werner plan see Andrew Moravcsik, *The choice for Europe. Social purpose and state power from Messina to Maastricht*, Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1998.

nexus, confirming the need to coordinate national policies and to create, by 31 December 1973, a European Regional Development Fund, destined to intervene in areas lagging behind or in decline. Moreover, such ambition on behalf of the Nine responded to requests made by Italy and certain sectors of the Commission; they insisted that the EEC be given more responsibility in tackling the persistent structural disparities within the European economy.

By the end of the 1960s, Italy — traditionally one of the most convinced advocates of the EEC's commitment in solving regional disparities — started pushing for the transition to a new and more intense phase of 'communitarisation' in this specific sector. Rome had understood that the nascent destabilisation of the international monetary system, along with the recommencement of internal social conflicts, prevented the Italian government from tackling the Southern question the way it used to do back in the 1950s and 1960s: namely by channelling investments — with the help of the Development Fund for the South of Italy and State organs — from the capital market or from international credits, following a strategy that drew on institutions such as the World Bank and the EIB or on the issue of bonds. New formulas based on the states' financial solidarity now became necessary, as demonstrated by the behaviour of personalities such as Moro, Donat Cattin and Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza.<sup>18</sup> In a speech held before the EIB's board of directors, the very director of the Bank of Italy — Guido Carli — expressed his scepticism about maintaining a system of fixed exchange rates and about the possibility for European countries to coordinate their own economic policies. His scepticism was motivated by the substantial "ungovernability" of the capital market — where "the decisions of importers and exporters [...] were of such nature as to deeply undermine the reserves managed by the central banks" — and by the crisis that affected the concept of authority in Western countries. Furthermore, for Carli it came down to the State and the very trade unions to monitor if the working class was respecting the agreements they had signed.<sup>19</sup> From 1968-1969 onwards, Italian authorities started seeing the expansion of internal demand in an ever more positive light. This occurred in the context of an increase in production in the South, which was driven by unique agreements between the State and public

<sup>18</sup> Cfr. Antonio Bonatesta, *Europa «potenza civile» e Mediterraneo. La politica comunitaria di Carlo Scarascia Mugnozza (1961-1977)*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> *Exposé du gouverneur Carli au Conseil d'Administration de la Banque Européenne d'Investissement*, 9 settembre 1969, in Archivio storico Banca d'Italia (hereafter ASBI), Direttorio Carli, Pratiche, n. 16, fasc. 10. On the impossibility to return to the wage freeze of the 1950s in Italy see Michele Salvati, *Sviluppo economico, domanda di lavoro e struttura della occupazione*, Bologna, snt, 1976; Anna Duso, *Keynes in Italia. Teoria economica e politica in Italia negli anni Sessanta e Settanta*, Bari, De Donato, 1978. On the centrality of exportations within the Italian development model see also Francesco Petrini, «Esportare, esportare, esportare». *L'economia italiana e il Mercato comune europeo*, in Concetta Argiolas, Andrea Becherucci (eds.), *La politica europea e italiana di Piero Malvestiti*, Rome, Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 2018, pp. 29-52.

and private companies — the so-called ‘planned negotiation’ — according to which specific subsidies were granted to those companies that accepted to delocalise to the South in the hope of avoiding social conflicts.<sup>20</sup> Hence, for Italy a reconsideration of the communitarianisation of extraordinary intervention policies — in terms of granting more importance to productive infrastructures and fixed social capital investments, which the EIB had always hesitated to finance — represented a solution for the exhaustion of an export-oriented development model and its interconnections with the international financial environment.

At the same time, the strengthening of regional policies served to identify a communitarian policy capable of offering the United Kingdom a ‘just return’ for its contribution to the Community’s finances. Moreover, it responded to the ambition of influential sectors within the European Commission — recently awarded with the creation, in 1969, of a specific Directorate, the DG XVI — to widen their skills in matters of regional development.<sup>21</sup>

A more cautious — if not reserved — behaviour was that of the Germans. The Social Democratic chancellor Helmut Schmidt (1974-1982) was adamant that there was a link between communitarian solidarity and financial discipline, urgently demanding that the European and American partners adopt deflationary policies.<sup>22</sup> As early as January 1974, Schmidt — then Minister of Finances — stressed that the Paris decisions had been circumvented, and that Europe had revealed incapable of continuing its path, especially in the monetary field:

[I]n its place — Schmidt argued — we nowadays have an agreement that is more or less supportive of a certain coordination of economic policies. Monetary cooperation hasn’t expanded: it has shrunk. At this point, for us Germans, European regional policy represents an anticipation of political integration, and we are therefore ready to give this anticipated contribution [...] for we believe that it will facilitate the future integration process.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Augusto Graziani, *Lo sviluppo dell’economia italiana. Dalla ricostruzione alla moneta europea*, Turin, Bollati Borighieri, ed. 2017. For a detailed analysis of industrial incentivisation policies in favour of the Italian South see Salvatore Adorno, *Le Aree di sviluppo industriale negli spazi regionali del Mezzogiorno*, in Maria Salvati, Loredana Sciolla (eds.), *L’Italia e le sue regioni. L’età repubblicana. Istituzioni*, Rome, Treccani, 2015, pp. 375-394.

<sup>21</sup> Iaria Poggiolini, *La Grand Bretagne et la Politique Régionale au moment de l’élargissement (1969-1972)*, in Marie-Thérèse Bitsch (ed.), *Le fait régional et la Construction Européenne*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2003, pp. 153-167; on the European Commission and the attempts to develop a regional policy see: Antonio Varsori, *La politica regionale europea: prime forme di solidarietà*.

<sup>22</sup> Barry Eichengreen, *The European economy since 1945: coordinated capitalism and beyond*, Princeton (NJ), Princeton University Press, 2007.

<sup>23</sup> Helmut Schmidt, *L’Europa vive di crisi?*, in Bino Olivi (ed.), *Discorsi per l’Europa. Trentesimo anniversario dei Trattati di Roma*, Roma, Presidenza del consiglio dei ministri, 1987, pp. 246-251. On the German attitude towards the regional policy dossier see, especially, Antonio Varsori, Lorenzo Mechi, *At the origins of the European structural policy: the community’s social and regional policies from the late 1960s to the Mid-1970s*, in Jan Van Der Harst (ed.), *Beyond the customs Union: the European Community’s quest for deepening, widening and completion, 1969-1975*, Bruxelles, Bruylant, 2007.



Consequently, being aware of their role as principal financiers of this new policy and sceptical about the ability of their partners — especially Italy — to maintain a correct economic-monetary discipline, the Germans showed even more rigidity in demanding efficient expenditure and directly productive investments, aimed at making regional policies a valid instrument for the EMU.<sup>24</sup>

From the middle of 1973 to March 1975, the ERDF's negotiations were dominated by the harsh confrontation between 'contributing' and 'beneficiary' countries as well as by France's hostility to granting the Commission excessive power. These elements would have prevented the development of regional policies with a solid community profile; as we have seen, the ERDF's entire system was based on an approach that was "little communitarian and not very regional".<sup>25</sup>

Between May and July 1973, the newly elected Commissioner for Regional Policy — the British George Thomson — presented the Report on regional problems in the enlarged Community. Along with the Commission's successive proposals regarding the composition of both the ERDF and the Regional Policy Committee meant to oversee it, Thomson's report raised disputes and hesitations among the member states; the breakdown of the international economic framework in the early 1970s increasingly put the countries' mutual solidarity under pressure.

The oil crisis of 1973 made it impossible to formalise the ERDF before the end of the year. Negotiations were only resumed at the end of 1974, and terminated in the spring of 1975. They took place at different levels: in the European Parliament, within the Permanent Representatives Committee (hereafter COREPER) and in the Council of Ministers.<sup>26</sup> The main issues that needed to be tackled included the duration, the amount of resources and the ERDF's management procedure; the maximum number of beneficiary regions and the communitarian intervention limit; the definition of funding eligibility; the coordination of national interventions.

Between September and December 1973, COREPER and the Council of Ministers dedicated various meetings to the important question of what resources to allocate to the ERDF, and to the relative appointment criteria.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> According to Renato Ruggiero, tensions rose so high that the same Brandt allegedly warned the British and the Commission's very representatives about the fact that Germany "had stopped paying for the reparations", see *Entretien avec Renato Ruggiero par Veronica Scognamiglio à Milan le 15 juillet 2004*, in Archivi storici dell'Unione Europea (d'ora in poi ASUE), Oral History, *The European Commission 1958-1973. Memories of an Institution*, p. 31, [https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral\\_history](https://archives.eui.eu/en/oral_history) (accessed 13 May 2019).

<sup>25</sup> Jean-François Drevet, *Histoire de la politique régionale européenne*, Paris, Belin Éducation, 2008, p. 51.

<sup>26</sup> For a reconstruction of the parliamentary debate see Laura Grazi, *L'Europa delle città. La questione urbana nel processo di integrazione europea (1957-1999)*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2006, pp. 128 sg.

<sup>27</sup> ASUE, Fondo BAC-CEE CEEA Commissions, Serie BAC 014/1986 DGXVI Politique régionale, 1973-1979, b. 12, Conseil, *Note. Politique régionale: échange de vue général sur les*

The Commission proposed to allocate the overall sum of 2,25 billion units of account for the triennium 1974-76 (8% of the EEC's budget), to be distributed on the basis of the demographic levels of each member state, measured through the country's gross domestic product. Bruxelles sustained that this system could guarantee a 'communitarian' parameter to be applied indiscriminately to all member states, without falling back on amounts that would have led "the regional policies to completely disappear in the national element". The relation between population and gross domestic product was sufficiently flexible to reabsorb part of the British regions, which would otherwise have been excluded. Throughout the negotiations, the Commission sought to oppose itself to the demands of a limited number of eligible regions, pertaining to some North European countries but also to Italy and Ireland; it sustained that such demands would eventually have caused "a permanent tension between the fund's beneficiary states and other states, given their divergent interests".<sup>28</sup>

Nonetheless, Bruxelles did not manage to prevent the polarisation of contributing and beneficiary countries. The United Kingdom requested that the ERDF's resources be raised to 3 billion units of account, which attracted criticism from the Germans and, in particular, the French. Italy, too, stressed the inadequacy of the endowments that the Commission offered. Moro himself warned that regional policies "introduced an element of justice into the Community"; for this reason, they should not be reduced to a mere symbolic engagement. In particular, the Italians wanted eligibility criteria to be based on the intensity of disparities, thus confirming the priority of the Italian South and of the Irish regions. Dublin, for its part, insisted that the 'major necessity' criterion be adopted in the distribution of resources, rather than that of the 'just return', so dear to the British. The divisions between the main beneficiary countries allowed the Germans and French to contest an endowment of the ERDF as suggested by the Commission. France rejected — among other things — the 'communitarisation' of the eligibility criteria that Bruxelles had proposed; it claimed that the areas in which the ERDF should intervene simply had to coincide with those regions already included in national programmes.<sup>29</sup>

*propositions de la Commission, 1721/73 (ECO 217) (FIN 563), 20 septembre 1973; Commission, Secrétariat général, Note à l'attention de Messieurs les membres de la Commission. 257ème session du Conseil - 15 octobre 1973. Politique régionale - Rapport sur l'état des travaux, 16 octobre 1973.*

<sup>28</sup> Commission, Secrétariat général, *Note à l'attention de Messieurs les membres de la Commission. 707e réunion du Comité des représentants permanents - 21 novembre 1973 - Politique régionale*, SEC(73)4412, 26 novembre 1973, loc. cit a nota 27.

<sup>29</sup> Thomson replied that the Commission's criteria were based on the indications provided by the Paris summit, and that they were "the least imperfect possible", as they allowed for the distribution of resources implying neither a rigid system of quotes nor the "just return". Commission, Secrétariat général, *A l'attention de MM. les Membres de la Commission. Compte rendu succinct de la 265ème session du Conseil consacrée aux "Affaires générales"*, SEC(73)4550, 3-4 décembre 1973, loc. cit a nota 27.

Tensions between contributing and beneficiary countries also arose with regard to certain political and technical aspects, such as the coordination of the member states' regional policies and the establishment of intervention fees and projects that could be accomplished through the ERDF. Additionally, member states with strong internal regional policies — like Italy and France — sought to protect their own intervention systems by adapting the ERDF's function as much as they could.<sup>30</sup>

The divisions that most impacted on the ERDF's future management concerned the type of interventions that could be tolerated. Belgians and Germans were unfavourable to financing infrastructure expenses unless these were directly linked to production, stressing the need to focus the ERDF's funds on the creation of new jobs. This hostile position was directed at the Italian delegation, which was interested in securing resources for the great infrastructural projects anticipated by the national economic plan of 1971-75.<sup>31</sup> In a certain sense, the dispute that had set the Italians against the Germans in 1956-1957, on the occasion of the EIB negotiations, resurfaced here.<sup>32</sup> Faced with similar objections, Donat-Cattin gave a description “without concessions” of the situation in the South, arguing that it could express a ‘self-stimulus’ dynamic, challenging the German delegation to propose alternative methods of convincing private companies to base their plants in southern Italy.<sup>33</sup> Although the Italians eventually succeeded in having water supply and drainage projects included in the plan, disputes about the interpretation of the concept of ‘productive infrastructure’ continued well beyond the approval of the Regulation of 1975, spilling over — as we will see — into the work of the Regional Policy Committee.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The Italians and the Irish affirmed that European regional policy couldn't entirely replace national policies but only support them; like the French, they favoured a coordination set up with the help of specific programmes, and this solution was eventually accepted. Conseil, *Note. Politique régionale: échange e vue générale sur les propositions de la Commission, 1721/73 (ECO 217) (FIN 563)*.

<sup>31</sup> Delegations from beneficiary countries were in favour of a broad understanding of “services” and “infrastructure”; Danish, Belgian, Dutch, Luxembourg and German delegates instead aspired to a more narrow interpretation; France suggested the adoption of compulsory lists that outlined all types of fundable projects and interventions. Commission, Secretariat général, *Note a l'attention de Messieurs les membres de la Commission. 257ème session du Conseil - 15 octobre 1973*.

<sup>32</sup> Lucia Coppolaro, *Setting up the financing institution of the European Economic Community: the creation of the European Investment Bank (1955-1957)*, “Journal of European Integration History”, 2009, n. 5, pp. 87-104.

<sup>33</sup> Commission, Secretariat général, *Note a l'attention de Messieurs les membres de la Commission. 257ème session du Conseil - 15 octobre 1973*.

<sup>34</sup> Here, too, water systems could be considered a borderline case of “productive” infrastructures, according to an interpretation that gained ground within the EIB in the mid-1960s: they allowed for the enhancement or — at times — replacement of water volume for industrial use, as in the case of the aqueduct of Pertusillo for Taranto's Italsider. See Antonio Bonatesta,

When the negotiations on the ERDF were taken up again in the first weeks of 1975, what remained to be defined was the function of the Regional Policy Committee, which consisted in national technocrats and experts. Traditionally hostile towards communitarian solutions, the French requested that the criteria for coordinating member states' regional policies — one of the specific functions of this organism — be established strictly in advance of the Committee's foundation. Moreover, they insisted that the Committee be made dependent on the Council. Similar proposals aimed at limiting its range of action and met with opposition from the remaining national delegations, and from the Commission itself; the latter wanted it between itself and the Council, following the model of the Economic Policy Committee, set up in 1974.<sup>35</sup> Even more controversial was the issue regarding the involvement of regional and local authorities, not to mention social actors, in view of the analysis of development programmes conducted by the Committee, as recommended by the European Parliament. Within the Council, the Italians, Dutch and Brits were optimistic; instead, the Danish, German, Irish and Luxembourg delegates raised doubts, fearing that “to allow regional powers direct or indirect access to the Regional Policy Committee [could have] raised [such] hopes and pressures [to distract] the Committee from its main tasks”. The possibility of establishing direct relations between ‘pressure groups’ — a definition that clearly also included regional and local authorities — and a committee of officials evoked “institutional and political problems of a particularly complex nature”. It was no surprise that the French delegation strongly objected. The Commission was suspected of wanting to “dismantle the member states’ power through the regions”; in reality, many were opposed to a direct relation between Bruxelles and the idea of a “meso-government”.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, the territorial authorities were not involved in the debate about development programmes, with clear implications for the nature of the Regional Policy Committee's choices. Instead, for a long time they had to make do with their connections to the Economic and Social Committee, and with an ‘occasional’ consultation offered by the Commission.<sup>37</sup>

*The European Investment Bank and the ‘Mezzogiorno’ in the context of regional development (1958-1973).*

<sup>35</sup> Conseil, *Note. Politique régionale: projet de décision du Conseil portant création d'un Comité de politique régionale*, 1859/73 (ECO 227) (FIN 605), 3 octobre 1973, loc. cit. a nota 27.

<sup>36</sup> According to Renato Ruggiero, the first Director-General for Regional Policy, an intervention in regions headed by the Commission would have forced it to create “an infinite bureaucratic organisation”; additionally, it would have been faced with a whole “series of political and [...] administrative inconveniences”, see *Entretien avec Renato Ruggiero...* By contrast, Rosario Solima, an Italian high official of the Commission, criticised the compromises Bruxelles had been forced to accept during the negotiations with member states, highlighting the fact that the latter had placed a “diaphragm” between the Community and the beneficiaries of the investments, cit. in Gian Paolo Manzella, *Una politica influente*, p. 44.

<sup>37</sup> Conseil, *Note du Président du Comité des Représentants Permanents. Objet: Politique régionale*, R/319/1/75 (ECO 32) (FIN 75), 7 febbraio 1975, loc. cit. a nota 27.

When the ERDF was inaugurated in March 1975, it bore a strong national mark and was severely downsized in terms of resources and intervention potential. Equipped with 1,3 billion units of account, distributed in fixed amounts and set up purely as a means of devolving part of the Community's finances to national expenditures within the sector, it started off with a difficult experimental triennium that postponed any evaluation of its own persistence until 1977. It has been noted that the compromise regarding the ERDF's endowment — albeit not fulfilling the British, Irish and Italian demands — went well beyond the amount that the Germans were willing to tolerate.<sup>38</sup> Likewise, no one within the Commission could claim to be happy with the compromises that the negotiations had imposed with regard to the ERDF's characteristics and functions.

### **The Regional Policy Committee and the disputes about the concept of infrastructure**

In March 1975, when the ERDF's Regulation was approved, the European Council of Ministers made a declaration that contained a number of clarifications, among which the recommendation to only fund "productive infrastructures". According to this declaration, both those infrastructures that included handicraft and service activities and those completing investment projects or constituting a necessary requirement for developmental efforts could have been linked directly to development infrastructures.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, it was a precarious compromise, and the dispute continued heatedly within the Regional Policy Committee. In fact, here the issue of infrastructure — and its narrow classification for the purpose of financial decisions — was increasingly linked to the criterion of geographical concentration, viewed as a guarantee for the European economy's degree of competitiveness. However, the notion of competitiveness was still rooted in a neo-mercantilist perspective, that is, linked to the necessity to reorganise national productive systems so as to face the challenges of the global market and with the aim of eliminating obsolete elements and industrial surplus.

Already in October 1975, when a first round of projects was examined, it had become evident that the Committee's members interpreted the Council's declaration in different ways.<sup>40</sup> The confrontation between the Committee's

<sup>38</sup> Stephan Leibfried, Paul Pierson (eds.), *European Social Policy. Between Fragmentation and Integration*, Washington/DC, The Brookings Institution, 1995.

<sup>39</sup> ASUE, Fondo BAC-CEE CEEA Commissions, Serie BAC 014/1986 DGXVI Politique régionale, 1973-1979, b. 12, Conseil, *Note. Objet: Politique régionale*, R/789/75 (ECO 90) (FIN 218), 14 marzo 1975.

<sup>40</sup> Regional Policy Committee (hereafter RPC), *Relazione del Comitato di Politica Regionale*, XVI/170/77, 15 giugno 1977, loc. cit. nota 39, 1975-1981, b. 10.

president, the German Social Democrat Claus Noë, and the Director-Generals for Regional Policy, Renato Ruggiero and Petrus Mathijsen, was particularly harsh. The German, in fact, insisted on a further specification, which focused on the preference for so-called ‘economic infrastructures’ (e.g. industrial areas) and on the reduction of “basic” infrastructures (e.g. communication roads, water systems and telecommunications) with exceptions to be made only under specific conditions. In this area, Noë stumbled upon the resistance of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy (hereafter DG XVI), which was convinced that the Council’s note sufficed to remove any doubts, and that any classification attempt would have limited the Commission’s space for manoeuvre. Equally opposed were the Italian and British delegations; they saw large parts of their respective development programmes jeopardised.

A first, unsuccessful attempt at mediation was made between the end of 1975 and during part of 1976; the Dutch Committee delegate J.R. Eysink Smeets had sought to put together a list of fundable infrastructures that could be valid for all member states.<sup>41</sup> The failure of the Dutch attempt opened the road for an initiative of the DG XVI, which — in November 1976 — drafted a working paper on request of the ERDF’s Committee, titled *Considerations of the concept of infrastructure*. The paper highlighted the impossibility of reaching a universal definition capable of responding to the variety of situations and cases present within the Community.<sup>42</sup> Throughout the 1970s, the Germans therefore saw their attempts to impose a more rigid discipline on infrastructure fail repeatedly. Consequently, they filled the Committee with discontent and resentment, which eventually cast a negative light on its first financial statement.<sup>43</sup>

The issue regained momentum after the Council promulgated the new ERDF Regulation, in February 1979, which forced the Commission to develop — over the next two years — a classification of fundable infrastructures, on the

<sup>41</sup> During the meeting of 2 December 1975, the report written by the Dutch Eysink Smeets did not obtain the Committee’s unanimous consensus. The conflict between Ruggiero and Noë continued over the next days, with the German drafting a “non-paper” that forced the Committee to produce results, in which he repropounded his reasoning. *Troisième réunion*, 1-2 décembre 1975, loc. cit. nota 39, b. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the Commission’s services had agreed to write up a document that supported the regulation’s application, without this implying any restrictive commitments for the ERDF in the eligibility assessment of the various infrastructural projects. Commission, DG Politica Regionale, *Documento di Lavoro. Considerazioni sul concetto di infrastruttura*, XVI/292/1/76, 19 ottobre 1976, loc. cit. nota 39, b. 10.

<sup>43</sup> RPC, Secrétariat, *Projet de rapport du Comité de politique régionale*, XVI/170/77-F, 20 aprile 1977. The services of the DG XVI, instead, held a different opinion; they highlighted that the Committee’s conclusions were excessively pessimistic, and that “if it was true that the Committee’s financial statement wasn’t very favourable” it nevertheless had to acknowledge the efforts made up to that moment in terms of elaborating development programmes, defining the concept of infrastructures and other activities, see J. Van Ginderachter, *Note a à l’attention de Monsieur Mathijsen*, 1 marzo 1977, loc. cit. nota 39, 1975-1976, b. 3.

basis of the regional development programmes as presented by individual member states. Thus, it was hoped that the barrier of the notion of 'productive infrastructure' might be bypassed, linking the infrastructure's contribution to the developmental needs of the region.<sup>44</sup> In June, then, the dispute within the Committee resurfaced. Supported by the rest of the German delegation and by the Dutch one, Noë pointed ever more explicitly to the identification of rigid criteria that might reduce the Commission's discretion, which in many cases had revealed to be excessive, as with the Italian-Algerian gas pipeline, managed by the Italian oil and gas company ENI.<sup>45</sup>

Conflicts about individual projects heightened tensions within the Committee. According to Noë, only Greece and Ireland could be considered 'developing' countries in the full sense of the word, where the ERDF's contribution could have been raised to 40-50% in support of a rather wide range of initiatives; in the remaining European regions, instead, it should have funded only those infrastructures that were "100% Region bezogen", namely industrial areas, local roads, water adduction and purification systems. In no situation whatsoever could the ERDF have handled social infrastructures, such as schools, theatres, hospitals and incentives for other service activities.<sup>46</sup> Tensions between the Directorate-General and the Irish and Italian delegations reached rather high levels, up to the point that — during a Committee meeting held on 22 November 1979 — the Italian member Francesco Tagliamonte asked Noë how any real production policy could ever take off in the midst of the Germans' various demands for restrictions.<sup>47</sup>

Moreover, the German delegation's limiting approach hardly embraced the growing sense of dissatisfaction, among the DG XVI officials, with the investments in material infrastructures. As Josef van Ginderachter highlighted:

Thus far we have focused on concrete investments (infrastructures, factories) whereas the obstacles might reside elsewhere, and we should move more towards investments in a "grey" matter: management, collective services, marketing, etc. Furthermore, small and medium-sized enterprises play an important role but cannot sufficiently count on public aids: the administrative and fiscal burdens of the social state are crushing them.

<sup>44</sup> Cfr. J. Van Ginderachter, *Note à l'attention de Monsieur Mathjisen. Objet: Examen des projets FEDER au regard des programmes*, 11 luglio 1979, loc. cit. nota 39, 1975-1976, b. 5.

<sup>45</sup> RPC, Secrétariat, *Compte rendu de la vingt-deuxième réunion du Comité de politique régionale*, 22-23 novembre 1979), loc. cit. nota 39, 1978-1979, b. 7.

<sup>46</sup> J. Van Ginderachter, *Note de dossier. Entretien avec M. Noë à Bonn le 21 juin 1979. Présents: MM Noë et Paulsen, Rencki et Van Ginderachter*, 27 giugno 1979; Commission, Direction générale de la politique régionale, *Note de dossier. Préparation de la réunion CPR des 22-23 novembre 1979. Entretien avec M. Noë (et M. Paulsen) à Bonn ce 30.10.79, XVI/A.21 JVG/jb*, compilata da Van Ginderachter, loc. cit. nota 39, 1978-1979, b. 7.

<sup>47</sup> RPC, Secrétariat, *Compte rendu de la vingt-deuxième réunion du Comité de politique régionale (Bruxelles, 22-23 novembre 1979)*. Tagliamonte was a former executive for the Development Fund for the South. In his early life, he had been a member of De Gasperi's secretariat and, subsequently, head of the press office at the High Authority of the CECA, see Roberto Ciuni, *Le macerie di Napoli. Reportage 1994*, Milan, Rizzoli, 1994.

Next, Van Ginderachter explicitly recalled Hirschman's unbalanced growth — or “trickle-down” — theory, according to which we should shift our attention from directly productive activities to social overhead activities.<sup>48</sup> Alternative viewpoints thus started to emerge within the Commission, which placed the ERDF not in the context of an economic and industrial growth directly guided by public powers, but in a wider range of interventions aimed at creating a social, economic and administrative environment that could be truly attractive to investments. In sum, these suggestions started to acknowledge that resources and investment allocations processes could and had to be transferred to market forces, based on the theory according to which the “high tide lifts up all boats”. The reference to small and medium-sized enterprises — considered most functional in this scenario — also went in this direction.

The emergence of these first forms of radical rethinking must inevitably be linked to the increased importance being given to regional development programmes. Indeed, it was hoped that these documents might indicate — possibly following a consultation between member states and regional and local authorities — a number of territorial growth options or alternatives: models capable of integrating into a context of high capital mobility. However, the programmes had already revealed to be a very rough road, in line with Hirschman's own criticism at the time, directed at state aid developed in view of a programme approach, especially with regard to their inability to determine the real use of the aids — or, in the economist's words, “to bring virtue into the world”.<sup>49</sup> The first round of programmes, prepared between late 1977 and 1978, had already revealed the great difficulties of developing an operational approach, of concretely quantifying the objectives, of providing a basis for coordinating the member states' regional policies.<sup>50</sup>

According to the Commission's services, national technocracies struggled to define the role of regional policies in a situation marked by low economic growth, thus demonstrating their inability to let go of traditional intervention techniques. In an exchange with Mathijsen, Van Ginderachter observed

<sup>48</sup> ASUE, Fondo BAC-CEE CEEA Commissions, Serie BAC 014/1986 DGXVI Politique régionale, 1980, b. 8, Commission, Direction générale de la politique régionale, *Aide-mémoire pour Monsieur Mathijsen en vue du Comité de Politique régionale des 0-10-11 juillet 1980*, 3 luglio 1980, compilata da J. Van Ginderachter.

<sup>49</sup> Albert Hirschman, Richard Bird, *Foreign Aid. A critique and a proposal*, “Essays in International Finance”, July 1968, n. 69, pp. 3-30, qui p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> ASUE, Fondo BAC-CEE CEEA Commissions, Serie BAC 014/1986 DGXVI Politique régionale, 1975-1976, b. 3, J. Jager, *Rapport. Programmes de développement régional de l'Allemagne (RF), du Danemark (Groenland), de la France, du Royaume-Uni. Réunion du Groupe d'experts du 21 septembre 1977*, 27 settembre 1977; J. Van Ginderachter, *Entrevue avec Monsieur Noë à Bonn ce 18 octobre 1977. Note à l'attention de Monsieur Mathijsen*, 13 ottobre 1977; P. Mathijsen, *Programmes de développement régional. Note à l'attention de Monsieur Giolitti*, 26 ottobre 1977; *Projet de compte rendu de la onzième réunion du Comité de politique régionale (Bruxelles, 25-26 octobre 1977)*.



that the governments “are awaiting economic recovery in order to resume a classical regional policy [i.e. productive growth], without asking themselves how a new regional policy might possibly help relaunch recovery”.<sup>51</sup> The Committee, too, noted that no document whatsoever mentioned the need to turn regional policies into a tool for reinforcing the regions' competitiveness in the market economy, via processes of infrastructuration and the development of an economic structure capable of attracting investments. Another item of debate was the difficulty with which member states framed infrastructural investments; these were predominantly focused on the construction of industrial areas that — while constituting the type of infrastructure that was mostly linked to growth — were by now subjected to a certain saturation in Europe, and this invalidated their potential appeal.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, with regard to the second-generation programmes that were promulgated in 1981, the Commission clashed with the member states' inability or reticence to identify and define priorities in an appropriate manner. As a consequence, for a long time the ERDF continued to fund traditional economic infrastructures.<sup>53</sup>

### **A prolegomenon to a communitarian doctrine opposed to state aid**

In addition to infrastructures, state aid (another typical sector of public intervention) also represented — halfway the 1970s and 1980s — an area in which State sovereignty in regional policies' matter was doomed to wear out. Already in the second half of the 1960s, the first attempts were made to subordinate national aid programmes to the communitarian regulation on competition, based on the ordoliberalist approach of the German Commissioner for Competition, Hans von der Groeben. After the Council had issued a first resolution in October 1971, the EEC hadn't further intervened in this delicate sector, which soon became a fundamental part of the member states' efforts to protect and adapt their economies in light of the difficult economic situation following the double crisis of 1971-73. In the second half of the decade, the excessive increase of state aid among European countries and their mutual neutralisation became a means through which to radically call into question this area of state authority and the underlying neo-mercantilist approaches.

At the end of the 1970s, the demand for a reorganisation of the European productive system required communitarian coordination aimed at avoiding

<sup>51</sup> See the Directorate-General for Regional Policy's note written by Van Ginderachter to Mathijsen, 2 giugno 1978, loc. cit. nota 50, b. 4.

<sup>52</sup> RPC, *Opinion of the Regional Policy Committee on the regional development programmes*, XVI/158/78-EN, 31 maggio 1978, loc. cit. nota 50.

<sup>53</sup> Commission, Direction générale de la politique régionale, *Avant-projet de Lettre de la Commission au Conseil*, 11 giugno 1980, loc. cit. nota 50, 1980, b. 8.

expensive competition among member states, in support of non-profitable industries that were doomed to disappear. The Council and the Commission were involved in tackling the problems of individual economic sectors in different ways: through measures that were designed to limit the use of state aid by national regimes for regional purposes; through commercial policy measures aimed at containing and eliminating industrial surplus; by excluding specific types of investments from the action range of the ERDF, the *European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF)* and the EIB. Between May and December 1978, the Commission sent two communications to the Council, on the issue of state aid for industrial activities, which attempted to reach a difficult mediation: state aid was allowed to correct serious regional disparities; to favour industrial adaptation and alleviate the social consequences of certain activities closing down; to neutralise market distortions provoked by third parties. At the same time, the Commission made it clear that all state aids — also those for regional purposes — would have to be cut if they resulted in overproduction dynamics.<sup>54</sup>

The Regional Policy Committee followed this specific sector with attention, especially on request of the Germans, Dutch, Belgians and Danes. In February 1978, it discussed a document of its own that seemed intent on repeating the DG XVI's efforts in balancing the needs for productive reorganisation and competitiveness with issues of regional disparities. The aim of some EEC sectorial policies for reconversion or productive excess limitation should have not translate itself into an outburst of regional and national economic disparities; this could have easily led to a situation where stronger areas appealed for free international exchange measures, whereas the weaker ones demanded the closure of borders. Moreover, the document acknowledged that the softening of state aid could have benefit the richer regions, as well as deteriorate the inconsistency between sectorial policy — such as competition or external trade relations — and the regional one. This contradiction might, however, be overcome through the adoption of a “progressive” and “balanced” approach. Following the Commission's position, the Committee judged that the types and intensity of state aid had to be assessed in relation to the dynamics of overproduction, reorganisation and reconversion.<sup>55</sup>

Soon, though, the German delegation decided to start a new controversy within the Regional Policy Committee, demanding a discussion of a comparative study on the *Regional incentives in the European Community*, commissioned by the German government and conducted by a team run by the econo-

<sup>54</sup> Commission, *Policy on sectorial aid schemes. Communication from the Commission to the Council*, COM(78) 221 final, 25 maggio 1978.

<sup>55</sup> ASUE, Fondo BAC-CEE CEEA Commissions, Serie BAC 014/1986 DGXVI Politique régionale, 1975-1976, b. 3, RPC, *Certains aspects des relations entre la politique régionale, les politiques sectorielles et celle de la concurrence*, XVI/47/78-F, Bruxelles, 16 febbraio 1978.

mist Kevin Allen between 1975 al 1979.<sup>56</sup> In October 1978, Albert clarified — in his introduction — that the aim of the study wasn't to analyse distortions in competition provoked by state aid regimes, but to assess their effectiveness. The German delegate added that the Committee should have been informed by national authorities about any change in this particular sector, however without adopting a dominant role. This approach was also largely supported by the Director-General for Regional Policy, Mathijssen, who agreed that the Committee's analyses in this sector fell outside of Art. 92 of the Treaty; at most, they aspired to obtain greater effectiveness and transparency of state aid regimes. According to the services of Bruxelles, more selectivity would have helped to avoid the effects of mutual neutralisation. Nevertheless, suspicions in this area remained tangible and were destined to come out in the open soon. The Dutch Eysink Smeets's proposal for a permanent working group on state aid met with opposition from Italian and Irish delegates, as well as with French scepticism.<sup>57</sup> It must be noted that there was a degree of ambiguity in the way the Committee's various components interpreted the concept of rationalisation: if the Commission and those countries with solid state support systems — such as Italy — appealed to this concept in order to concentrate state aid within their own territories, thus obtaining communitarian control over economically dominant regions, the Germans and the Dutch viewed this control — or coordination — as a means of preventing member states from continuously supporting productions outside the market and enacting bailouts. Hence, although negotiators apparently drew upon a shared language, namely that of economic rationalisation, the feeling that one or the other interpretation prevailed determined the outcome of the decisional process. Furthermore, the declarations with which the Germans had meant to promote the debate showed that, even at the end of the 1970s, the pressure to rationalise the European productive system still had to be legitimised in terms of a productive-oriented vocabulary and logic.

A problem that was partially connected to the state aid regulation regarded the Community's financial tools and their geographical concentration. Once again, the main dividing line was that which separated the Germans from the positions of Commission's services and other national delegations. In September 1979, Noë confessed being worried about the risk that the over-

<sup>56</sup> The study was prepared by the Berlin *International Institute of Management del Wissenschaftszentrum*. It was co-sponsored by the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs, by the Land Assia and by the European Commission, in view of Art. 266 of the Commission's general financial statement, which prescribed the publication of regional studies on the request of member states. See Kevin Allen, *Gli incentivi regionali nella Comunità europea*, Collezione Studi, Serie politica regionale, n. 15, Lussemburgo, 1981.

<sup>57</sup> ASUE, Fondo BAC-CEE CEEA Commissions, Serie BAC 014/1986 DGXVI Politique régionale, 1975-1976, b. 5, RPC, Secrétariat, *Projet de compte rendu de la seizième réunion du Comité de politique régionale (Bruxelles, le 26 octobre 1978)*.

lapping of so many different EEC's tools such as the ERDF, EIB loans, the 'New Community Instrument for Borrowing and Lending' (as known as NCI or 'Ortoli Facility') and interest subsidies from the European Monetary System (hereafter EMS) ended up establishing an "accumulation of national and communitarian aids", also due to the fact "that the Community's financial tools, loans and subsidies, multiply, develop and diversify". The Italian spokesperson, Tagliamonte, and the EIB's official Leroux — who was invited to join the discussion — instantly warned the Committee's president about the difference between a simplified image of the "accumulations" and the real necessity to geographically concentrate interventions. Nevertheless, in this regard, some thoughts by Giolitti and his Direction were ongoing. Since, by 1980, ERDF's investments were still strictly allocated into regions chosen by national authorities, Bruxelles' services began to speculate they should concentrate into very few areas that part of the ERDF budget (the non-quota portion) which was under their exclusive control; in this case, the non-quota could have cover the 25% of the Community's population, instead of the 38%.<sup>58</sup> In sum, even within European regional policies, which had been subjected to national jurisdiction ever since the early 1960s, the idea of a detachment from the member states' classifying work as well as the possibility/claim to redefine the spatial boundaries of Europe's delayed development started to gain space.

### **"The end of Keynes's 'aggregate demand theory'"**

The period between the 1970s and the 1980s years turned out to have a major impact on the international economy, which had gone into recession again following the monetary restrictions in the US and the second oil crisis; the latter was used by countries that exported crude oil to tackle the loss of exchange that the weakening of the dollar had provoked. As is known, in 1979 Europe promulgated the EMS in an attempt to protect its economy from the new wave of financial distress.

Between 1978 and 1981, the Regional Policy Committee started a consultation phase involving experts, advisors and services of the Commission, with

<sup>58</sup> Conversely, the DG XVI disagreed with the interpretation — by the Germans and other Northern European delegations — according to which the ERDF distribution in individual national quotas represented an anti-community criterion. In line with the positions of the Economic and Social Committee and the European Parliament itself, the quotas in fact seemed to most benefit the "weakest" countries; hence, in the construction of European political unity, it was enough to proceed with a regular revision of the quotes to such degree that geographical concentration could be guaranteed. Cfr. Commission des Communautés Européennes, Direction générale de la politique régionale, *Aide-mémoire pour Monsieur Mathjisen en vue du Comité de Politique régionale des 0-10-11 juillet 1980*, 3 luglio 1980, compilata da J. Van Ginderachter, loc. cit. nota 57, 1980, b. 8.

the purpose of discussing the relation between general economic policies and regional policies. The consultations marked the progressive exhaustion of the interventionist approach and the rise of monetarist and neoliberal theories.

In this regard, the last clear expression of a strategy based on aggregate demand occurred in February 1978, with the hearing — on behalf of the Committee — of Jean-Claude Morel, head of the Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs (DG II). The French official emphasised the paradigm shift that European regional policy had suffered after the crises of the early 1970s: from delays in development via unemployment issues, low productivity, low salaries and consumption, increased importance of agriculture, and scarce economic and social infrastructure provision, to a more general phenomenon, capable of damaging strong areas as well, through sectorial crises in the steel, building, textile and shoe industry. As new forms of international labour division were being outlined, the Community should have adopted a nonbinding organisation and an orientation — regarding economic policy choices — that was able to soften the regional disparities brought about by the other communitarian policies, as for example agricultural policies. Regional policy had to become a tool for the relaunch of an economic and monetary union, and was to improve the productivity of communitarian industries by raising the positive balance and compensating for the decline in takings, services and social services as a result of the recession.<sup>59</sup>

Morel's hearing was anticipated by an exchange with the Committee's secretary, Georges Rencki, an official close to Giolitti who invited the DG II official to recall — on monetary policies — the Marjolin and MacDougall Reports, so that it became sufficiently clear that progress in this sector had a destabilising effect in terms of regional growth. What was at stake was the very possibility to maintain a regional policy within a situation of slow economic growth. Noë's position on this issue was clear: "no regional policy without economic growth". According to Rencki, it was instead counterproductive to deny regional policy any functionality in times of slow growth; with a view to greater monetary restrictions among the Nine, a similar denial would have been tantamount to yielding to monetarism, viewed as the savage adaptation of weak and peripheral economies to the parameters imposed by an exchange rate based on the German mark. In this regard, Rencki constructed a clear opposition between productive, regional policy investments and reimbursement transfers in the context of a European system of fixed exchange rates:

[I]f it is decided that the compensation for losing national sovereignty in a monetary context (exchange rate) should take the shape of social services or consumption subsidies, there is

<sup>59</sup> Commission, Direction Générale des Affaires Economique et Financières, *Politique économique et dimension régionale*, II/130/78-F, Bruxelles, 17 febbraio 1978, loc. cit. nota 57, 1975-1976, b. 3.

a risk that regions will participate and integrate in the union in a passive way (i.e. as mere financial transfers to fill the deficit in the region's balance of payments), the discrepancy will widen and break the union up, given that the cost of a similar form of integration might become intolerable for other parts of the Community's territory.<sup>60</sup>

With a view to the imminent relaunch of the goals of monetary coordination, which were promulgated in April 1978 by the French-German agreement of Copenhagen that opened the road for the EMS, what was now being re-proposed was, in essence, the same contrast between "monetarists" and "economists" that had accompanied the Werner plan ten years earlier.

The Director-General for Regional Policy, Mathijssen, also had rather evident reservations about the EMS. In fact, the EMS carried the risk of causing deflation in weak states: due to high inflation rates caused precisely by regional discrepancies, these states would no longer have been able to make adjustments through the exchange rate. This would quickly have led to a growth of internal prices and a decrease in net exportations, with serious consequences in terms of a decline in production and the rise of unemployment levels. The EMS would, then, have benefitted the most industrialised regions, and this did not imply an elimination but rather a reinforcement of measures in favour of those regions that were lagging behind or in decline. Noë, instead, was convinced that the connection between regional disparities and inflation was more complex and linked to the problem of territorial distribution of salaries in relation to regional productivity.<sup>61</sup> Highly critical of the Commission's ability to impose a credible regional policy with a communitarian feel to it, the Committee's president repeatedly revealed himself to be in favour of to "return to the idea of a net Fund, economically far more logical than a European regional policy linked to the EMU".<sup>62</sup>

Thus, the clash between the German delegation and members of the Directorate-General for Regional Policy eventually represented the main dynamics that animated the Committee. Yet, this confrontation started to change as early as the first half of 1981, when radically neoliberal positions gained the upper hand; these eventually reverberated in the Committee thanks to the hearings of Commission officials from Bruxelles. This was the case, for example, of two presentations by Richard Hay, the British secretary of the Committee for Economic Policy and Director-General of the DG II, which illustrated the directions of the fifth Programme of mid-term economic

<sup>60</sup> George Rencki, *Note à l'attention de Monsieur Morel Directeur de la DG II*, 6 febbraio 1978, loc. cit. nota 57.

<sup>61</sup> RPC, Secrétariat, *Projet de compte rendu de la seizième réunion du Comité de politique régionale (Bruxelles, le 26 octobre 1978)*, loc. cit. nota 57, 1975-1976, b. 5.

<sup>62</sup> Commission, Direction générale de la politique régionale, *Aide-mémoire pour Monsieur Mathijssen en vue du Comité de Politique régionale des 0-10-11 juillet 1980*, 3 luglio 1980, compilata da J. Van Ginderachter, loc. cit. nota 57, 1980, b. 8.

policy. Hay, who entered the Commission in Christopher Soames's footsteps, believed that the fifth programme carried a vision of 'positive adjustment', which aimed at giving market laws complete liberty and fully re-establishing Europe's economic competitiveness. The main priority was now to reorganise the productive system no longer through more substantial public interventions, possibly mediated by a clearer coordination at community level; on the contrary, this reorganisation should take place through a drastic reduction of public mediation, whereas the renewal of the economic environment — made possible through price stability and the reduction of labour cost — would have attracted new investments. Hay further clarified this approach in June 1981. The main goal was to stop inflation with harsh monetary measures, which wouldn't necessarily have slowed down growth provided that the latter was combined with a salary reduction and control over the public sector deficit. The European economy's degree of resilience with regard to structural changes was to be enabled through an elimination of the inflexibilities that public interventions had provoked. In order to facilitate the achievement of these goals, the programme suggested that regional policy had the following goals:

[T]o encourage innovation, re-allocation of resources from declining industries to competitive activities, more transparency in public interventions, promotion of capital that is at risk, small and medium-sized enterprises, professional development in weak regions, more strictness in granting regional aids by further differentiating these, a better balance between demand and offer in agriculture, more efficient European financial interventions, especially with regard to the ERDF.<sup>63</sup>

These affirmations were designed to increase pressure on the "interventionist" group that had taken shelter within the Regional Policy DG and the very Committee. The Directorate-General official Josef van Ginderachter, in a discussion with Mathijsen, acknowledged that "the first draft of the fifth programme focuses on the long-term politics of offer, which implies the end of Keynes's 'aggregate demand policy'". In this perspective, only a "well-thought-out" regional policy — that is, radically reconsidered in its methods and objectives — would have allowed staying involved in the achievement of the goal of 'convergence'.<sup>64</sup> Within the Committee, the Germans, Dutch and Danes welcomed the programme drafted up by the DG II; in their interventions, they lamented the fact that the measures focusing on a stimulation of global demand were even liable to reinforce regional disparities and steer investments towards the richer regions. The communitarian coordination of national regional policies shouldn't limit itself to the creation of a legal framework for competition,

<sup>63</sup> RPC, Secrétariat, *Avant-projet. Compte rendu de la 31e réunion du Comité de Politique Régionale (Bruxelles, 2-3 juillet 1981)*, loc. cit. nota 57, 1981, b. 9.

<sup>64</sup> RPC, *Réunion des 2-3 juillet 1981. Aide-mémoire à l'intention de Monsieur Mathijsen*, loc. cit. nota 51.

but had to regulate the amounts of public resources that had been set apart for regional purposes, including infrastructure: this in order to reduce or cut national aids in prosperous areas and refrain from funding declining sectors. In sum, the purpose of regional policies should have been that of improving resource allocation in order to develop the Community's global economic potential and encourage its structural adaptation.<sup>65</sup>

### **Against the “imperialism” of regional policies**

The ERDF's new regulation, No. 1787 of June 1984, developed over a rather long period. It was launched at least three years before, on the basis of a specific Memorandum on the priorities of regional policy that had been prepared by the European Commission in spring 1981, and was directed at the Council. Within communitarian circles, the debate about the Memorandum was conditioned, in first instance, by the British demand to revise the EEC's finances: an issue that was worsened by the possibility of including the Mediterranean into the Community — a partially already accomplished act — and by an economic situation that was characterised, at least until 1983, by slow growth and high inflation levels. Within the Committee, the document's discussion marked a real watershed that followed from the ever more evident intolerance of many delegates towards what they considered an attempt — on behalf of the Commission — to enact an “imperialism of regional policy with regard to the other policies”. This definition, coined by the Danish representative Arting, was supported by nearly all countries from northern Europe. Although he agreed on the necessity to favour the productive growth of weak regions, President Noë warned that

the objective of harmonious development, as mentioned by the Treaty, is unrealistic if it is interpreted in an egalitarian sense. The Community's economic dynamism should not be compromised by concentrating all development efforts exclusively on the weak regions.<sup>66</sup>

The Luxembourgier Ley used similar tones when he noted how the Commission hadn't succeeded in finding a balance between regions with slow development and those in decline, alerting the services to “a misleading representation of the concept of regional disparity, which fails to take into account all existing differences between the regions”. The German Albert attacked the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) that, in his opinion, permitted European agriculture to “work while being safeguarded from this competition, allowing

<sup>65</sup> *Draft opinion of the Regional Policy Committee on the preliminary draft Fifth medium-term economic policy programme*, XVI.A.2/JVG.AK.bp, 23 giugno 1981, loc. cit. nota 57.

<sup>66</sup> RPC, Secrétariat, *Avant-projet. Compte rendu de la 29e réunion du Comité de Politique Régionale (Bruxelles, 31 mars 1981)*, loc. cit. nota 57.



underdeveloped rural regions to export thanks to the reimbursements of the EAFRD". Consequently, any intention of the Commission to introduce forms of commercial protectionism for regional purposes was permanently rejected.<sup>67</sup>

The growing breach between northern and southern European countries, as well as the British government's shift — following Thatcher's rise to power — towards conservative positions permanently changed the balances within the Committee, prematurely marking a redefinition of the power dynamics between advocates of a competitive policy and those supporting regional policy. The conditions thus emerged for a serious reconsideration of the latter, which would have been promulgated through the enactment of the economic cohesion and social politics of the Single European Act, and through pressure being placed on the regulation of the individual member states' regional policies, based on the perspective of competition. An area of Community influence on national politics was created with regard to intervention tools, eligibility requirements, geographical coverage of the measures, intensity of state aid, and the overall amount of expenditure.

Forms of neoliberal regulation in competition policies were particularly evident from the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, through figures such as Peter Sutherland (1985-1989) and Leon Brittan (1989-1995).<sup>68</sup> Sutherland became Commissioner for Competition in January 1985. He was nominated by the Irish government led by the conservative party Fine Gale, of whose Strategic Committee he had been a member between 1978 and 1981. A young, charismatic and ambitious lawyer, Sutherland gave evidence of a strong devotion to the principles of the free market economy; when he made his entry into the Delors Commission, he specifically asked to manage the Competition sector, convinced that a stricter interpretation of the Treaties in this area might grant the Commission far more powers than it could claim in other areas. Sutherland realised that an incrementation of the Community's competences in sectors such as industrial agreements, fusions and state aid — traditionally reserved to member states — was tantamount to "striking the nerve of national sovereignty".<sup>69</sup> He adopted the strategy of attacking cartels, monopolies and state aid via the naming and shaming tactic, and by building on the Treaties, confident that the European Court of Justice would have defended him once the infringement procedures would be applied.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>67</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>68</sup> Angela Wigger, Hubert Buch-Hansen, *The unfolding contradictions of neoliberal competition regulation and the global economic crisis: a missed opportunity for change?*, in Henk Overbeek, Bastiaan van Apeldoorn (eds.), *Neoliberalism in crisis*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, pp. 23-44, qui p. 31.

<sup>69</sup> Hubert Buch-Hansen, Angela Wigger, *The politics of European competition regulation. A critical political economy perspective*, London, Routledge, 2011, pp. 80-82.

<sup>70</sup> Bertjan Verbeek, *Leadership of International organizations*, in John Kane, Haig Patapan, Paul 't Hart (eds.), *Dispersed democratic leadership. Origins, Dynamics, & Implications*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2009, pp. 235-255, qui pp. 248 sg.

The moment he took office, Sutherland convincingly supported the infringement procedure against the French textile giant Bossuac, which his predecessor Fran Andriessen had started in November 1984, and against the building industry. The Irish Commissioner's assertive style met with much opposition both within the Bruxelles Commission and in the European chancelleries. Various member states — including France, Italy and Greece — who had suffered the consequences of the economic recession of the early 1980s were worried about his market-oriented ideology. Rivalry with the DG III — which was more inclined to a protectionist approach — would soon have developed within the Commission, whereas the very President Delors had reasons for preoccupation in view of his activism in favour of state aid. Nonetheless, Sutherland also enjoyed the favour of German officials, who were traditionally more sensitive to the dictates of ordoliberalism and willing to develop a more determined communitarian protocol on state aid.<sup>71</sup>

According to Sutherland and the DG IV officials, state aid was unlawful if granted without a reorganisation plan, and had to be carefully assessed through the lens of geographical concentration; the latter was considered a means of regulating regional aids from the perspective of their spatial expansion, as the Fifteenth Report on competition of 1986 and beyond had already demonstrated. In 1985, Sutherland established a task force on state aid, which marked the beginning of a new phase. In 1988, the results were presented in the *First Survey of State Aids in the European Community*, which offered a detailed picture of the evolution of national public aids from 1981 to 1986. The member states had come to spend some ten per cent of their entire public expenditure in public aids, at times even reaching peaks of 20%, for an average of 3 to 5% of the GDP.<sup>72</sup> The European governments sustained the industry with 93 billion euros in 1986 — an amount that was the equivalent of the Community's entire budget. Within the naming and shaming strategy, the “bad guys” were represented by Greece, Ireland and — especially — by Italy, which received five times more funds than France, United Kingdom and Germany.<sup>73</sup> It is in this context, for example, that the dispute with Italy about the new regulation on extraordinary interventions as prescribed by Law 64/1986 unfolded.

<sup>71</sup> Laurent Warloutzet, *Governing Europe in a globalized world*.

<sup>72</sup> Michelle Cini, Lee McGowan, *Competition policy in the European Union*, London, Palgrave MacMillan, ed. 2009, p. 177.

<sup>73</sup> Stephen Wilks, *Competition Policy: challenge and reform*, in Hellen Wallace, William Wallace, Mark A. Pollack (eds.), *Policy-making in the European Union*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005, pp. 113-140.

## Conclusion

My reconstruction of the debate within the Regional Policy Committee on the theoretical models, methods and types of regional policy interventions seems to suggest that, between the 1970s and 1980s, a transition of various meanings and goals occurred that may be attributed to this specific sector. If, at the onset of the communitarian project, the EEC's regional policy was meant to accompany the efforts of national governments in the struggle against the main discrepancies within the Common Market, it was subsequently forced to consider the need for a productive reorganisation of declining industrial regions and, eventually, yield to the perspective of a single market and of competition policy. In this sense, we might say that elements such as the crisis and the need for a reorganisation of European economy — along with attempts to identify the premises of a regional policy even in times of economic crisis and high inflation — represented the primary stage for a double process in which old recipes for regional development were used up and transformed in more suitable models of marketisation. This transition seems to be the result of a growing perception of the State's inefficiency in solving regional problems or — at the very least — of the loss of a certain consensus on the State's importance, in the context of the slow consumption of dictates of production and interventionist policies measured according to the politics of demand. It is no coincidence that this phenomenon was accompanied by the dismantlement of the primary systems of national intervention — primarily the Development Fund for the South — and by a progressive celebration of the subsidiary role of regional and local autonomies within the planning and expenditure of structural funds.

Around the mid-1980s, the economic recovery also affected Europe, as a consequence of the American increase in aggregate demand. This encouraged national authorities to overcome fears of destabilising their respective societies, which had for a long time kept them from introducing drastic measures in theoretical models based on public policies. Elements of the neoliberal doctrine could thus penetrate even in a sector traditionally predisposed for State sovereignty, like that of interventions in regional disparities, starting from a cocktail of critical elaborations already developed between the end of the 1970s and the start of the following decade, when interventionist policies declined — as my reconstruction of the Regional Policy Committee's activities have revealed. From this perspective, a similar organism could actually be considered a sort of thermometer of the debate going on in single member states, and of processes that the European Commission — being an administrative body — inevitably became a part of only in a later moment, through its subsequent compositions. Thus, by the mid-1980s, people like Sutherland presented themselves on the communitarian stage in the role of "commutators" of a critical patrimony of ideas and thoughts that had been collected up to that instant,

concerning the function of the current interventionist model, so as to convert it into new hegemonic forms of neoliberal discourse. In this regard, the story of state aid is an exemplary one.

In terms of the role played by individual state members, I have stressed the fact that the regulation the Commission imposed upon these was gradually accepted by national policymakers, because it allowed them to control their partners' analogous policies. Sutherland himself noticed "a pronounced tendency in all state members to view other national aid systems as bad and their own as perfectly legitimate".<sup>74</sup> Obviously, we must also not underestimate the role of internal political balances, primarily the possibility that national decision-makers appeal to external motivations in order to justify their control over a matter covered by such social or economic interests as well as by consensus mechanisms that were difficult to overcome.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Peter Sutherland, *Competition policy in the EEC Today. Address to a Delegation of Saarland*, Bonn, snt, 31 March 1987.

<sup>75</sup> Fiona Wishlade, *Regional state aid and competition policy*, London, Kluwer Law International, 2003, p. 216.

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## Making sense of the industrial past. Deindustrialisation and industrial heritage in Italy

Gilda Zazzara\*

This article analyses the relationship between deindustrialisation and industrial heritage by considering recent studies on the topic. Although Deindustrialisation Studies and (Industrial) Heritage Studies focus on distinct phases of industrial change — schematically a “before” and an “after” of the history of industry — these fields increasingly converge on the role of the memory of the industrial past in the present. The essay examines these convergences in the Italian context, looking at the history of industrial archaeology and the difficulty of recognising a specifically “Italian deindustrialisation”. It argues that history, especially environmental and labour history, can play an important role in this dialogue. In the last part, the article focuses on the industrial area of Porto Marghera (near Venice) and analyses the major cultural events that were organised for its centenary. It argues that this is an example both of “deindustrialisation without industrial heritage” and of “industrial heritage without the memory of deindustrialisation”. This makes it difficult to develop a shared elaboration of the area’s industrial past and of its future.

**Key words:** Deindustrialisation Studies, Heritage Studies, Industrial Heritage, Labour History, Italy, Porto Marghera (Venice)

In this article, I will examine the relationship between deindustrialisation and industrial heritage; I do so by considering the former as a historical process and the latter as a contemporary practice of, and discussion about, the industrial past. I will start from a question that may seem paradoxical at first sight: what came first, deindustrialisation or industrial heritage? The most straightforward answer is that the heritagisation of an industrial artefact can only occur after production has ceased or changed; deindustrialisation is, then, a preliminary and necessary condition for industrial heritage to be conceived.<sup>1</sup> Yet, if we look more closely at the connections between the two and ground them in an example, the linearity of events may not seem so clear.

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<sup>1</sup> Kevin Walsh, *The representation of the past. Museums and heritage in the post modern world*, London-New York, Routledge, 1992.

Deindustrialisation is not a singular event but a prolonged process of structural change, which runs in parallel with opposed phenomena at both a global and a local level. In turn, heritage is not a product but the outcome of material and symbolical selections and negotiations between social, political and economic actors. Deindustrialisation considered in terms of the history of economic transformation and industrial heritage as the public memory of that experience are both battlefields where opposing values and interests regularly confront one another.<sup>2</sup> The ways in which communities have gained experience from industrial closure, the means through which they have negotiated and opposed this decline, and the outcomes of reconversion affect the strategies of the heritage industry and the accompanying heritage in a locality or region.<sup>3</sup>

On this basis, I view deindustrialisation and industrial heritage not in terms of a “before” and “after”, as is often assumed in scholarship; Deindustrialisation Studies re-elaborate and historicise the various results of change, whereas Heritage Studies seek to make these usable and significant in the present. Rather than considering the history of the reversal of industrialisation and the memorialisation of the industrial past as distinct areas of expertise, I see them as parallel approaches. In the words of one of the founding fathers of Heritage Studies, David Lowenthal, if “showing off the past is the common result of identifying it”, then my interpretation of deindustrialisation and industrial heritage raises the question of how deindustrialisation — viewed in terms of history — can be incorporated in industrial heritage practices.<sup>4</sup> This question takes on a particular importance if we consider the most recent wave of industrial dismantling in the Western world, beginning with the economic crisis of the 1970s, which is the *terminus a quo* of all interpretations that define contemporary societies as “postmodern”, “post-Fordist” or “post-industrial”.<sup>5</sup>

In the first part of the article, I will outline a number of important developments in international scholarship on deindustrialisation and industrial heritage. It was my longstanding interest in the former that led me to focus my attention on the latter. Next, I will consider the Italian national context, starting from the politically contentious question of whether Italy is a deindustrialised country or is in the process of becoming one. The answer to this question has consequences both for the memory of work and for the development of an industrial archaeology of the Fordist era. Finally, I will ground my analysis in

<sup>2</sup> Michael Frisch, *De-, re-, and post-industrialization. Industrial heritage as contested memorial terrain*, “Journal of Folklore Research”, 1998, n. 3, pp. 241-249.

<sup>3</sup> Stefan Berger, Steven High (eds.), *(De-)Industrial Heritage*, “Labor”, 2019, n. 1; see also David Nettleingham, *Heritage work. The preservations and performances of Thames sailing barges*, “Cultural Sociology”, 2018, n. 3, pp. 384-399.

<sup>4</sup> David Lowenthal, *The past is a foreign country*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985, here p. 271.

<sup>5</sup> Scholarly literature on these themes is extremely vast, and I will limit myself to mentioning David Harvey’s classic, *La crisi della modernità*, Milan, Il saggiatore, 1993.

a local case study that I consider to be a potential example of deindustrialisation without (for the moment) industrial heritage, but at the same time also an example of industrial heritage without placing deindustrialisation within its interpretative frame. This is the case of Porto Marghera, the vast industrial, deindustrial and post-industrial mainland area that faces the Venetian lagoon — the twentieth-century extension of the “old city” and an investment in its modernity. However, due precisely to the changes it is experiencing, nowadays Porto Marghera is caught between the stigma of the past and an uncertain future that make it extremely difficult to identify its heritage.

### Studies in deindustrialisation and heritage

Deindustrialisation and Heritage Studies generally approach the theme of industrial change by focusing on two different scenarios: that in which industry fades, or collapses, and that in which it is reborn in the form of material or immaterial “heritage”. These thematic areas share an inevitable and concrete rootedness in space; deindustrialisation is a selective and localised, non-global phenomenon, whereas the heritage of industrial labour — in all its tangible and intangible aspects — is inseparable from the places in which this heritage is considered such by collective actors, including when “it moves” along with migratory phenomena.

Deindustrialisation does not always produce a recognisable heritage that can be valorised: a history capable of becoming memory. The “creative destruction” of capitalism — to use Joseph Schumpeter’s famous definition — that is often mentioned in Deindustrialisation Studies entails the continuous substitution of buildings and machines as a result of technological modernisation.<sup>6</sup> Conversely, in areas that still suffer the social consequences of dismantling, valorisation projects may encounter a double obstacle: the disapproval of local communities, especially when hit hard by unemployment or other forms of social disadvantage, or the lack of local economic resources.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, in many places the rise of an ecological awareness — which initially developed in close connection to the problem of “industrial risk”, at least in Italy — has generated a cultural *humus* that is unfavourable to the memory of industrialisation.

However, when projects are launched for the re-use and/or valorisation of deindustrialised places, a dialogue between Deindustrialisation and Heritage Studies becomes possible, in which historians of modern times can play a

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Tim Strangleman, *Portrait of a deindustrialising island*, in Graham Crow, Jaimie Ellis (eds.), *Revisiting divisions of labour. The impacts and legacies of a modern sociological classic*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 2017, pp. 55-68.

<sup>7</sup> James Douet (ed.), *Industrial heritage re-tooled. The Ticch guide to industrial heritage conservation*, Lancaster, Carnegie, 2013, p. 8.

significant role, especially those interested in “working-class public history”.<sup>8</sup> Deindustrialisation Studies initially focused on the “here and now” of the crises, of their macro-economic causes and immediate effects. During a subsequent phase, they aimed at deciphering the long-term cultural and political consequences for deindustrialised communities, be they regions, urban areas, company towns or working-class districts. Many scholars of deindustrialisation have limited their perspective to a subjective theme, to the fact that people inhabit areas of decline or descend from displaced workers.<sup>9</sup> As the concept of deindustrialisation gradually lost its connotation of a sporadic, casual or inevitable event, instead becoming synonym with structural caesura, the role of historians — working in close connection to other social scientists — has become ever more important.

The concept of deindustrialisation entered public debate in Europe and North America in the 1980s, in the midst of a traumatic surge of renovations and closures, accompanied by harsh attacks on labour organisations. Consequently, specific attention began to be paid to the so-called Rust Belt in the United States and the coal-mining areas of Britain — torn apart by the long strike of 1984-85. Ever since the economists Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison defined deindustrialisation as a “widespread, systematic disinvestment in the nation’s basic productive capacity”, thus highlighting its economic and national dimension, the area of investigation has broadened considerably. The role of historians has been decisive in this development.<sup>10</sup>

Christopher Johnson’s 1998 study of the decline of the textile industry in the Languedoc region during the Second Empire shed light on the crucial role politics played in the dislocation and articulation of industrial capital. In particular, Johnson’s study was praised for having contributed to a reconsideration of the historical period in which deindustrialisation is to be located.<sup>11</sup> With the case of Detroit in mind, Johnson argued that the cataclysmic deindustrialisation of the 1980s in the United States was no more than an episode in the long-

<sup>8</sup> Michael Frisch, *Working-class public history in the context of deindustrialization. Dilemmas of authority and the possibilities of dialogue*, “Labour/Le Travail”, 2003, n. 51, pp. 153-164.

<sup>9</sup> Steven High, Lachlan MacKinnon, Andrew Perchard (eds.), *The deindustrialized world. Confronting ruin in postindustrial places*, Vancouver-Toronto, Ubc Press, 2017, pp. 13 ff.

<sup>10</sup> Barry Bluestone, Bennett Harrison, *The deindustrialization of America. Plant closings, community abandonment, and the dismantling of basic industry*, New York, Basic books, 1982, here p. 6; Steven High, “The wounds of class”. *A historiographical reflection on the study of deindustrialization, 1973-2013*, “History Compass”, 2013, n. 11, pp. 994-1007. The international debate reached Italy through Angelo Pichierri’s anthology, *Il declino industriale. Il contributo delle scienze sociali alla diagnosi e alla definizione di strategie di risposta*, Turin, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1986.

<sup>11</sup> Christopher H. Johnson, *The life and death of industrial Languedoc, 1700-1920. The politics of deindustrialization*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1995. An anticipation of this research in Italian had appeared several years before: Id., *De-industrializzazione: il caso dell’industria laniera della Linguadoca*, “Quaderni storici”, 1983, n. 52, pp. 25-56.



term transformation of capitalist economy; throughout the course of its history, the latter has constantly sought more favourable conditions for making profit through cost reduction and the disciplining of labour.

As a result, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam suggested to expand the study of deindustrialisation to its social, cultural and political implications, and to include it in the agenda of global labour history.<sup>12</sup> In fact, to observe the movements of industrial capital inevitably raised the question of how “the vicissitudes of groups of workers in different parts of the world are connected in complex ways”.<sup>13</sup> Simultaneously, some North American studies considered the resistance to dismantling an integral part of the working-class movement’s political history.<sup>14</sup>

A growing number of oral histories, ethnographies and autobiographies have given voice to the labourers that were affected by the decline. They have done so by analysing stories of decline in terms of lost identity (i.e. class, gender, ethnic), health problems, consequences for family relations and social cohesion.<sup>15</sup> Often, a photographic language accompanied the ethno-historical research so as to capture faces and landscapes at the moment of transition.<sup>16</sup>

Industrial decline has paved the way for a reconsideration of the classical approach of labour historians; traditionally more interested in studying working-class identity formation and the unfolding of conflicts, scholars have tended to avoid analysing the longer-term implications of industrial decline. Working in close dialogue with sociology, historians have linked these reflections to situations of contemporary labour, demonstrating how the end of the Fordist paradigm has gone hand in hand with precarisation, a drop in trade union

<sup>12</sup> Christian De Vito (ed.), *Global labour history. La storia del lavoro al tempo della “globalizzazione”*, Verona, Ombre Corte, 2012.

<sup>13</sup> Bert Altena, Marcel Van Der Linden (eds.), *De-industrialization: social, cultural, and political aspects*, “International Review of Social History Supplements”, 2002, n. 10, p. 2.

<sup>14</sup> Jefferson Cowie, *Capital moves. Rca’s seventy-year quest for cheap labor*, New York, The New Press, 1999; Sherry Lee Linkon, John Russo, *Steeltown Usa. Work and memory in Youngstown*, Lawrence, University Press of Kansas, 2002; Steven High, *Industrial sunset. The making of North America’s Rust Belt, 1969-1984*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2003.

<sup>15</sup> To give a few examples: Kathryn Dudley, *The end of the line. Lost jobs, new lives in postindustrial America*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 1994; Tracy E. K’Meyer, Joy L. Hart, *I saw it coming. Workers narratives of plant closings and job loss*, New York, Palgrave-MacMillan, 2009; Valerie Walkerdine, Luis Jimenez, *Gender, work and community after de-industrialisation. A psychosocial approach to affect*, Basingstoke, Palgrave-MacMillan, 2012; Christine J. Walley, *Exit zero. Family and class in postindustrial Chicago*, Chicago-London, University of Chicago Press, 2013; Tim Strangleman, James Rhodes, Sherry Lee Linkon (eds.), *Crumbling cultures. Deindustrialization, class, and memory*, “International Labor and Working-Class History”, 2013, n. 1.

<sup>16</sup> From the classic “instant” report by Dale Maharidge and Michael Williamson, *Journey to nowhere. The saga of the new underclass*, New York, Doubleday, 1985 to Michael Frisch, Milton Rogovin, *Portaits in steel*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 1993 and Steven High, David W. Lewis, *Corporate wasteland. The landscapes and memory of deindustrialization*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 2007.

membership, a growth in inequality and the shift towards right-wing political positions.<sup>17</sup> A debate has unfolded about the fact that the tertiary sector, too, is increasingly affected by automisation and delocalisation processes, with similar consequences in terms of unemployment and urban voids.<sup>18</sup>

Next, the need to move “beyond the ruins” and the counting of lost jobs has resulted in analyses of deindustrialisation’s effects also from the perspective of cultural representations.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the passage of time in former company towns and in the regions that are most active in the secondary sector has generated different forms of cultural engagements in literature, cinema, theatre, art and new media. Sherry Lee Linkon has introduced the concept of half-life, which in physics measures the amount of time it takes for a radioactive substance to lose half of its radioactivity within a living organism; she thus sought to analyse the culture of generations that have absorbed the legacy of blue-collar labour — although they never witnessed its decline — and are re-interpreting it with the help of new languages.<sup>20</sup> Finally, considerable scholarly attention is being given to the themes of the deindustrialised landscape and politics of urban regeneration, with the involvement of geographers, architects and urban planners.<sup>21</sup>

This synthetic overview allows me to conclude that Deindustrialisation Studies — in their most recent developments — have crossed over to a territory that had hitherto belonged to Heritage Studies. Deindustrialisation scholars are advancing an ever more critical approach to industrial heritage practices, calling for greater consideration of the social and class aspects that determine these practices. They have thus managed to draw attention to the risks of fetishising and aestheticising industrial ruins, efficiently described as “ruin porn” or “Rust Belt chic”, and of urban resilience narratives that ignore the banishment of popular classes from their neighbourhoods.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, they

<sup>17</sup> Tim Strangleman, James Rhodes, *The “new” sociology of deindustrialisation? Understanding industrial change*, “Sociology Compass”, 2014, n. 4, pp. 411-421; Jefferson Cowie, *Stayin’ alive. The 1970s and the last days of the working class*, London-New York, The New Press, 2010; Richard Sennet, *The corrosion of character. The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*, New-York-London, Norton, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> Sherry Lee Linkon, John Russo, *The social costs of deindustrialization*, in Richard McCormack (ed.), *Manufacturing a better future for America*, Alliance for American Manufacturing, 2009, pp. 149-174.

<sup>19</sup> Jefferson Cowie, Joseph Heatcott (eds.), *Beyond the ruins. The meanings of deindustrialization*, Ithaca-London, Cornell University Press, 2003.

<sup>20</sup> Sherry Lee Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization. Working-class writing about economic restructuring*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2018.

<sup>21</sup> Margaret Cowell, *Dealing with deindustrialization. Adaptive resilience in American midwestern regions*, London-New York, Routledge, 2015; Ellen Braae, *Beauty redeemed. Recycling post-industrial landscape*, Risskov-Basel, Ikaros press-Birkhauser, 2015; Tim Edensor, *Industrial ruins. Spaces, aesthetics and materiality*, Oxford-New York, Berg, 2005.

<sup>22</sup> Tim Strangleman, “Smokestack nostalgia”, “ruin porn” or working-class obituary. *The role and meaning of deindustrial representation*, “International Labor and Working Class History”, 2013, n. 84, pp. 23-37; S.L. Linkon, *The half-life of deindustrialization*, pp. 131 ff.

have started to investigate how the creation of local identities can benefit from industrial heritage in different ways, depending on the extent to which processes of dismantling — and the conflicts they have provoked — have been tackled socially and politically.<sup>23</sup>

Similarly to the extension of Deindustrialisation Studies beyond the socio-economic sphere, considerations of industrial heritage are no longer limited to archaeological or museum-related issues. As I already mentioned, by now industrial heritage scholars have increasingly acknowledged the fact that late twentieth-century deindustrialisation processes introduced new challenges for their field, leading them to examine an impressive amount of sites, buildings and relics that have lost their productive functions over the past 30 to 40 years.<sup>24</sup>

The retrieval of a former industrial artefact in terms of a monument, landmark, *lieu de mémoire* or container of completely different functions from those it was built for in the first place, is no longer seen as a purely aesthetical operation, as a form of urban requalification or as a valorisation of heritage. The experts employed in valorisation projects are increasingly encouraged to reflect on the industrial memories associated with these sites, on the effects such projects could have on local communities in terms of strengthening social ties and public participation. The acceleration of the technological change in “late modernity”, which also renders the immediate past prematurely obsolete, opens up space for an “archaeology of the recent and contemporary past”.<sup>25</sup> The selection of heritage can thus be directed at moments and subjects that have thus far been excluded, for example the case of closed factories that had seemed ahead of their times just a few years before being declared out-of-date.

The heritage idea is nowadays very distant from its original focus on the birthplace of industry narratives that were an integral part of industrial modernity and nationalism.<sup>26</sup> It is equally distant from industrial archaeology, which originated in the 1950s in Britain; this was more a cultural movement than a discipline, aimed at valorising and conserving the “ruins” of the Industrial Revolution and of the Victorian era. During the years that Margaret Thatcher ruled during the 1980s — the age of British deindustrialisation and delabourisation — the taste for industrial heritage was often accompanied by a conservative political nostalgia for the age of national greatness and empire. In

<sup>23</sup> Stefan Berger, Jana Golombek, Christian Wicke (eds.), *Deindustrialization, heritage, and representations of identity*, “The Public Historian”, 2017, n. 4; Idd., *Industrial heritage and regional identities*, London-New York, Routledge, 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Rodney Harrison, *Heritage. Critical approaches*, London-New York, Routledge, 2013, in particular pp. 79-85.

<sup>25</sup> Rodney Harrison, John Schofield, *After modernity. Archaeological approaches to the contemporary past*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Laurajane Smith, *Uses of heritage*, London-New York, Routledge, 2006, pp. 20 ff.

the meantime, cultural, natural and industrial heritage had become the stage of interventions by transnational organisations such as UNESCO, with its World Heritage Convention, and the International Committee for the Conservation of the Industrial Heritage (hereafter TICCIH).<sup>27</sup>

The increasingly evident political dimension of the debate around industrial heritage, as well as the presence of institutions that took charge of an “authorized heritage discourse”, are at the basis of a critical reconsideration of heritage studies.<sup>28</sup> In the 1980s, Robert Hewison — a British scholar of John Ruskin — coined the term “heritage industry” to describe the proliferation of museums and heritage sites in the Anglo-American world; this industry was slowly but steadily becoming a real economic activity.<sup>29</sup> Hewison interpreted this obsession with the past as the unhealthy expression of a society incapable of imagining a future for itself because suffering from too rapid changes, primarily that of industrial decline: “while the real world of industrial manufacturing decays, redundant and obsolete machinery flourishes — in museums”.<sup>30</sup> The main limit of museums such as the Ironbridge Gorge Museum in Shropshire or the Beamish in Durham — which often employed former labourers so as to promote the creation of alternatives to job loss — was the narration of a sweetened past, freed from trauma and conflicts, not in the least those caused by the post-industrial transition.

In the 1990s, the French historians Louis Bergeron and Gracia Dorel-Ferré suggested that we abandon the concept of industrial archaeology in favour of the broader idea of “histoire du patrimoine industriel”, that is, of a stronger link between labour and entrepreneurial history and practices of safeguarding material artefacts. Contemporary deindustrialisation processes — “les temps des grandes friches industrielles” — gave priority to this “new territory” of research.<sup>31</sup> They also opened up the possibility of widening public awareness of their relevance by involving the affective memory of the protagonists: “il n’est que de visiter la mine d’Alès et d’écouter d’anciens mineurs, qui n’hésitent pas à commenter avec amertume les circonstances dans lesquelles furent décidées les fermetures, prématurées, selon eux, des puits de mine”.<sup>32</sup> If

<sup>27</sup> The *Convention concerning the protection of the world cultural and natural heritage* was ratified in 1972; the TICCIH was founded the following year.

<sup>28</sup> On the concept of “authorized heritage discourse”, see L. Smith, *Uses of heritage*, in particular pp. 29-34.

<sup>29</sup> Cfr. Robert Hewison, *The heritage industry. Britain in a climate of decline*, London, Methuen, 1987, pp. 88 ff.

<sup>30</sup> R. Hewison, *The heritage industry*, here p. 91.

<sup>31</sup> Louis Bergeron, Gracia Dorel-Ferré, *Le patrimoine industriel, un nouveau territoire*, Paris, Liris, 1996, here p. 1. The text can be consulted online, on the website of the Association pour le Patrimoine Industriel de Champagne-Ardenne, [www.patrimoineindustriel-apic.com](http://www.patrimoineindustriel-apic.com) (last accessed 5 August 2019).

<sup>32</sup> L. Bergeron, G. Dorel-Ferré, *Le patrimoine industriel, un nouveau territoire*, here p. 41.

in the midst of conflicts triggered by deindustrialisation — as in 1980s Britain — the heritage boom had seemed a pathological phenomenon, as time passed it revealed itself to be a favourable context for alternative and experimental developments.

It is precisely in those areas where deindustrialisation has been most intense that politics and debates about regeneration have allowed for stimulating forms of remembrance. Laurajane Smith, for example, has studied the case of Castelford, a coal-mining city in Yorkshire where closures have been so rapid and radical that no relic around which to construct an industrial memory remains. Nonetheless, the local community has developed — from below and independently from any kind of institutional politics — shared feelings about its working-class identity, promoting cultural events capable of socialising and transmitting this identity, with a positive effect on the citizens' self-perception.<sup>33</sup> Placing emphasis on the immaterial dimension of heritage, which has probably been the most relevant development of the past years, means taking another step towards the social history of deindustrialisation, and towards public history.

### **The Italian path towards a memory of industry**

The times and modes of industrial modernisation affect the times and modes in which industrial heritage practices and narratives are developed in a specific national or local context. If the purpose of the latter is to give value (including in economic terms) and meaning to the history of industrial heritage in the present, then the historical interpretation of that past overwhelmingly comes into play. As I have tried to explain, I believe that to also include the history of deindustrialisation in this sense-making process might enhance not only the interdisciplinary dialogue between specialists, but also the public engagement of the involved actors.

The more industrial decline is perceived, studied and discussed, the more the memory of industry is able to move beyond politics of requalification (which often coincide with gentrification processes), beyond the linear history of scientific progress, and beyond a sweetened or nostalgic narrative. As the aforementioned studies suggest, the history of deindustrialisation can renovate that of industrialisation, preventing it from becoming an absolute entity — extracted from the flow of capitalism's continuous transformations. By introducing elements of discontinuity and transition, industrial heritage is brought closer to the present and connected to living memories, while the disorienting effects of change become more comprehensive and reflection on the current

<sup>33</sup> L. Smith, *Uses of heritage*, pp. 237 ff.

“society of labour” is encouraged (even only by way of creating a contrast). The dismantling experience is that *tranche* that enables industrial heritage projects to involve local communities, to acknowledge the existence of both dividing and cohesive elements of industrial memory, and to interpret seemingly unconnected cultural phenomena.

In Italy, public interest in industrial heritage developed later than elsewhere. It wasn't until halfway through the 1970s that discussions about industrial archaeology emerged, and the first plans for the safeguarding of industrial sites were undertaken. In 1975, experts began studying the retrieval of the historic working-class town of Crespi d'Adda (Lombardy), destined to become the first Italian industrial site to be included in the UNESCO's World Heritage List. If compared to the British tradition, Italian industrial archaeology has distinguished itself by a lesser involvement of local enthusiasts and a stronger embeddedness in universities, resulting in a strong focus on methodological aspects. With regard to the French tradition, Italian institutions are far less inclined to consider industrial archaeology an important field of cultural politics.<sup>34</sup>

The first local industrial archaeology associations were formed in the 1980s. They started an innovative activity, but were soon faced with a context of fragmentation and isolation, which was marked by a more general climate of reduced interest — on behalf of intellectuals — in the world of industry and blue-collar labour.<sup>35</sup> Thus, it was the politician and trade unionist Bruno Corti who directed the Roman Institute for Material Culture and Industrial Archaeology (Istituto per la cultura materiale e l'archeologia industriale), which predominantly operated on an institutional and educational level. In Lombardy, the first systematic census of regional historical-industrial heritage was conducted, but the launch of a scientific journal endorsed by the Micheletti and Feltrinelli foundations of Brescia and Milan respectively, with the help of important social and industrial historians (from Franco Della Peruta to Duccio Bigazzi), was short-lived.<sup>36</sup>

The longest-lasting project was coordinated by the architecture historian Cesare de Seta, in collaboration with the Neapolitan Association for Industrial Archaeology. This project paid particular attention to a reevaluation of the manufacturing history of the South. The group developed an original approach to industrial archaeology based on a division into periods not limited to the

<sup>34</sup> For a first evaluation, see Renato Covino, *Archeologia industriale in Italia: ambito disciplinare, termini cronologici*, “Quaderni storici”, 1980, n. 43, pp. 218-229; for a more recent assessment, Augusto Ciuffetti, Roberto Parisi (eds.), *L'archeologia industriale in Italia. Storie e storiografia (1978-2008)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Francesco Chiapparino, *Dall'archeologia al patrimonio industriale. Le linee di un dibattito*, in A. Ciuffetti, R. Parisi, *L'archeologia industriale in Italia*, pp. 55-77.

<sup>36</sup> Alberto Garlandini, Bruna Micheletti, Pier Paolo Poggio (eds.), *Il patrimonio storico-industriale della Lombardia. Censimento regionale*, Brescia, Fondazione Luigi Micheletti, 1991.

age of Industrial Revolution; the aim was to demonstrate that nineteenth- and twentieth-century industrialisation had cancelled the traces of a technologically skilful and innovative South, devastated by a precocious and forgotten deindustrialisation.<sup>37</sup>

The Neapolitan project came to an end in 1993, just when the very first university courses in industrial archaeology were being offered. In his last editorial, de Seta expressed his bitterness about the tendency within the sector to focus almost exclusively on conducting censuses of “sites of interest”, at a time when the “dramatic reality of deindustrialisation that is happening in our country (the South, in particular)” was causing unprecedented problems concerning the safeguarding and re-use of extremely vast areas.<sup>38</sup> Reading between the lines, it isn’t difficult to note a reference to the dismantling of the major iron and steel plant of Bagnoli (Naples), heading towards closure in that very moment.

In 1997, scholars of industrial archaeology founded the Italian Association for Industrial Archaeological Heritage (Associazione italiana per il patrimonio archeologico industriale, hereafter AIPAI), which nowadays represents Italy in the TICCIH. It plays a consulting role in the selection of sites to be included in the UNESCO’s World Heritage List. The AIPAI reflected an interest that went beyond the boundaries of industrial archaeology in a traditional sense. However, the focus was again placed on the “classic” age of the Industrial Revolution, with occasional digressions beyond the 1930s, whereas the importance of economic-social research shrunk to the benefit of an approach centred more around the history of technology and architecture, and around problems related to the transformation of sites into heritage, the creation of museums and the conservation of sources, with specific attention being paid to industrial photography and corporate archives.<sup>39</sup>

Yet, as the years passed, the problem of the still smoking ruins of “Italian-style Fordism” started entering the discussions of heritage professionals. It is noteworthy that they found commonalities with environmental history, another relatively young and cutting-edge discipline within Italian historical studies. As Augusto Ciuffetti has written, the contribution of environmental historians is revealing to be crucial for the consolidation among heritage professionals of a division into periods “that initiates with the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation of the late nineteenth century and ends with the dismantling practices of the last decades of the twentieth century”.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Gregorio E. Rubino, *Industrialismo e archeologia industriale. Riepilogo metodologico*, “Bollettino dell’Associazione per l’Archeologia industriale”, 1993, n. 35-37, pp. 1-13.

<sup>38</sup> G.E. Rubino, *Industrialismo e archeologia industriale*, here p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> 1997-2007. *Dieci anni di Aipai*, “Aipai Newsletter”, 2007, n. 0.

<sup>40</sup> Augusto Ciuffetti, introduction to *Città, industria, ambiente*, monographic section of “Patrimonio industriale”, 2010, n. 6, pp. 6-9, here p. 6. See also Salvatore Adorno, Simone Neri Serneri (eds.), *Industria, ambiente e territorio. Per una storia ambientale delle aree industriali*

The stages of industrial dismantling mark an improvement in quality when it comes to environmental awareness within communities. Decontamination projects require studies that can offer new knowledge about the historical and orographic stratifications of industrial pollution. The decline of the promise of factory work often coincided with the end of the “long period of silent acceptance” of the environmental costs of industrialisation, whereas public debates about the purposes of the most compromised areas generates antagonist memories or the resurfacing of pre-existing alternatives.<sup>41</sup> Yet, the emergence of experiences and knowledge that had remained hidden during the stages of expansion are accompanied by new forms of forgetting. Thus, the role of trade unions in the negotiation of the crises — which often resulted in the acceptance of an “environmental compatibility proposed by the property” — has overshadowed important periods of “labour environmentalism”.<sup>42</sup>

While historians consider deindustrialisation an embryonic theme, it is gaining increased interest. Political and economic historians have thus started taking stock of the situation, attempting a conceptual clarification.<sup>43</sup> Over the last few years, historians, anthropologists and sociologists alike have launched research groups dedicated to the memory of work in areas of industrial decline, confirming the fact that the theme of deindustrialisation is grounded in specific geographic contexts: a global phenomenon whose repercussions can be assessed only on a local level, and which can be approached from different disciplinary perspectives. From Piombino (Tuscany) to the Sulcis region (Sardinia), from Sesto San Giovanni (Lombardy) to Termini Imerese (Sicily), many research projects have started to engage with international Deindustrialisation Studies without overlooking the issue of heritage, and even considering it a point of departure.<sup>44</sup>

*in Italia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2009. It is no coincidence that one of the journals that is most interested in environmental history first devoted a special issue the *Aree deindustrializzate*, “Meridiana”, 2016, n. 85. See in particular Gabriella Corona’s introduction, *Volti e risvolti della deindustrializzazione. Alcuni interrogativi sulla contemporaneità* at pp. 9-34.

<sup>41</sup> Augusto Ciuffetti, *Dallo sviluppo industriale ai processi di dismissione: ambiente e industria nell’Italia contemporanea*, in *Città, industria, ambiente*, pp. 10-17, here p. 11.

<sup>42</sup> Salvatore Romeo, *L'acciaio in fumo. L’Ilva di Taranto dal 1945 a oggi*, Rome, Donzelli, 2019 here p. 287. On working-class environmentalism see Stefania Barca, *On working-class environmentalism: a historical and transnational overview*, “Interface: a Journal for and about Social Movements”, 2012, n. 2, pp. 61-80.

<sup>43</sup> Luigi Vergallo, *Una nuova era? “Deindustrializzazione” e nuovi assetti produttivi nel mondo (1945-2005)*, Rome, Aracne, 2011; Carlo Fumian, *Traiettorie del declino economico italiano* and Roberto Artoni, *Le interpretazioni del declino economico italiano*, both in *L’Italia contemporanea dagli anni Ottanta a oggi*, vol. I, *Fine della Guerra fredda e globalizzazione*, edited by Silvio Pons, Adriano Rocucci, Federico Romero, Rome, Carocci, 2014, pp. 85-114 and pp. 115-136; Luciano Segreto, *Un nuovo fiume carsico. La deindustrializzazione in Italia nel dibattito pubblico*, “Passato e presente”, 2016, n. 99, pp. 13-40; Roberta Garruccio, *Chiedi alla ruggine. Studi e storiografia della deindustrializzazione*, “Meridiana”, 2016, n. 85, pp. 35-60.

<sup>44</sup> As this paper does not aim to provide a literature review of recent Italian scholarship on deindustrialisation, I would like to mention a selection of relevant works, with apologies for



In literature, as well, we may identify some elements that are not unlike the themes covered by the historiography of deindustrialisation. Ermanno Rea paved the way over 15 years ago, with his novel about the closure of Bagnoli's steelworks, *La dismissione* [The dismantling], which offers an insightful analysis of the psychological implications, of the divided nature of working-class solidarity and of the consequences of deindustrialisation for collective identity and post-industrial generations.<sup>45</sup> Nowadays the works of a successive generation, namely the "children of deindustrialisation", are conducting a real re-elaboration of working-class heritage, coming to terms with both the grief the factory has inflicted upon them and the sense of belonging that it still bestows upon them, even after its disappearance.<sup>46</sup>

These sensibilities have started to prompt an explicit resistance — not only within academic circles — to the acknowledgement of an "Italian deindustrialisation", which was made possible by national capitalist developments. By the 1980s and 1990s, when deindustrialisation was by now a reality in the capitals of the "industrial triangle", economists, sociologists and political scientists turned their attention to the "Third Italy" and its successful alternative model to Fordism.<sup>47</sup> At the same time, following a long militant phase focused on times of conflict and organisation, labour and working-class historiography entered a period of decline, undoubtedly also as a result of the dismantling of the major factories.<sup>48</sup>

The issue re-emerged at the start of the new millennium, still suffering from heavy burdens. Sociologist Luciano Gallino, who was very close to the world of labour, even in his tirade against "the disappearance of industrial Italy" judged the concept of deindustrialisation inappropriate and even harmful, because it was unsustainable from a global perspective — the most suitable framework for understanding contemporary capitalism.<sup>49</sup> Giuseppe Berta also

any involuntary omissions: Roberta Garruccio, Sara Roncaglia and Sara Zanisi on the Falck company of Sesto San Giovanni; Annalisa Tonarelli on the steel plants of Piombino, Tommaso India and Elena Di Nubila on the Fiat factories of Termini Imerese and Melfi respectively; Giovanna Rossi on Taranto's Ilva; Liliosa Azara and Eloisa Betti on the Sardinian coal mines. Additionally, a fascinating book in this field of research is that by Alessandro Portelli on Terni: *La città dell'acciaio. Due secoli di storia operaia*, Rome, Donzelli, 2017. See also the literature review by Roberta Garruccio and Gilda Zazzara (eds.), *La rivoluzione deindustriale*, "Passato e Presente", 2018, n. 105, pp. 177-203.

<sup>45</sup> Ermanno Rea, *La dismissione*, Milan, Rizzoli, 2002.

<sup>46</sup> Alberto Prunetti, *Amianto. Una storia operaia*, Rome, Alegre, 2014 (I ed. 2012); Stefano Valenti, *La fabbrica del panico*, Milan, Feltrinelli, 2013; Eugenio Raspi, *Inox*, Milan, Baldini & Castoldi, 2017; Simona Baldanzi, *Figlia di una vestaglia blu*, Rome, Alegre, 2019 (I ed. 2006).

<sup>47</sup> Scholarly literature on these themes is extremely vast, and I will limit myself to mentioning Francesco Bartolini, *La Terza Italia. Reinventare la nazione alla fine del Novecento*, Rome, Carocci, 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Stefano Musso, *Gli operai nella storiografia contemporanea. Rapporti di lavoro e relazioni sociali*, in Id. (ed.), *Tra fabbrica e società. Mondi operai nell'Italia del Novecento*, "Annali della Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli", 1997, n. 33, pp. IX-XLVI.

<sup>49</sup> Luciano Gallino, *La scomparsa dell'Italia industriale*, Turin, Einaudi, 2003.

adopted a critical position, calling it an “import product”, an instrument of political controversy even within an American context, though utterly inappropriate for Italian history; in Italy, he argued, it was Fordism that faded away at the end of the 1970s, certainly not the country’s manufacturing sector.<sup>50</sup> In Paolo Frascani’s study of economic crises, the term “deindustrialisation” isn’t used as a heuristic concept, even if Frascani speaks of “the slow top-down decline of the industrialisation process”.<sup>51</sup>

Trade unions have long contributed to the failure to legitimise the idea of an “Italian deindustrialisation”. In the 1970s, the first signs of crisis within the Fordist system were interpreted exclusively as the result of capitalist restructuring and anti-worker actions.<sup>52</sup> After the defeat of Fiat’s working-class in 1980, industrial restructuring was largely negotiated with the help of state financial support for the displaced workers, mainly via redundancy programmes and early retirement agreements. Industrial restructuring and closures resulted in widespread local confrontation and resistance to such an extent that the 1980s merits scholarly re-interpretation as a period of social peace; however, on a national level they did not generate emergencies.

Although the trade unions clearly sensed the problem of youth unemployment, of the expanding market of informal and unprotected labour, and the emergence of unprecedented forms of precarity, the employed Fordist working-class generation was widely protected over the course of its “exit” from the scene. Thanks to the centralised negotiation of crises in the sector and the achievement of solid “outgoing” benefits, labour organisations undoubtedly fulfilled one of their main tasks; at the same time, the strong industrialist character of Italian trade unionism shaped their political analyses in terms of a categorical rejection of deindustrialisation. If trade unionists even in the “virtuous” Ruhr area — capable of shifting, gradually and backed by consensus, from a coal-mining region to a favourite destination of industrial tourism — “saw industrial heritage as a job killer”, it is understandable that Italian trade unions haven’t even grappled with the problem of heritage.<sup>53</sup>

Criticised by scholars, contested or blanked out by trade unions, today deindustrialisation can no longer be considered a spectre or a curse. Given

<sup>50</sup> Giuseppe Berta, *L’Italia delle fabbriche. La parabola dell’industrialismo nel Novecento*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2001, followed by various updated editions in subsequent years.

<sup>51</sup> Paolo Frascani, *Le crisi economiche in Italia. Dall’Ottocento a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2012, here p. 236.

<sup>52</sup> Fim, Fiom, Uilm Emilia-Romagna, *Atti del convegno piccole e medie aziende metalmeccaniche industriali e artigiane* (Bologna, 9-10 October 1971), Bologna, Grafiche BG, 1972; Fim Bergamo (ed.), *Sindacato e piccola impresa. Strategia del capitale e azione sindacale nel decentramento produttivo*, Bari, De Donato, 1975.

<sup>53</sup> Stefan Berger, Jana Golombek, Christian Wicke, *Burdens of eternity? Heritage, identity, and the “great transition” in the Ruhr*, in Idd. (eds.), *Deindustrialization, heritage, and representations of identity*, pp. 21-43, here p. 25.

that the industrial sector in Italy is still important (we are “Europe’s second manufacturing country after Germany, according to a worn-out but still trendy formula”),<sup>54</sup> we cannot deny the definitive transformation of whole regions and cities as a result of dismantling processes, especially after the 2008 crisis.<sup>55</sup> It is not a coincidence that trade union leaders’ public invocation of deindustrialisation are increasing in number.<sup>56</sup>

From North to South there is a wealth of potential research material concerning the cycle of industrial transformations that initiated in the 1970s, which enables us to both shed new light on preceding models of development — the very premise of this cycle — and to understand the tensions that traverse our contemporary society and the political responses to an endless crisis. It would be worthwhile to establish a sustained dialogue between deindustrialisation scholars, heritage experts, social scientists and “intermediate actors”, regarding two types of areas: those where the industry is dying in slow agony and in so doing dividing local communities, as in the case of Taranto, of which Alessandro Leogrande has highlighted the unexpected similarities with one of the capitals of the Rust Belt, Youngstown; and those where the “great-industrialist” cycle has permanently come to an end, though with surprising removals and “shadow zones” of memory.<sup>57</sup>

In the absence of recognition, analysis and discussion of deindustrialisation, is it possible to critically remember industrial heritage in ways that are not purely aesthetic? Before focusing on my case study, I would like to briefly point to two symbolic places that seem to answer this question. One is Milan, the first Italian city to have been converted to a service economy: that is, the first to have deindustrialised. As Giorgio Bigatti has observed, the vanishing of industry from the Milanese urban landscape has been extremely rapid and without economic decline; indeed, it has resulted in a successful reconversion. Even if the urban space is scattered with places that evoke this recent past, the immaterial legacy of industry — in terms of culture, mentality, identity — seems to have evaporated. Bigatti writes that “if it wasn’t for the inconvenient presence of some huge voids in the former industrial areas that haven’t yet

<sup>54</sup> Giuseppe Berta, *Che fine ha fatto il capitalismo italiano?*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2016, here p. 149.

<sup>55</sup> Banca d’Italia, *Deindustrializzazione e terziarizzazione: trasformazioni strutturali nelle regioni del Nord Ovest*, di Antonio Accetturo e al., “Questioni di economia e finanza (Occasional Papers)”, July 2015, n. 282, [www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/qef/2015-0282/QEF\\_282.pdf](http://www.bancaditalia.it/pubblicazioni/qef/2015-0282/QEF_282.pdf) (last accessed 15 December 2019).

<sup>56</sup> The most recent one — made while this article was being prepared — was that by the Cgil’s secretary, Maurizio Landini, in an interview in “La Repubblica” of 8 December 2019.

<sup>57</sup> Alessandro Leogrande, *Fumo sulla città*, Rome, Fandango Libri, 2013, here p. 236, also cited in Giovanna Rossi, *Voci dalla fabbrica. Memorie ed esperienze degli operai dell’Ilva di Taranto dal 1960 ad oggi*, unpublished doctoral thesis in Social and statistical sciences, Università degli studi di Napoli Federico II, 2016-2017.

undergone transformation processes, no one would remember the industrial past".<sup>58</sup> A few years ago, Luca Mocarelli made similar observations with regard to the regeneration of the Pirelli area, the first of many great dismantlings in Milan. The architectural choices and purposes of the new neighbourhood were interpreted as "a systematic cancelation of industrial memory".<sup>59</sup>

More recently, Mattia Granata asked himself why — despite the city's many self-representations as a "capital" — the capital of industry and the working-class have completely been forgotten. The absence of a museum dedicated to industry and labour is striking.<sup>60</sup> Similarly, Roberta Garruccio described Sesto San Giovanni, in the metropolitan area of Milan, as the Italian symbol of deindustrialisation without any post-industrial transformation.<sup>61</sup>

A second exemplary case of the short circuit between deindustrialisation and industrial heritage is that of Bagnoli. As we have seen, Naples and its surroundings have been the object of a precocious archaeological project by industrial heritage scholars, and of a number of interventions of national importance, such as the Pietrarsa Railway Museum.<sup>62</sup> In the area of Bagnoli, instead, the post-industrial transition remains an open wound. When the steel plant closed it employed a mere 600 workers, from high of 7,000 at its peak, not long before. The history of this collective displacement has yet to be written.

Following a first phase of factory demolitions and indiscriminate dismantling, major projects to relaunch the service, tourist and research sectors were undertaken, with important contributions from urban planners and industrial heritage experts. Mayor Antonio Bassolino found political support among the former workers, as the regeneration projects not only offered them new job opportunities but also a chance to leave behind the city's industrial history with dignity.

The outcome of this vision is underwhelming: the only completed piece of work within the urban park is a panoramic pier and the massive public and

<sup>58</sup> My gratitude goes to Giorgio Bigatti for giving me access to the text of his presentation at the international conference *Deindustrialization: the structural transformation of Nord-Ovest and the Ruhr in comparative perspective* (Istituto storico germanico di Rome, 18-20 April 2018).

<sup>59</sup> Luca Mocarelli, *Le aree dismesse milanesi o della cancellazione del patrimonio industriale: il caso della Bicocca*, "Patrimonio industriale", 2011, n. 7, pp. 69-75, here p. 69.

<sup>60</sup> Mattia Granata, *Creare a Milano un museo o una città del lavoro*, "La Repubblica", 5 February 2018, <https://ricerca.repubblica.it/repubblica/archivio/repubblica/2018/02/05/creare-a-milano-un-museo-o-una-citta-del-lavoroMilano07.html> (last accessed 15 December 2019).

<sup>61</sup> Roberta Garruccio, "Hardly a cause for tears": job insecurity and occupational psychology culture in Italy. Oral narratives from the Falck Steelworks in Sesto San Giovanni (Milan), in Stefan Berger (ed.), *Constructing industrial pasts. Heritage, historical culture and identity in regions undergoing structural economic transformation*, Oxford-New York, Berghahn Books, 2020, pp. 168-183.

<sup>62</sup> Gennaro Biondi, Silvio De Majo, Augusto Vitale, *Napoli e l'industria. Dai Borboni alla dismissione*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2008.

European funds allocated to a company that was to decontaminate the area have been squandered. This resulted in a sensational bankruptcy and, what is worse, a further environmental disaster. After the arson attack of 2013, the City of Science — a restored district adjacent to the former steel plant — still awaits reconstruction. In addition to the ecological damage, the credibility of local authorities has inevitably been compromised, legal principles have been violated and the city's heritage is likely to become a problematic — albeit a shared — one.<sup>63</sup> As Rea confirmed in an interview published in the AIPAI's magazine, infinite dismantling “creates monsters, provokes lethal infections and produces Mafia, decay, underdevelopment, hate, resentment”.<sup>64</sup>

Milan: a working-class capital without industrial memory, where forgetting appears virtuous and pain-free. Naples: industrial capital of the South and laboratory of industrial archaeology, with the risk that — instead of a history of the working-class — only the stigma of environmental disaster will remain. These two examples offer a space for historians to investigate processes of industrial decline, bringing to light the way in which these processes have corroded values, mentalities, the composition of social class structures, ties of belonging and the landscapes of many Italian areas. Moreover, they push scholars to contribute not just to public practices of industrial memory, but also to develop instruments capable of interpreting the challenges currently faced by numerous minor places, due to an increasingly aggressive globalisation. The latter “takes away work opportunities”, and with it the possibility to place oneself in a shared history and to feel part of a community.

### **Porto Marghera, Venice**

An interesting case study on the connections between deindustrialisation and industrial heritage is that of Porto Marghera, Venice's industrial zone. What links Marghera to Milan is not the success of the latter's transition to a well-structured service economy, tourist monoculture being the sole pillar of urban tertiarisation in Venice, but the weakness of its contemporary working-class identity. Its commonality with Naples, on the other hand, lies in the extent of the environmental disaster it produced rather than in any ambitious post-industrial reconversion plans.

Over the last 40 years, Porto Marghera has been subjected to changes that have reduced the number of employees from some forty thousand — the vast majority of whom were “blue collars” — to little more than ten thousand, less

<sup>63</sup> An optimistic approach is that by Giovanni Dispoto, Antonio di Gennaro, *Bagnoli: una dis-missione possibile*, “Meridiana”, 2016, n. 85, pp. 133-154.

<sup>64</sup> Augusto Ciuffetti, *I miei fantasmi non sono bugiardi: una testimonianza di Ermanno Rea*, “Patrimonio industriale”, 2013-2014, n. 12-13, pp. 176-179, here p. 176.

than half of whom perform manufacturing activities.<sup>65</sup> Contrary to the transformation that occurred a few decades before, which changed this part of the mainland facing the Venetian lagoon into one of the most industrialised areas in Europe, Marghera's most recent metamorphosis lacks a historiography or any other form of public narration.<sup>66</sup> Although this historical silence may be attributed to the temporal closeness of the most intense period of dismantlings — the 1980s and 1990s — and therefore to the timeless idea of history as “the owl of Minerva”, the elimination of Porto Marghera's deindustrialisation from other “theatres of memory” calls for more structured explanations, which are deeply rooted in history.<sup>67</sup>

The industrial harbour was created in 1917, with the aim of conducting modern production activities beyond the physical boundaries of the historic city. This, it was believed, would restore Venice's role at a national level following a long period of economic decline. A vast portion of mainland — not just that reserved for the industries, but also some small residential areas, among which Mestre and the new Marghera district — was annexed to the Venice municipality. Chemical and metallurgical productions rapidly developed; thousands of farmers poured into the factories from the hinterland, triggering major processes of geographical and social mobility. Contrary to political expectations, the historical city's working-class refused to move to Porto Marghera; it was only during the second post-war period that the Venetians started accepting work in the factories on mainland, albeit in small numbers and at the cost of permanently leaving the insular city. As Porto Marghera turbulently expanded and developed itself, Venice saw its industries close one by one, while depopulation and tourist flows marked the start of a relentless decline of its city life, and its conversion into a “historical centre”.

All this lies at the root of the controversial relationship between Venice and its “industrial periphery”, a relationship that has become increasingly conflictual as the environmental damages caused by industrialisation became perceptible: first with the 1966 flood, then through the workers' protests against working environments' “noxiousness”, up to the trial against the chemical company Montedison and the more recent problem of decontaminating the abandoned areas. These incidents have involved and mobilised segments of the urban population, social groups and different generational cohorts, each of

<sup>65</sup> See the last *Indagine conoscitiva sulle attività economiche presenti nell'area di Porto Marghera*, relative to the year 2016 at [www.comune.venezia.it/it/osservatorioportomarghera](http://www.comune.venezia.it/it/osservatorioportomarghera) (last accessed 15 December 2019).

<sup>66</sup> For an almost complete bibliography of this theme, see *Raccontare Marghera e Porto Marghera a cent'anni dalla sua nascita 1917-2017. Guida alle fonti e ai materiali bibliografici, audiovisivi, fotografici conservati presso la Biblioteca di Marghera e il Centro di documentazione di storia locale*, “Vedo”, 2018, n. 14.

<sup>67</sup> Raphael Samuel, *Theatres of memory*, vol. I, *Past and present in contemporary culture*, London, Verso, 1994.

which has developed its own vision and narration of the industrial twentieth century.

For the residents of Venice, which was added — along with its lagoon — to the UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1987, the part of the city that should have made it modern and “normal” progressively turned into an enemy and a historical mistake, even a crime.<sup>68</sup> The residents of the mainland districts, which — together with the workers — paid the highest price in terms of health and pollution, have nurtured more complex feelings towards the industries, from rejection to nostalgia, from victim blaming to recognition. With regard to the workers, their dispersal across the territory, the absence of a clear urban identity and the discontinuity provoked by the disappearance of almost all the factories have contributed to make the public memory of industrial work fragmentary and sporadic in terms of public self-representation.

What still evokes most curiosity and emotional reactions is the negative judgement of an accelerated and traumatic industrialisation, as it is still the 1970s — the “suspended years” — that divide social experiences and political cultures born from the confrontation with the world of factories.<sup>69</sup> What prevails is a “satanic”, “monstrous” or “exceptionalist” narration of Porto Marghera and its impact on community life, which hinders the idea that there may be both something else to add or remember, and something to conserve. From this point of view, Venice seems closer to the case of Glasgow than to that of Dortmund, closer to the American side of Niagara Falls than to the Canadian. In other words, it is closer to contexts in which the “social stigma” of the past expresses itself also in the difficulties of inscribing it in the present.<sup>70</sup>

However, the political context further complicates the memory and remembrance of the lagoon industry. Although Porto Marghera has benefitted from European structural funds devoted to depressed areas ever since the 1990s, and, though it was placed at the top of the list of “sites of national importance for decontamination” at the end of that same decade and was more recently declared the object of a “complex industrial crisis”, there is no unanimity on its identity as a deindustrialised zone.

<sup>68</sup> Laura Cerasi, *Perdonare Marghera. La città del lavoro nella memoria post-industriale*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2007; Gianfranco Bettin (ed.), *Petrolkimiko. Le voci e le storie di un crimine di pace*, Milan, Baldini & Castoldi, 1998.

<sup>69</sup> See the documentary *Gli anni sospesi: movimenti e percorsi politici a Porto Marghera*, by Manuela Pellarin, Italy 2009, sold as part of the text by Devi Sacchetto, Gianni Sbrogiò (eds.), *Quando il potere è operaio. Autonomia e soggettività politica a Porto Marghera (1960-1980)*, Rome, Manifestolibri, 2009.

<sup>70</sup> Ralph Richter, *Industrial heritage in urban imaginaries and city images. A comparison between Dortmund and Glasgow*, in C. Wicke, S. Berger, J. Golombek, *Deindustrialization, heritage, and representations of identity*, pp. 65-84; Alice Mah, *Industrial ruination, community, and place. Landscape and legacies of urban decline*, Toronto-Buffalo-London, University of Toronto Press, 2012, pp. 37-68.

The first and main reason for this is that, contrary to Bagnoli or the working-class districts of Milan, in Porto Marghera industry never disappeared; certain industrial activities were relaunched and occasionally even prospered. Gallino would probably be among the critics of a “deindustrialist” or “declinist” perspective when confronted with a productive site like that of Fincantieri shipyard, which during its peaks of production employs 5,000 labourers (mostly immigrants and employees of contractors), or with a commercial harbour and airport that have increased trade and workforce considerably. Yet, the main opponents of any reconstruction that considers deindustrialisation an accomplished and — at least for some sectors — irreversible fact are trade unions and the local government, albeit with divergent aims and using different tones. The 2017 centenary of Porto Marghera’s foundation has given ample proof of this.

### **Between two anniversaries**

A collective reflection on Porto Marghera “after Porto Marghera” initiated at the end of the 1990s. Ever more observers realised that this part of the city had profoundly changed, and that all those factors that had determined a kind of — heavy and intensive — development had disappeared: the availability of low-cost energy and labour, public subsidies and the complete absence of environmental commitments. As the gradual closure of factories relieved residents from the fear of immediate industrial risks, new narratives of lived experience emerged.<sup>71</sup>

It was in this climate of reconsideration and reappropriation that the ninetieth anniversary of the harbour’s foundation was celebrated in 2007. Marghera’s borough council, in particular, endorsed the involvement of residents and associations, local artists and musicians, by coordinating a programme filled with debates, book launches, theatrical performances and concerts.<sup>72</sup> A photo and documentary exhibition recounted the district’s history up to the present. Although the period of industrial crises wasn’t clearly identified on the exhibition panels, the exhibition poster depicted a child on its tricycle playing under the ruined arches of the majestic paraboloid buildings that had once served as storehouses of fertilisers.<sup>73</sup> Marghera represented itself

<sup>71</sup> Among the most interesting contributions in this regard see the poetry collection by Antonella Barina, *Madre Marghera. Poesie 1967-1997*, Spinea (Ve), Helvetia Editrice, 2018, I ed. 1997.

<sup>72</sup> The various initiatives can still be consulted at the website [www.marghera90.it](http://www.marghera90.it) (last accessed 14 August 2019).

<sup>73</sup> *Storia sociale di Marghera tra fabbriche e territorio*, photo and documentary exhibition by Daniela Rigon and Alessandro Nappi. The panels are visible on the website of the Documentary centre of local history in Marghera, in the section Mostre, [www.centrodokumentationemarghera.it](http://www.centrodokumentationemarghera.it) (last accessed 14 August 2019).



as the resilient district of the deindustrialised city, thus giving value to its plural memories and its tradition of associationism, volunteerism and musical culture, which for some years had transformed it into a kind of “Italian Liverpool”.

In that same year, the main cultural centre of Mestre — the other neighbourhood of the polycentric city whose transformations would be incomprehensible if detached from the industrial parable — hosted the exhibition “Mestre Novecento” (Twentieth Century in Italian) following a long period of gathering sources and archival documents. The exhibition was promoted by the Venice city council, with the involvement of associations and residents.<sup>74</sup> Mayor Massimo Cacciari praised it as the first part of a city museum that would have given space to “a memory that is, yes, conflictual and controversial, but dutiful, and must not be dismissed, not even in its darkest moments”.<sup>75</sup>

The centenary celebrations of 2017 were of a very different kind: less participation from below and a more central role for a handful of “official” figures, implying that the changes of the last ten years had also strongly affected memory politics. In Mestre a major private museum was inaugurated, while only a hint remained of the “Mestre Novecento” project; M9 stands for Museum of the Twentieth Century, not a museum of the city but “of the nation [...] where Italians and all those interested in Italy can meet, discover their origins and how the things that surround us evolved, sharing thoughts on how to project them onto the future”.<sup>76</sup>

The “authorized heritage discourse” around Porto Marghera’s 100 years of existence was promoted by a committee composed of representatives from national and local institutions, universities, cultural foundations and social actors. The trade unions’ complaints about not having been involved from the start — as opposed to entrepreneurs — resulted in their eventually being invited as well.<sup>77</sup> In reality, the role of the various committee members has been rather insignificant, since Mayor Luigi Brugnaro — in his quality of president of the committee — strongly determined the anniversary’s communicative strategies, pushing them into a specific direction. Elected in 2015 in a centre-right coalition, Brugnaro was an entrepreneur in the recruitment sector and owner of the city’s basketball team. Among his most used symbolic resources was the fact that he is a “son of Porto Marghera”. Indeed, his father is one of the best known and original leaders of post-war working-class

<sup>74</sup> Elia Barbiani, Giorgio Sarto (eds.), *Mestre Novecento. Il secolo breve della città di Terraferma*, Venice, Marsilio, 2007.

<sup>75</sup> E. Barbiani, G. Sarto, *Mestre Novecento*, p. 7.

<sup>76</sup> From the website of M9 <https://m9digital.it/it>, nella sezione *Museo* (last accessed 6 November 2019).

<sup>77</sup> See the joint public statement by the CGIL, CISL and UIL in protest against the refusal to involve the trade unions in the committee, at the website [www.cgilvenezia.it/it/2-non-categorizzato/312-centenario-di-porto-marghera-il-sindacato-confederale-escluso](http://www.cgilvenezia.it/it/2-non-categorizzato/312-centenario-di-porto-marghera-il-sindacato-confederale-escluso) (last accessed 14 August 2019).

protests: a labourer in one of the most important chemical factories, a heterodox trade unionist of the CISL (the second largest national trade union) and, most of all, a worker-poet who narrated the monstrosity of working in the chemical industry and — at the same time — the epic story of revolt against its noxiousness.<sup>78</sup>

The mayor presented himself as the embodiment of a (non-political) family history of upward mobility, to be read in parallel to Marghera's transition from an unhealthy and dangerous "industrial pole" to the ideal context of a sustainable and cross-sector economy. The underlying message of all the official initiatives was that Porto Marghera is not a place of death or decline, but of labour, development and potential "re-industrialisation".<sup>79</sup> This vision was driven not just by genuine personal convictions, but also by material interests — the mayor owns various free areas — and strategic alliances like that with ENI (the major Italian oil company), the sole sponsor of the centenary, which is making Porto Marghera one of the privileged sites of its campaign for "green chemical industry".

Among the first sponsored initiatives was a double exhibition at the Candiani cultural centre of Mestre. In one room, industrial photographs of the Porto Marghera refinery in the 1950s were juxtaposed with contemporary photographs, taken after its reconversion into a "biorefinery"; the other room exhibited pictures taken by two young photographers, depicting the wide dismantled spaces of the petrochemical area won back by comforting vegetation.<sup>80</sup> In sum, while one exhibition celebrated the victorious continuity of the chemical industry, the other stressed the appeal of available areas for new investors. Neither of the two leaked out any disturbing, unsettling or critical content.

The most successful initiative was the *Industriae* exhibition, set up in a former fertiliser storehouse of the Vega, the city's "scientific and technological park". Thousands of people visited it and participated in many guided tours through the still active companies, which were integrated into the exhibition.<sup>81</sup> At the centre of the space, a long "cage" filled with objects, instruments and products from the various types of manufacturing that have characterised Porto

<sup>78</sup> Ferruccio Brugnaro, *Vogliono cacciarci sotto. Un operaio e la sua poesia*, with an afterword by Italian poet Andrea Zanzotto, Verona, Bertani, 1975.

<sup>79</sup> See the interview with Luigi Brugnaro on the weekly magazine "Panorama", on 17 August 2015, where he states that "in Marghera I dream of reindustrialisation", [www.panorama.it/news/politica/luigi-brugnaro-sindaco-venezia-intervista](http://www.panorama.it/news/politica/luigi-brugnaro-sindaco-venezia-intervista) (last accessed 15 December 2019).

<sup>80</sup> *Figurazione di un luogo. Fotografia industriale dall'Archivio Giacomelli e PM 100. Un secolo di Porto Marghera: dalle fondamenta un nuovo futuro*, photos by Carlo Albertini and Alessandro Scarpa, both inaugurated in the presence of the mayor, on 1 September 2017. For all the initiatives that were sponsored by the Committee, see the website [www.portomarghera100.it](http://www.portomarghera100.it) (last accessed 15 December 2019).

<sup>81</sup> Gianni Favaro, *Il Centenario chiude con 12 mila visitatori in poco più di 6 mesi*, "La Nuova Venezia", 27 maggio 2018.

Marghera in the past and present offered the possibility to admire 100 years of industrial culture. On the walls, large panels provided historical and technical data about the various sectors, whereas screens placed higher up broadcast brief interviews with former and current workers.

Thanks to the skills of the historians and industrial heritage experts that were involved in the exhibition's preparation and didactic activities, *Industriae* wasn't only the centenary's most attended but also the best documented event. Nonetheless, it hardly moved away from the official view that politics had imposed: based on productive continuities and entrepreneurial teleologies, focused more on things than on people and processes, and careful to soften the roughness of the past, using it as a lesson to help avoid repeating its errors.

The third initiative that the committee sponsored was the exhibition *Porto Marghera 100* at the Doge's Palace in Venice.<sup>82</sup> For the second time in a century, the industrial area penetrated a place of high culture within the city, following the photo exhibition held in Ca' Pesaro back in 1985.<sup>83</sup> A video-speech by a life-size mayor welcomed visitors, along with a portrait of Giuseppe Volpi, the politician-entrepreneur who had enabled the construction of Porto Marghera. Here, too, the exhibition focused on the industry's products, and specifically raw materials that had been dignified by their employment in sculptures by contemporary artists of undisputed fame: from Jannis Kounellis' coal to Mario Merz's neon, from Pino Pascali's synthetic fibre caterpillars to Tony Cragg's glass. Each room also presented a brief edited video — containing archival images, photographs and interviews — and pictures from John Gossage's reportage of the late 1990s, when Porto Marghera had been at the centre of a certain boost in landscape photography.<sup>84</sup>

Only the last room was dedicated to the representation of the labourer's work. It featured images printed on pierced canvases by the Norwegian artist Anne-Karin Furunes, whose works focus on marginal identities and highlight the fact that they are difficult to distinguish unless one takes the right distance. However, the images seemed to have been chosen indiscriminately, without any preliminary research on sources and context.<sup>85</sup> The predominant feeling after leaving the exhibition in the Doge's Palace was that one had passed through a patchwork of unconnected signs, but filled with direct and indirect messages — once again — about the potentiality, the resources and the vital elements of the industrial area.

<sup>82</sup> The exhibition was curated by the director of the Fondazione Musei Civici di Venice, Gabriella Belli, in collaboration with Paolo Apice, the director of external affairs in the municipal council. No catalogue is available, but the texts that accompanied the exhibition tour can be consulted on the website of the Foundation.

<sup>83</sup> *Porto Marghera le immagini la storia 1900-1985*, Turin, Musolini Editore, 1985.

<sup>84</sup> See the exhibition catalogue *Venezia\_Marghera. Fotografia e trasformazioni nella città contemporanea*, edited by Paolo Costantini, Milan, Charta, 1997.

<sup>85</sup> Giacinta Gimma, *Foto "rubata" in mostra. Leso il diritto d'autore*, "Il Gazzettino di Venezia", 22 November 2017.

In this discursive context, the unions' complaints were weak and ambiguous; the by now ritual denouncement of politics' "failed responses" to Porto Marghera's crisis — a theme that has accompanied the process of deindustrialisation over the last 40 years or so — went hand in hand with a complete adherence to the mayor's "re-industrialist" discourse, up to the point that certain initiatives related to the centenary were criticised precisely for having "museumised" work. On various occasions, statements by trade union leaders reflected an objection to any interpretation made from a heritage perspective. For example, the CGIL's chemical federation (the most representative and influential organisation in Porto Marghera), made the following declaration:

We are wasting time with photo exhibitions, long talks by "big shot professors", and even the Teatro La Fenice is interested in celebrating this centenary. But we have seen very few workers, few actual exponents of that history have been called to interpret themselves and demonstrate, in real terms, what they personally experienced.<sup>86</sup>

But what could Porto Marghera's workers ever have "demonstrated"? What situation had "they personally experienced" that they could narrate in the present, if not that of dismantling, the crisis, the fear of losing one's job and — more generally — of seeing one's class identity marginalised? So long as the experience of deindustrialisation remains a spectre or a taboo, so long as it isn't acknowledged, shared and included in the widest and most disquieting transformations of global labour, trade unionism will remain firmly on the defensive, incapable of creating new visions and inclusions, and inevitably dependent on current political powers.<sup>87</sup>

## Deindustrialisation without industrial heritage and vice versa

In Porto Marghera, the shift from archaeology to industrial heritage and from the single relict to an industrial landscape will take a long time to complete. Throughout its metamorphosis, a very large number of landmarks — buildings, plants, towers, chimneys, portals, dock equipments, tracks — have been demolished at random, if only for the purpose of "making space".<sup>88</sup> Often what

<sup>86</sup> See the public statement *Comitatone come il centenario, Filctem Cgil: "Si rischia l'ennesima operazione di facciata a Porto Marghera"* on the website of the Filctem of Venice, [www.parliamodilavoro.it](http://www.parliamodilavoro.it) (last accessed 15 December 2019).

<sup>87</sup> In this paragraph I have only considered the main official initiatives that were organised for the centenary, not all the accounts that circulated during the anniversary. Among the latter I would just like to mention the novels by Gianfranco Bettin, *Cracking*, Milan, Mondadori, 2019 and Michele Catozzi, *Marea tossica. Un'indagine del commissario Aldani*, Milan, Tea, 2019, and a documentary by Andrea Segre, *Il pianeta in mare*, Italy 2019.

<sup>88</sup> On the industrial landscape of Porto Marghera see Foscara Porchia, *L'evoluzione del porto industriale di Marghera dalle origini al secondo dopoguerra (1917-1963). Insediamenti, cicli produttivi, trasformazioni territoriali tra passato e futuro*, unpublished doctoral thesis

has been saved from the raging bulldozers lies in a state of decline. Even buildings that were renovated or reconverted to the “advanced tertiary sector” a few years ago, like the Torre Hamon (a cooling tower for metallurgical production), are nowadays empty and abandoned. A layer of postmodern ruins is thus being added to the layer of modern ruins. Furthermore, dismantling has also resulted in the dispersion of company archives, with only some being saved by chance or thanks to the good will of local associations or activists, but without any institutional support.<sup>89</sup> Hence, what is disappearing or deteriorating isn’t only an industrial landscape, but a wider social history. As the Montefibre depots are razed to the ground to make space for a new harbour terminal, following the company’s permanent closure in 2009, the works council’s board room — with its murals dedicated to international working class struggles — is infested by brambles and mice.

Within this framework of decontextualisation, disinterest and even aversion to Marghera’s industrial heritage, which the centenary paradoxically magnified, signs of different sensitivities have nonetheless emerged, albeit in a fragmented way. Thus, the National Department for Archaeology, Arts and Landscape intervened for the first time in an ongoing demolition, securing some elements of the old thermoelectric plant — including the last, partially dismantled, turbine — that is nowadays privately owned. Another example is that of a private society operating in port logistics, which recently fostered the renovation of the second cooling tower that remains in Porto Marghera. It was reborn under the ambitious name of Venice Heritage Tower, with the purpose of hosting events, although the tower isn’t yet open to the public and it is hard to say if, and how, it will be used for cultural activities. Finally, two female architects of the Venice University Institute of Architecture (Istituto universitario di architettura di Venezia, IUAV) have completed a meticulous cataloguing project of the constituent elements of Porto Marghera’s landscape; they have drawn up an atlas of its current state, which also identifies the many relicts of historical value that still await the implementation of protective measures.<sup>90</sup>

In the summer of 2017, the demolition was ordered of two towering industrial chimneys that were part of the notorious vinyl chloride monomer (VCM) plants, the chemical substance responsible for the death of hundreds of workers. A first attempt to bring the chimney down failed, and it was only

in Historical Science, Università degli studi di Padova, 2011-2012; for an early comparison between Venice’s industrial heritage and that of Porto Marghera see Franco Mancuso, *Da Venezia a Marghera. Ambiente, fabbriche, dismissioni e pratiche di riuso: un primo bilancio*, “Patrimonio industriale”, 2010, n. 6, pp. 24-35.

<sup>89</sup> For example, this is what happened to the Montefibre library, retrieved from the Università Ca’ Foscari, and to a number of archives of closed companies, which were purchased by the Fondazione Gianni Pellicani of Mestre.

<sup>90</sup> Esther Giani, Irene Peron, *Porto Marghera Atlas*, Trento-Barcellona, ListLab, 2019.

thanks to the army — which was authorised to use plastic explosive — that the operation could be completed. Some commentators and various former employees of the chemical plant interpreted the demolition as a metaphor for the “resistance” of Porto Marghera’s history, erasable only through military violence.<sup>91</sup> The ungraceful structures, clearly visible even from one of the most fascinating panoramic points of Venice, the Fondamenta delle Zattere, weren’t simply a brand of “killer” industrialisation; they also symbolised the tenacious resistance against deindustrialisation. During an extremely long period of unemployment benefits, the last workers that were employed in those plants conducted a stubborn and original — in its communicative forms — battle, which counted among its most dramatic and spectacular moments the nine-day occupation, in 2010, of one of the chimneys, at a height of over 100 metres.<sup>92</sup>

Although no industrial archaeologist took the trouble of defending the industrial chimneys, the attention and emotions that they evoked when they came down raise at least one question: has the time perhaps come to include battles against industrial closures into the history of labour conflicts and working-class “moral economy”, as has been done for those of the “economic boom”? And shouldn’t we also start considering the extent of their agency and participation, along with the contradictions that those resistances bring to the surface (i.e. the defence of potentially harmful work)?

The critical contribution of deindustrialisation historians and heritage scholars can definitely go beyond the defence of material artefacts. Over 40 years ago, the journal of the Neapolitan industrial archaeologists commented the demolition of an early twentieth-century jute factory, which had just been closed down after a long crisis, with the exception of the chimney stack.

Perhaps they wasted a chance, of use and memory, given that this case also fits into a practice without culture, which ignores the current debate about the use of urban voids generated by deindustrialisation, and which thinks it can protect the industrial monument by “saving” a chimney stack.<sup>93</sup>

The problem, now as then, is not to preserve what already has an aesthetic or artistic dignity — “saving a chimney stack” — but to dig deeper into the critical possibilities the heritage debate has to offer us, up to the discussion about what kind of work and which societal model has taken the place of what has disappeared over a very short timeframe. “I was convinced that this would

<sup>91</sup> Gilda Zazzara, *Smokestack nostalgia o della nostalgia del futuro*, “Clionet”, 2018, n. 2, pp. 517-523.

<sup>92</sup> The Vinyls workers used a musical album and a theatrical play called *Vinyls 176. Marghera vista dalla luna*, among other things, to raise solidarity and draw attention to their controversy.

<sup>93</sup> Antonia Coccozza, *Ricordo di un monumento industriale: lo “iutificio napoletano”*, “Bollettino dell’Associazione per l’Archeologia industriale”, 1983-1984, n. 7-9, pp. 40-41, here p. 41.

have remained the model of our modernity for at least 300 years”, Vittorio Foa wrote in reference to the “spectacle” of places such as the Bagnoli steel plant. Instead, he continued, “after only 30 to 40 years it has become the past”.<sup>94</sup>

Alberto Rollo echoes Foa’s words at the end of a journey through his “Milanese working-class education”, which seems only to exist in personal memories: “who [...] would have imagined to see the T5 plant of the Falck Concordia besieged by weed, Ansaldo impoverished and turned into a museum, the Alfa Romeo factory in Arese converted into the Arese Shopping Centre, one of Europe’s major retail centres?”<sup>95</sup> Among the most shocking lessons of deindustrialisation there is precisely that fallibility of human perception and uprootedness that the acceleration of change generates in those “who stay behind”: no one better than the workers that have been written off, or are about to be, can give it back its depth and significance.

<sup>94</sup> Vittorio Foa, *Passaggi*, Turin, Einaudi, 2000, here p. 148.

<sup>95</sup> Alberto Rollo, *Un’educazione milanese*, Lecce, Manni, 2016, here p. 280.





**The lost half. Quantitative methods and historical studies:  
a critical review**

**Michele Nani\***

Starting from three recent publications (a handbook, a conference proceeding, and an edited volume), this article discusses the limited use of quantitative methods among historians, especially in the Italian context, despite the widespread debate about digital history and historical “big data”. After the great promises made between the 1960s and the 1980s, and the opposite trend of the following 20 years, the spread of personal computers and the great diversification and refinement of methods have allowed for direct and experimental uses of quantitative analysis, even on a small corpus of data or from a micro-historical perspective. Widespread quantitative training would strengthen historians’ reflexive and interpretative skills.

**Key words:** The lost half. Notes in quantitative methods and historical studies

In 2009, a thorough essay by André Carus and Sheilagh Ogilvie tried to give an answer to the recurring question that haunts many social historians: how could they avoid the pressure for formalism that marks economic history and the refusal of quantification so common among history scholars?<sup>1</sup> Published in the renowned journal “Economic History Review”, their essay reaffirmed the comparative dimension of knowledge and the statistical nature of all comparisons.<sup>2</sup> They suggested searching for the indispensable link between “quality”

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<sup>1</sup> André W. Carus, Sheilagh Ogilvie, *Turning qualitative into quantitative evidence: a well-used method made explicit*, “Economic history review”, 2009, n. 4, pp. 893-925. See also André W. Carus, Sheilagh Ogilvie, *The poverty of historical idealism*, “History workshop journal”, 2005, n. 59, pp. 270-281. On the opposition see Claire Lemercier, Carine Ollivier, *Décrire et compter. Du bricolage à l’innovation: questions de méthode*, “Terrains & travaux”, 2011, n. 2 (19), pp. 5-16.

<sup>2</sup> These are rare themes even for developmental age psychologists: Alison Gopnik, *Il bambino filosofo. Come i bambini ci insegnano a dire la verità, amare e capire il senso della vita* [2009], Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 2010, chap. 3; see also Alison Gopnik, Andrew N. Meltzoff, Patricia K. Kuhl, *Tuo figlio è un genio. Le straordinarie scoperte sulla mente infantile* [1999], Milan, Baldini & Castoldi, 2000. The exaggerated titles and subtitles, which respond

and “quantity” in the complex effort to establish a relationship between the “emic” categories of past social agents and the “ethic” categories of scholars.<sup>3</sup> The approach presented in the essay sought to make explicit the method that Peter Laslett had implicitly proposed in 1963, and which subsequently became a constant feature in the works of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure.<sup>4</sup> It is not possible here to reconsider a proposal focusing on small “populations” (as statistics use the term) and moves towards a “history from below” approach. Rather, the purpose of this review is to demonstrate that reflections such as those offered by Carus and Ogilvie go to the root of the question whether quantitative methods can know the past, dissolving the contrast between the alleged “reductionism” of the statistical approach and the supposed “irreducibility” of social realities. The emergence and revival of approaches such as Laslett’s “micro-exemplary” one favour a critical use of quantitative methods, which is a fundamental premise for the construction of an analytical, experimental and reflective historical practice, capable of exercise a rigorous (self-)control over choices and protocols concerning sources, methods, categories and research acquisitions dissemination.<sup>5</sup>

The great historian of the French Revolution, Georges Lefebvre, often stated that “if you want to do history you have to be able to count”.<sup>6</sup> As many other

to commercial strategies aimed at new parents, risk casting a shadow on the quality of these books. For an academic reference book see Alison Gopnik, Andrew N. Meltzoff, *Costruire il mondo. Una teoria dello sviluppo cognitivo* [1996], Milan, McGraw-Hill, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Some important analyses conducted by historians of this dialectic include Carlo Ginzburg, *Our words, and theirs: a reflection on the historian's craft, today*, in Susanna Fellman, Marjatta Rahikainen (eds.), *Historical knowledge. In quest of theory, method and evidence*, Cambridge, Cambridge scholars publishing, 2012, pp. 97-119 (also in “Cromohs”, 2013, n. 18, pp. 97-114) and Simona Cerutti, *Microhistory: social relations versus cultural models?*, in Anna-Maija Castrén, Markku Lonkila, Matti Peltonen (eds.), *Between sociology and history. Essays on microhistory, collective action, and nation-building*, Helsinki, SKS/Finnish Literature Society, 2004, pp. 17-40.

<sup>4</sup> For a revisited and extended version of the essay by Peter Laslett and John Harrison, *Clayworth and Cogenhoe*, originally published in 1963, see Peter Laslett, *Family life and illicit love in earlier generations. Essays in historical sociology*, London, Cambridge university press, 1977, pp. 50-101. A still relevant study on the Cambridge Group is Pier Paolo Viazzo, *Il Cambridge Group e la ricerca storica sulla famiglia*, in Richard Wall, Jean Robin, Peter Laslett (eds.), *Forme di famiglia nella storia europea*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1984, pp. 9-27. For subsequent developments see the official website, [www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk](http://www.campop.geog.cam.ac.uk) (last accessed — as all links cited in this footnote — on 24 January 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Edoardo Grendi, *Del senso comune storiografico*, “Quaderni storici”, 1979, n. 41, pp. 698-670; Eric Brian, *L'horizon nouveau de l'historiographie expérimentale*, in *Le métier d'historien à l'ère numérique: nouveaux outils, nouvelle épistémologie?*, “Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine”, 2011, n. 4bis, pp. 41-56. For critical readings see Massimo Mastrogregori, *L'idea della storia sperimentale*, “Belfagor”, 2003, n. 1, pp. 1-18.

<sup>6</sup> As recalled by his pupil Richard Cobb, in an entirely ideological controversy over quantitative methods: *La storia fatta con i numeri* [1971], in *Tour de France* [1976], Milan, Adelphi, 1995, pp. 124-136.

scholars of his generation,<sup>7</sup> he participated in the controversy raised by early twentieth-century sociologists (especially François Simiand) over the “idols of the historians’ tribe”: Politics, Origins and the Individual.<sup>8</sup> Economic historians had always made use of numbers and statistics, but the *Annales* introduced a quantitative approach to history, first explained by Ernest Labrousse and then applied to a wide range of objects during the second post-war period, from the history of climate to that of mentalities.<sup>9</sup> In a clear and all but harmonious framework of relations, as demonstrated by the controversy in the field of “cliometrics”,<sup>10</sup> the French approaches seem to have engaged with the “new history” that thrived in the United States in the 1960s; the latter presented specific variations of the encounter between historical studies and social sciences, also in its use of quantification.<sup>11</sup> While it is utterly misleading to speak of a historiographical hegemony of quantitative methods during the second post-war period, as critics of the time occasionally dared to do (and as their contemporary imitators continue to do), it remains a fact that from the 1980s onwards fascination and promises have made way for disappointment, embodied by the various “turns” and the different “avatars” of postmodernism in historiography.<sup>12</sup> Re-emerging scepticism towards historical knowledge contributed to the failure to exploit the new and extraordinary opportunities offered by the micro-electronic revolution; the first personal computers were equipped with calculation tools that would previously have required bulky computers.<sup>13</sup> For 20 years now, we have been witnessing a revival of the quan-

<sup>7</sup> Stéphane Buzzi, *Georges Lefebvre (1874-1959), ou une histoire sociale possible*, “Le mouvement social”, 2002, n. 200, pp. 177-195.

<sup>8</sup> François Simiand, *Méthode historique et science sociale* [1903], “Annales ESC”, 1960, n. 1, pp. 83-119. See, among others, Massimo Mastrogregori, *Note su Simiand metodologo. Esiste una terza via tra storicismo ed empirismo?*, “Rivista storica italiana”, 1989, n. 1, pp. 237-250.

<sup>9</sup> For two renowned analyses of the time, see Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *La révolution quantitative et les historiens français: bilan d’une génération* [1969], in *Le territoire de l’historien*, Paris, Gallimard, 1973, pp. 15-22 (translated in *Le frontiere della storia*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1976, pp. 9-18) and François Furet, *L’histoire quantitative et la construction du fait historique*, “Annales ESC”, 1971, n. 1, pp. 63-75 (translated in Jacques Le Goff - Pierre Nora (eds.), *Fare storia* [1974], Turin, Einaudi, 1981, pp. 3-23).

<sup>10</sup> On “cliometrics” see William H. Sewell, Jr., *A strange career: the historical study of economic life*, “History and theory”, 2010, n. 4, pp. 146-166, Maria Luisa Pesante, *Modelli fuori controllo. A proposito di “La rivoluzione industriale inglese” di Robert C. Allen*, “Quaderni storici”, 2012, n. 2, pp. 575-611 and the recent self-criticism by Stefano Fenoaltea, *Spleen. The failures of cliometric school*, Rome, Banca d’Italia, 2019. A still useful analysis is that offered by Pierre Vilar, *Sviluppo economico e analisi storica*, Bari, Laterza, 1970.

<sup>11</sup> A reconsideration of “new history” can be found in Jan de Vries, *Changing the narrative: the new history that was and is to come*, “Journal of interdisciplinary history”, 2018, n. 3, pp. 313-334.

<sup>12</sup> A convincing critical approach to historiographical “postmodernism” remains Gérard Noiriel’s *Sur la “crise” de l’histoire* [1996], Paris, Gallimard, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Disinterest and continued changes in formats and backup software have often resulted in the failed storage of gathered data. The frequent disappearance of data storage devices (i.e. CDs and fixed hard drives) urgently calls for a census of Italian degree theses of the 1970s and

titative method, although this has not occurred without some ambiguity. On the one hand, many have celebrated the digitalisation and computerisation of sources on the Internet as well as the revolutionary impact of creating historical big data (think of the case of *The history manifesto*).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, there has been a limited and methodologically more perceptible return to the examination of data drawn directly from sources via a “constructivist” approach. Regrettably, the scarce knowledge of quantitative methods risks exposure to both an acritical acceptance of such celebration and mistrust of this return.<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in the Italian context, the scarceness of basic statistical expertise among scholars in the “humanistic” area — who often find themselves having to acquire these skills via personal, and usually marginal, initiatives — re-evokes the problem of how quantitative training can be re-integrated into history courses.<sup>16</sup> It is no coincidence that Claire Lemerrier and Claire Zalc’s precious little manual on quantitative methods in history, published in 2008 in France, has never been translated in Italian.<sup>17</sup> Instead, a new English edition recently appeared, titled *Quantitative Methods in the Humanities. An Introduction*. Although the change from “historien” to “humanities” in the title may be no

1980s, which used and sometimes also published quantitative data, for example demographic history data.

<sup>14</sup> David Armitage, Jo Guldi, *Manifesto per la storia* [2014], Rome, Donzelli, 2016. See the debate in “American historical review”, 2015, n. 2, pp. 527-554, with some critical contributions by Peter Mandler and Deborah Cohen and responses from Armitage and Guldi, and “Annales HSS”, 2015, n. 2, with contributions by Armitage and Guldi as well as by Lynn Hunt, Claudia Moatti, Francesca Trivellato, Christian Lamouroux and the same Claire Lemerrier, *Une histoire sans sciences sociales?*, pp. 345-357. See also Giulia Bassi, *Storia, storiografia, manifesto: alcune considerazioni in merito ad una sintesi difficile*, “Studi storici”, 2016, n. 2, pp. 297-313.

<sup>15</sup> To follow the most recent developments see the journals “Historical methods” (born in 1978), “Histoire & mesure” (launched in 1986, see *Trente ans d’Histoire & Mesure. Entretiens croisés avec Gérard Béaur, Jean-Philippe Genet et Jean Heffer*, “Histoire & Mesure”, 2016, n. 2, pp. 3-9) and the “International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing” (called “History and computing” until 2007, 1989-2002).

<sup>16</sup> Introductory tests in Italian were published in the 1980s: Luigi Bulferetti, Oscar Itzcovitch, *Orientamenti di storiografia quantitativa*, Naples, Guida, 1983 and Angelo Porro, *Storia e statistica. Introduzione ai metodi quantitativi per la ricerca storica*, Florence, La Nuova Italia scientifica, 1989. See also subsequent volumes: Renzo Derosas, Robert Rowland (eds.), *Informatica e fonti storiche*, “Quaderni storici”, 1991, n. 78 and Simonetta Soldani, Luigi Tomassini (eds.), *Storia e Computer. Alla ricerca del passato con l’informatica*, Milan, Mondadori, 1996. In 1995, the University of Bologna launched an innovative doctoral programme in “History and information technology”. This important experience was ended a few years ago.

<sup>17</sup> Claire Lemerrier, Claire Zalc, *Méthodes quantitatives pour l’historien*, Paris, La Découverte, 2008. A wealth of supplementary material can be found on a website edited by the authors: [www.quantihmc.ens.fr](http://www.quantihmc.ens.fr). The book doesn’t seem to have been reviewed in any Italian journals, but some information is comprised in Claire Lemerrier, *L’analisi testuale*, in Deborah Paci (ed.), *La storia in digitale: teorie e metodologie*, Milan, Unicopli, 2019, pp. 291-292 and *Ce que le numérique fait à l’historienne. Entretien avec Claire Lemerrier*, Elisa Grandi, Émilien Ruiz (eds.), “Diacronie. Studi di Storia Contemporanea”, 2012, n. 10 ([www.studistorici.com/2012/06/29/grandi\\_numero\\_10](http://www.studistorici.com/2012/06/29/grandi_numero_10)).

more than a sign that the potential readership has been extended beyond the historiographical field,<sup>18</sup> the book's contents have significantly been updated.<sup>19</sup> The distance from the Italian context is evident from the earliest paragraphs, for example when the authors thank the "French scientific community for mostly ignoring the divide between the humanities and social sciences" (p. vii) — in Italy, a similar statement would be risky, to say the very least. The book's fundamental principle is the premise that quantitative methods must neither be made into a fetish nor become an object of fear, as they are just one among many tools in the historian's hands. They aren't simply useful accessories or a specialist's instrument, but necessary resources for anyone dealing with sources and documents, regardless of the ingrained prejudice that considers them a monopoly of scholars interested in demographic, social and economic structures.<sup>20</sup> According to Zalc and Lemerrier, some rather simple approaches may often prove more than enough to give solid results: casual sampling methods, contingency tables (which display the frequency distribution of two variables), and their verification (Chi-square test,  $X^2$ ).<sup>21</sup> Yet, the book highlights the possibility of moving beyond these first steps, so as to try out more complex tools.

<sup>18</sup> For a number of essays on the issue of doing history in the era of "digital humanities" see Kristen Nawrotzki, Jack Dougherty (eds.), *Writing history in the digital age*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2013 (<https://writinghistory.trincoll.edu>). On the Italian case see Giancarlo Monina, *Storia digitale. Il dibattito storiografico in Italia*, "Memoria e ricerca", 2013, n. 43, pp. 185-202.

<sup>19</sup> Claire Lemerrier, Claire Zalc, *Quantitative methods in the humanities. An Introduction*, Charlottesville-London, University of Virginia Press, 2019. The authors contributed to a recent special issue of the *Annales* that was dedicated to quantitative history: see, for example, the introduction by Karine Karila-Cohen e all., *Nouvelles cuisines de l'histoire quantitative*, "Annales HSS", 2018, n. 4, pp. 773-783. The manual's two editions have also been combined into a separate text: Claire Lemerrier, Claire Zalc, *Le sens de la mesure: l'histoire et les nouveaux usages de la quantification*, in Christophe Granger (ed.), *A quoi pensent les historiens?*, Paris, Autrement, 2013, pp. 135-164 (with thanks to Enrico Francia for having obtained a copy). Lemerrier is a research director at CNRS (*Un si discret pouvoir. Aux origines de la Chambre de commerce de Paris, 1803-1853*, Paris, La Découverte, 2003), while Zalc runs the Institut d'histoire moderne et contemporaine (*Dénaturalisés. Les retraits de nationalité sous Vichy*, Paris, Seuil, 2016). Only few Italians are mentioned in the text, and not always in view of their use of quantitative methods (e.g. the fathers of "microhistory"). Given that citations are always taken from translations, this may mostly reflect a linguistic barrier.

<sup>20</sup> Charles Tilly's brief but solid call for "formalisation" (a broader practice than that of "quantification") as a research tool goes precisely in this direction: *Observation of social processes and their formal representations*, "Sociological theory", 2004, n. 4, pp. 595-602. See Franco Moretti, 'Operationalizing'. Or, the function of measurement in literary theory, "New left review", 2013, n. 84, pp. 103-119.

<sup>21</sup> Here the authors don't address the radical criticism of these procedures advanced by Maurizio Gribaudi, Alain Blum, *Des catégories aux liens individuels. L'analyse statistique de l'espace social*, "Annales ESC", 1990, n. 45, pp. 1365-1402. See, for a dissociation from this criticism, Claire Lemerrier, *Analyse de réseaux et histoire*, "Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine", 2005, n. 2, pp. 88-112 (reference is being made to pp. 90-91) and indirectly, C. Lemerrier, C. Zalc, *Sens*, pp. 162-163.

Fittingly for a history book, and even more so for a manual, the first chapter is devoted to a brief but effective historiographical *excursus* on quantitative methods in the twentieth century. Here, the authors valorise French and American experiences, they highlight the limits of the first stages of “quantitative history”,<sup>22</sup> and they point out the neopositivist risks of the current big data vogue as well as the distortions and scarce productivity — in terms of actual historiographical innovation — of the digitalisation of sources and their transference to the Internet.<sup>23</sup> In the face of the recurrent emergence of “pseudo-qualitative” approaches,<sup>24</sup> which “use examples (selected in a non-explicit way from not clearly defined populations) as proof, and adverbs such as ‘often’ and ‘generally’ without the support of precise data” (25), Lemerrier and Zalc stress the fact that anything can be quantified. In their opinion, one could even make use of the often denigrated statistics of the past without there being any necessity for their — albeit legitimate — criticism and historicisation to turn into mistrust and rejection.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, extreme rigour is required for the quantification process, which is outlined in the second chapter. Starting from the very construction of the corpus of data that are drawn from the sources, close monitoring is fundamental. Against the tendency to completeness, the authors advocate the sampling method. In fact, a total of some thousand cases is more than enough to guarantee statistical reliability, provided that their selection is truly casual, that the data available for the population from where the sample is taken are verified, and that comparisons are made with control groups. In the third chapter, the authors make a distinction between the insertion of data and

<sup>22</sup> For an account see Bernard Lepetit, *L'histoire quantitative: deux ou trois choses que je sais d'elle* [1989], in *Carnet de croquis. Sur la connaissance historique*, Paris, Albin Michel, 1999, pp. 231-242. On the development of the quantitative method in history see also the recent studies by Steven Ruggles, Diana L. Magnuson, *The history of quantification in history: the JIH as a case study* and Myron P. Gutmann, *Quantifying interdisciplinary history: the record of (nearly) fifty years*, “Journal of interdisciplinary history”, 2020, n. 3, pp. 363-381 e n. 4, pp. 517-545.

<sup>23</sup> On the theme of “history and Internet”, which cannot be discussed in detail here, see Stéphane Lamassé, Gaëtan Bonnot (eds.), *Dans les dédales du web. Historiens en territoires numériques*, Paris, Editions de la Sorbonne, 2019 and, in Italian, Rolando Minuti (ed.), *Il web e gli studi storici. Guida critica all'uso della rete*, Rome, Carocci, 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Daniel S. Milo, *Le rencontre insolite mais édifiante du culturel et du quantitatif*, “Histoire & mesure”, 1987, n. 2, pp. 7-37.

<sup>25</sup> On this matter, see Giovanni Favero (ed.), *Fonti statistiche per la storia economica dell'Italia unita*, “Quaderni storici”, 2010, n. 134, Manfredi Alberti (ed.), *Lo studio del passato e le fonti statistiche. Prospettive storiografiche a confronto*, “Memoria e ricerca”, 2012, n. 40, pp. 111-144 and Luciano Allegra, *Le trappole della statistica. Una stima dei poveri in antico regime*, “Contesti”, 2014, n. 1, pp. 59-90. For a contemporary example see Agnès Labrousse, Poor numbers. *Chaînes statistiques et économie politique du chiffre*, “Annales HSS”, 2016, n. 4, pp. 845-878. For a contextualisation of the quantification processes, both in everyday life and in scientific research, a comparison with the “ethnostatistic” approach may also prove useful. For an introductory note see Jonathan Potter, *Ethnostatistics*, in Lisa McGiven (ed.), *The Sage encyclopedia of qualitative research methods*, Los Angeles, Sage 2008, vol. I, pp. 298-301.

their codification. During the first process, one must remain close to the documentation, whereas in the second process one can test the different categorisations of the gathered information, without neglecting the “conventional” and not “metrological” nature of the social group. While it is best not to be misled by the idea that there are “standard” templates valid for all research, which would only need to be “applied” to one’s own, we mustn’t delude ourselves into thinking that previous templates — or “indigenous” classifications — were neutral. Remaining loyal to an experimental and pragmatic approach, Zalc and Lemerrier insist on the virtues of multiple categorisations and, therefore, on the comparison of different data classification templates.<sup>26</sup>

The second part of *Quantitative methods* takes matters a step further. If the authors call for caution in the shift from rediscovering correlations between data to the assumption of causal relations, a number of instruments allow for the formulation of theories in this regard, and also enable to deal with complex corpuses (i.e. that cannot be reduced to the intersection of few variables). Regressions and factorial analysis are the two classical approaches (outlined in the fourth chapter): different and often counterposed ways of treating qualitative (e.g. job) or discontinuous variables (e.g. number of children: contrary to prices or migration rates, which always allow space for intermediate cases, one cannot have two and a half children) in quantitative terms. For both methods, Lemerrier and Zalc distrust the mechanic use of programmes, and invite the reader to gain awareness of the instruments’ limits and to make critical use of these, paying particular attention to the development of theories and the interpretation of results. Most importantly, the authors encourage a creative and experimental use of the methods, and warn not to limit oneself to a single approach; rather, one should exploit the complementarity between the various statistical families. Furthermore, from the 1970s onwards new methods have been added to the historian’s quantitative arsenal, in order to overcome the static approaches that were centred on variables: network analysis, sequential analysis and event history analysis allow the scholar to put individuals and their relations at the centre of attention while keeping track of time — that is, change (fifth chapter). The manual also contains an adequate consideration of the importance and risks of visual material:<sup>27</sup> graphics and geographical

<sup>26</sup> On the distinction between quantification as a “measure” (typical of natural science and, in different ways, life science) and as a “conventional codification” (according to a legal-institutional model) see Alain Desrosières, *Entre réalisme métrologique et conventions d’équivalence. Les ambiguïtés de la sociologie quantitative*, “Genèses”, 2001, n. 2 (43), pp. 112-127. Of the same author see also *Comment faire des choses que tiennent: histoire sociale et statistique*, “Histoire & Mesure”, 1989, n. 3-4, pp. 225-242. For an author’s profile see Jay Rowell, *De l’urne de Bernoulli au big data. Penser la quantification avec Alain Desrosières*, “Genèses”, 2016, n. 104, pp. 163-168). On this issue see also the considerations of a quantitative studies veteran, Antoine Prost, *Des registres aux structures sociales en France. Réflexions sur la méthode*, “Le Mouvement social”, 2014, n. 246, pp. 97-117.

<sup>27</sup> For a recent and clever discussion see Franco Moretti, Oleg Sobchuk, *Hidden in plain sight. Data visualization in the humanities*, “New left review”, 2019, n. 118, pp. 86-115.

maps as research tools and means of dissemination (sixth chapter).<sup>28</sup> Finally, Zalc and Lemerrier reaffirm the potentiality of a quantitative analysis of the texts (seventh chapter). Counting words and comparing texts can give traditional readings unfathomable dimensions and contribute to the formulation of new interpretations. In sum, while the authors acknowledge that quantitative methods remain largely unused in history studies, they remind the reader that these methods are by no means esoteric or the exclusive monopoly of economic history. Instead, they have the precious advantage of enforcing the adoption of explicit formulations and allowing free experimentations, given their plurality and the fact that they are by now within the reach of our computers.

Written in an accessible way, never too technical and rich with concrete examples drawn from historical research, *Quantitative methods* presents itself as the ideal starting point for anyone who wishes to gain familiarity with quantitative approaches to historical research. The rich bibliography — presented gradually throughout the manual — offers suggestions for further reading, citing more extensive manuals,<sup>29</sup> but also specific texts focused on individual methodologies.

Lemerrier and Zalc's manual tends towards the organisation of information drawn from historical sources via spreadsheets, which are easier to use and enable scholars to directly conduct categorisations and analyses. In their opinion, actual databases would only be appropriate for a mere “relational” intersection between different corpuses. A conference held in 2017 in San Marino focused precisely on these “great data collections”, the proceedings of which have been published by Alessio Fornasin and Michaël Gasperoni.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>28</sup> The systems of geographical information, better known under the English acronym GIS, deserve an analysis of their own. For an introduction see Ian N. Gregory, Paul S. Ell, *Historical GIS. Technologies, methodologies and scholarship*, Cambridge, Cambridge university press, 2007; on the developments in the historical-urban field, see Susanne Rau, Ekkehard Schönherr (eds.), *Mapping spatial relations, their perceptions and dynamics: the city today and in the past*, Cham-London, Springer, 2014 and Jean-Luc Arnaud, *Analyse spatiale, cartographie et histoire urbaine*, Marseille, Parenthèses/MMSH, 2008.

<sup>29</sup> Most references are to Charles H. Feinstein, Mark Thomas, *Making history count. A primer in quantitative methods for historians*, Cambridge, Cambridge university press, 2002, and Pat Hudson, Mina Ishizu, *History by numbers. An introduction to quantitative approaches* [2000], London, Bloomsbury academic, 2017. An excellent introduction is Alain Guerreau's *Statistique pour historiens*, 2004, freely downloadable from <http://elec.enc.sorbonne.fr/statistiques/stat2004.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> Alessio Fornasin, Michaël Gasperoni (eds.), *Dalla fonte al database. Per una storia economica e sociale delle popolazioni del passato* (San Marino Conference Proceedings, 22-23 June 2017), San Marino, Centro sammarinese di studi storici, 2019. The publication differs from the conference in two ways: it doesn't include Pascal Cristofoli's precious talk on the relational approach to databases, while an interesting text (in French) by Benoît Pandolfi e Sylvain Rassat has been added, on the “Demo-Hist” model of organising data. Fornasin is an Associate Professor in Demography at the universities of Udine and Trieste, and is the director of the Italian society for historical demography. Alessio Fornasin, Claudio Lorenzini (eds.), *Per una storia della popolazione italiana nel Novecento*, Udine, Forum, 2016. Gasperoni is a Cnrs



*Dalla fonte al database* [From source to database] is a timely reminder of the fact that databases, although extremely powerful tools, continue to rely on the questions of the scholar(s) that builds and uses them — like any other historical documentation. Fornasin and Gasperoni's book is a collection of essays focusing on different databases, accompanied by examples of their use in specific research projects. Alessio Fornasin and Anna Marzona offer a description of "Friuli/*in prin*", which gathers data from 339,000 medical examinations in the Friuli region (classes of 1846-1900). Marco Breschi and Matteo Manfredini present the databases that provide information on more than 17,000 individuals from the rural communities of Madregolo (Parma) and Casalguidi (Pistoia), connecting parish records with *status animarum* and fiscal sources, drawn up between 1761 and 1883. Focusing on the decline of mortality rates, Luciana Quaranta gives proof of the historical-demographical potentiality of the data contained in the "Scanian Economic Demographic Database" (SEDD). This database retrieves information from the — notoriously rich — Swedish parish records, as well as from civil status records, fiscal records and other sources, with the aim of describing the population of the country's southern region between 1813 and 1968. Francesco Scalone and Martin Dribe re-examine the decline in fertility rates starting from two extraordinary international databases with the same nature (nominative data) and structure (allowing to make comparisons): the "North Atlantic Population Project" (NAPP, which compares historical census data from Northern Europe and North America) and the "Integrated Public Use Microdata Series" (IPUMS, on contemporary censuses in the United States and in other nations). Michaël Gasperoni accounts for two databases he personally constructed as part of research initiated some 20 years ago, and still ongoing due to the very wide temporal range (covering the period between 1500 and 1850) and the large number of examined sources (starting from parish records and notarial archives). The first database contains information on the population of San Marino (subsequently extended to some hundred parishes within the Diocese of Rimini and Montefeltro — currently consisting of 86,000 individuals), while the second focuses on the Jewish minorities of the ghettos in Rome and the Marche region.

The book ends with the two essays by Vincent Gourdon and Cyril Grange. Gourdon reconstructs the "complex dialogue" between historical demography and family history. If early historical works on family units strongly built on historical-demographical quantification, subsequent studies soon abandoned this method in virtue of a criticism of the quantitative approach (preferring cultural or microhistorical approaches instead), or with the aim of revising certain premises (e.g. the underestimation of extra-domestic family ties). Yet,

over the last two decades the methodological innovations of historical demography (event history analysis, network analysis, sequence analysis) have allowed for a reconciliation. In this same area, Grange's contribution describes the study of marriages and wider family alliances, profoundly renewed by the adoption of new instruments that were specifically developed so as to answer difficult queries. For example, Puck ("Program for the Use and Computation of Kinship data") enables innovative interventions in genealogical databases, such as the identification of "marriage circuits" and "constellations" that divide populations into segments, as in territorial areas of marital preference.<sup>31</sup>

In sum, *Dalla fonte al database* is a great introduction to databases.<sup>32</sup> What is more, it offers a concrete illustration of the potentials of collective work, interdisciplinarity and collaboration among researchers and technicians — all dimensions that are becoming less and less feasible in the context of Italian historiography, given the distortions caused by precarious employment, under-financed work, infra-disciplinary parcelling out and the "assessment" syndrome. The various contributors to *Dalla fonte al database* share an approach that distinguishes itself from that of *Quantitative methods*: if Lemerrier and Zalc argue for casual sampling, which makes it possible to work on a not too large number of individuals (i.e. not always physical people, in a statistical sense), the historical demographers and historians of family relations that participated in the San Marino conference prefer a "total" study of a population (i.e. territorially well-defined and/or via other criteria), which involves a thorough examination of one or more sources. This reflects a disagreement that inevitably re-evokes old, yet still useful, statistical debates.<sup>33</sup> An even more radical split can be found in the field of economic history, which — as we have seen — was the first to be attracted to quantification.<sup>34</sup> This is demonstrated by *Quantità/qualità* [Quantity/quality], a valuable collection of essays that focuses on the (alleged) alternative between quantity and quality, edited by Daniele

<sup>31</sup> For more information see the digital platform "Kinsources": [www.kinsources.net](http://www.kinsources.net).

<sup>32</sup> For a wider variety of sources, see also Valeria Galimi (ed.), *Trovare la rotta. Banche dati e ricerca storica*, "Passato e presente", 2019, n. 107, pp. 68-87, which includes — other than a brief introduction by the editor — essays by Cesare Panizza, *Il Partigianato piemontese e la società civile* and Andrea Martini, *Il data base dei processi ai fascisti e ai collaborazionisti*.

<sup>33</sup> See, for example, Paolo Fortunati, *Statistica e ricerca scientifica* [1958], in *Scritti di statistica e di politica economica*, Bologna, Cooperativa libraria universitaria, 1968, pp. 11-29. Fortunati insisted on the positions of his teacher Corrado Gini. See Gini's bilingual volume *Statistica e induzione. Induction and statistics*, Bologna, Clueb, 2001 (accessible online: <https://amshistorica.unibo.it/52>). For a contextualisation of their positions in Italian statistics, see Giovanni Favero, *La statistica fra scienza e amministrazione*, in Francesco Cassata, Claudio Pogliano (eds.), *Storia d'Italia-Annali*, 26, *Scienze e cultura nell'Italia unita*, Turin, Einaudi, 2011, pp. 703-735 and Jean-Guy Prévost, *A total science. Statistics in liberal and fascist Italy*, Montreal, McGill-Queens university, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Riccardo Faucci, "Vecchia" e "nuova" storia economica: quarant'anni di discussioni, in Gianni Toniolo (ed.), *Lo sviluppo economico italiano (1861-1940)*, Bari, Laterza, 1973, pp. 71-117.

Andreozzi.<sup>35</sup> The rise of “pure” economic sciences (or economics) to a discipline of reference for social sciences, regardless of their unrealistic foundations and their continuous failure to define and anticipate a future direction, owes a great deal to the “spirit of the time”, but also to the capacity to provide coherent and quantified explanations, following the model of natural science. No longer “political”, as it was explicitly defined in the classical tradition and as it continued to be considered in nineteenth-century theories (e.g. Keynesian, Marxist, institutionalist) as well as more recent developments (i.e. economics of conventions and regulatory economics), “pure” or *sans phrase* economics overlooks history because it is founded on individual behaviours (in themselves considered invariable) and on market “laws” that formalise it.<sup>36</sup> Aided by the crisis of humanistic knowledge and by the marginalisation of history, according to Andreozzi’s efficient reconstruction the definite consecration of “economy-history” is derived from it. Focused on “markets” and “entrepreneurs”, without alternatives of action, without social contexts and without power relations, this variation of history has the paradoxical consequence of being “incapable of generalising”.<sup>37</sup> Alida Clemente offers a wider historical reconstruction, where she considers the postmodern turn in social sciences as an exclusion of the economic — a reaction to the rise of economics, which nevertheless remains entirely dependent on its disciplinary imperialism. In the name of rejecting reductionism and determinism, historians allegedly abandoned the economic and the quantitative method so as to make way for the stronger project of retrospective econometrics, instead of seeking a dialogue with alternative economic traditions.<sup>38</sup> Giovanni Favero relaunches economic history as the ideal space for a recomposition of structures and cultures, beyond the obsession with creating objective representations via quantitative means (e.g. cliometrics, but also the

<sup>35</sup> Daniele Andreozzi (ed.), *Quantità/qualità. La storia tra sguardi micro e generalizzazioni*, Palermo, NDP, 2017 (freely downloadable from the publisher’s website: [www.newdigitalfrontiers.com/it/book/quantita-qualita-la-storia-tra-sguardi-micro-e-generalizzazioni\\_91](http://www.newdigitalfrontiers.com/it/book/quantita-qualita-la-storia-tra-sguardi-micro-e-generalizzazioni_91)). Andreozzi is an Associate Professor in Economic History at the University of Trieste, along with Roberto Finzi, *Storia economica del mondo moderno e contemporaneo*, Bologna, Clueb, 2002.

<sup>36</sup> Let me cite two classics here: Karl Polanyi, *La grande trasformazione. Le origini economiche e politiche della nostra epoca* [1944], Turin, Einaudi, 2000 and Pierre Bourdieu, *Le strutture sociali dell’economia* [2000], Trieste, Asterios, 2004 (subsequently *Anthropologie économique. Cours au Collège de France (1992-1993)*, Paris, Raison d’agir/Seuil, 2017). For didactic texts see Ha-Joon Chang, *Economia. Istruzioni per l’uso* [2014], Milan, il Saggiatore, 2015 and Francesco Sylos Labini, *Rischio e previsione. Cosa può dirci la scienza sulla crisi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> Daniele Andreozzi, *Senso e potere. Alla ricerca della storia tra dimensioni, confini e rilevanze*, in D. Andreozzi (ed.), *Quantità/qualità*, pp. 17-34

<sup>38</sup> Alida Clemente, *Micro e macro tra narrativismo postmoderno e scelta razionale: il problema della agency e la storia economica come scienza sociale*, in D. Andreozzi (ed.), *Quantità/qualità*, pp. 35-56. Of the same author see also *A proposito di “The world in the model: how economists work and think”, di Mary Morgan*, “Quaderni storici”, 2017, n. 1, pp. 255-273.

preference for the “typical”, the “average” and the “representative”), which would avoid the problems of comparison, change and the very production of the “fact”.<sup>39</sup> Finally, although they stress different elements, Luca Mocarelli and Carlo M. Cipolla reaffirm the “difficult position” of economic history: suspended between “two cultures that don’t speak to one another” and tending — as Deirdre McCloskey states — towards a “cultural” rather than “scientific” declination.<sup>40</sup> The authors of *Quantità/qualità* consider — even if not all in the same way — the return to microhistory as a possible way out of the crisis of economic and social history. It is not simply a question of scales, as the prolific “global” applications of this approach demonstrate,<sup>41</sup> but of counterposing the construction of context and the attention to concrete agents to a history that becomes evenemential and exclusive.<sup>42</sup> The microhistorical practice — whose pioneers, Giovanni Levi and Edoardo Grendi, are mentioned in the volume — would allow for the creation of a new declination of social history, capable of measuring itself also with economic dimensions. The aspiration to generalisation would be guaranteed, and not denied by the strong analytical and experimental tension. Thus, history would take the shape of a science of partial replies — because based on specific cases and studied through sources that bear only traces of the past — to universal, theoretical questions. Consequently, the latter would continuously need to be reformulated if we are to take those specific replies into consideration.<sup>43</sup>

The publication of *Dalla fonte al database* and *Quantità/qualità* seem to imply that there may be space for an Italian translation of Lemerrier and Zalc’s manual. A similar operation might help revive the debate on quantitative methods for the study of history, starting from the fundamental dimension of university teaching. Yet, we cannot hide the fact that the problems we face as scholars represent only a small part of a wider and more urgent issue: schools, too, should become interested in statistics education.<sup>44</sup> The dissemination of a

<sup>39</sup> Giovanni Favero, *Sul metodo storico e le scienze sociali: per una microstoria applicata*, in D. Andreozzi (ed.), *Quantità/qualità*, pp. 57-70. Of the same author see *Microstoria e storia economica*, in Paola Lanaro (ed.), *Microstoria. A venticinque anni da L’eredità immateriale*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011 pp. 107-117.

<sup>40</sup> Luca Mocarelli, *Storia ed economia: un matrimonio impossibile?*, in D. Andreozzi (ed.), *Quantità/qualità*, pp. 71-98.

<sup>41</sup> Christian G. De Vito, *Verso una microstoria translocale (micro-spatial history)*, “Quaderni storici”, 2015, n. 3, pp. 815-833 (followed by a debate in subsequent issues of the journal, 2017, n. 2 e 2018, n. 3) and *History Without Scale: The Micro-Spatial Perspective*, “Past and present”, 2019, suppl. 14, pp. 348-372.

<sup>42</sup> In this regard, see the six issues of “Contesti”, a “microhistory journal” edited by Davide Tabor, launched in 2014 and now in its sixth year: the editorial “Project” can be consulted on the journal’s website: [www.contestirivista.it](http://www.contestirivista.it).

<sup>43</sup> Giovanni Levi, *La storia. Scienza delle domande generali e delle risposte locali*, “Psiche”, 2018, n. 2, pp. 361-377.

<sup>44</sup> Obviously the problem is not so much that of introducing a “statistics” hour, or giving it more space in existing courses (e.g. maths); rather, we ought to consider why and how we should

stronger awareness of the “point of view of the number”<sup>45</sup> would be the best antidote to the proliferation in mass communication (hence well beyond the scientific world) of “data”, “graphics” and “maps” used as a means of authoritarian information, rather than as a means of shaping public opinion and, therefore, critical citizenship. As within the small community of historians, in the wider society they inhabit they must be able to use numbers, and for the same reasons: to avoid risks provoked by the absence of critical exchange, impulsive obsessions and rejection based on prejudice.

teach statistics, and therefore which approach would be preferable. Think, for example, of the ongoing debate on teaching economics in primary schools, which usually leads to a “financial education”; this runs parallel with the promotion — at a European level — of “business competence” in educational programmes, which equally aims at promoting a neoliberal cultural hegemony from the earliest age on.

<sup>45</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, Alfred Sauvy, *Le point de vue du nombre 1936*, Paris, Ined, 2005. By Halbwachs see also the classic *Morphologie sociale* [1938], Paris, Colin, 1970. On Halbwachs see Olivier Martin, *Raison statistique et raison sociologique chez Maurice Halbwachs*, “Revue d’histoire des sciences humaines”, 1999, n. 1, pp. 69-101.

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## Colonial heritage, colonial legacy. The photographic collections of Giuseppe De Reali and Nello Puccioni

Elena Cadamuro\*

This article investigates the colonial photographic collections belonging to the traveller Giuseppe De Reali (1877-1937) and the anthropologist Nello Puccioni (1881-1937). Between the end of the nineteenth century and the 1930s, both visited the African continent several times, creating two collections — a zoological-naturalistic one, and an anthropological-ethnographic one — that are now kept and partly displayed in the Natural History Museum of Venice and in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence, respectively. By analysing these images, the article examines the modes of representation of the African continent and its populations, and the functions and meanings acquired by pictures and objects in the transfer to museums. In conclusion, it raises a series of preliminary questions concerning the continuities of exhibition practices between the fascist and the republican period.

**Key words:** Colonialism, Racism, Photography, Anthropology, Fascism, Museum

In this article I present two case studies chosen from the complex framework that characterises Italian museum institutes: the photographic collections of the traveller Giuseppe De Reali (Venice, 26 June 1877 - Dosson, 15 February 1937) and of the anthropologist Nello Puccioni (Florence, 16 July 1881 - Florence, 31 May 1937). While these two collectors could be considered representative figures of the Italian expansionist project in the broad sense, their collections could be exemplary of its legacy instead: both are indeed currently stored and partially exhibited at the Natural History Museum of Venice and at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence,<sup>1</sup> respectively. By juxtaposing the cultural experiences of De Reali and Puccioni, I will first of all examine how different actors contributed to the construction of the Italian colonial imaginary within a specific time frame. For both the protagonists,

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<sup>1</sup> It is relevant to underline that when this article was translated and revised in May 2021, the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology in Florence turned out to be temporarily closed for refurbishment works.

this period began at the end of the nineteenth century and evolved between the liberal age and the fascist regime. It is noteworthy that these experiences ended in 1937, when both De Reali and Puccioni died, which is the same year when the Royal Decree-Law 880 of 19 April 1937 was announced, that is, the first notorious “defence of race” laws that marked the beginning of the regime’s racist turn. Secondly, the collections’ long-term museum set-ups — starting in the 1930s and running into the present — make them a privileged point of observation; in the absence of a major national colonial museum, an analysis of the multitude of collections — including the two objects of this article — that are scattered across the territory will allow us to study the history and heritage of the Italian expansionist project and, most of all, the visual legacy of the colonial imaginary in contemporary Italy.<sup>2</sup>

### The traveller and the anthropologist

Giuseppe De Reali and Nello Puccioni were both protagonists of journeys to the African continent. Coming from different backgrounds, the former put together a zoological-naturalistic collection, the latter an anthropological-ethnographic one.

Giuseppe De Reali was the last-born of the Venetian Reali family, which owned many lands in the Treviso region and in the lagoon area and had belonged to the Venetian entrepreneurial world from the mid-nineteenth century onwards.<sup>3</sup> Although the documentation on Count De Reali is scarce,<sup>4</sup> we know that he was a traveller, hunter, sculptor, painter, mayor and podestà.<sup>5</sup> In sum, a man of quite considerable cultural and political importance within the local context. On 20 April 1922, De Reali married Amelia Pigazzi (Padua, 24 November 1871 - Venice, 28 September 1957),<sup>6</sup> who played a significant

<sup>2</sup> See Beatrice Falucci, *Sources for colonial historiography: museums and colonial collections, a mapping and memory project on the Italian national territory*, “Cahiers d’histoire”, automne 2019, n. 1, pp. 21-40.

<sup>3</sup> Giampaolo Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali al Museo civico di Storia Naturale di Venezia*, special issue “Quaderni del Museo civico di storia naturale di Venezia”, gennaio 1999, n. 5, suppl. “Bollettino del Museo civico di storia naturale di Venezia”, 1997, vol. XLVIII, pp. 5-6.

<sup>4</sup> G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, pp. 6-7. Vittorio Emanuele III bestowed the title of count by Royal Decree *motu proprio* on 16 December 1936 and RR. LL. PP. on 17 March 1927. More information can be found in the Central State Archive (Archivio Centrale dello Stato, hereafter ACS), Presidenza del consiglio dei ministri. Consulta araldica. Fascicoli nobiliari e araldici delle singole famiglie, 6507 De Reali Giuseppe, b. 1094.

<sup>5</sup> Report by the Prefect of Treviso Marcello Vaccari, 18 May 1935, in ACS, Ministero dell’Interno, Podestà e consulte municipali, Comune di Casier.

<sup>6</sup> G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, p. 8. With regard to Amelia Pigazzi, the only information that has been retrieved is contained in a letter dated 13 March 1937 from Osvaldo Sebastiani, Mussolini’s secretary, which was addressed to the

role also with regard to her husband's collection. Indeed, it is only by virtue of Pigazzi's major efforts in engaging with important people of the time and making the collection known that we nowadays have some idea of the count's activities.<sup>7</sup>

Being a young aristocrat,<sup>8</sup> De Reali's interest in Africa was nurtured by the aspiration of going on a "colonial Grand Tour". It is probably for this reason that his endeavours never gained much notoriety at a national level, given that these were private trips, even if they were of no less importance than those of contemporary travellers, such as Giovanni Miani, Vittorio Bottego, Carlo Piaggia and Ernesto Cordella.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, in 1960 the geographer Giotto Dainelli apparently dedicated some space to De Reali in his text about Italian explorers in Africa, where he recalled De Reali's first journey at the age of 21 (1898).<sup>10</sup>

De Reali visited the African continent 11 more times, between 1901 and 1929: his second journey (1901) covered Eritrea, Abyssinia and Eastern Ethiopia; three years later (1904) he moved towards Equatorial Africa, following the Tana and Uaso Nyiro rivers on his way to German East Africa, Kenya and Tanganika, and eventually pushed into Ethiopian territory. In 1907 he again passed through Kenya on his way to Uganda, and in 1908 he passed across the Seychelles Islands on his way back. De Reali went on one more trip in 1912, before returning to Eritrea in 1920 and 1922.<sup>11</sup> In 1926 he travelled to Tripolitania, through to Ghadames, whereas his last peregrination dates back to 1929, when he went to Tripolitania, Tunisia and the French Sahara.<sup>12</sup> The only journey we have some information on was that to Congo in 1925, with his wife

Prefect of Venice; from this letter we may deduce that Pigazzi had become a member of the National Fascist Party in 1926, was awarded the Croce commemorativa della III Armata (Commemorative Cross of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army) and covered the positions of president of the Ente della Moda and vice-president of the "Terre Rendente" association for the city of Treviso. She was also a fiduciary of the rural housewives of San Michele di Quarto (in ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario (1922-1943), b. 424, fasc. 160434).

<sup>7</sup> The complete documentation that is stored at the Central State Archive concerns Countess De Reali. From these documents we may deduce that she personally knew Edda Ciano Mussolini and Rodolfo Graziani. See ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario (1922-1943), Sussidi, b. 2616, fasc. P38477; ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario (1922-1943), b. 424, fasc. 160434.

<sup>8</sup> In fact, Antonio De Reali (Venice, 24 July 1834 - Venice, 17 June 1887), Giuseppe's father, at the time of his nomination as Senator of the Kingdom of Italy (1876) turned out to be a hereditary noble; in particular, he received the title on 13 May 1855. See <https://bit.ly/2AQ75jc> (last accessed 19/06/2020).

<sup>9</sup> Erika Ferrando, *Le spedizioni africaniste di G. De Reali: dal terreno al museo*, Bachelor's Degree thesis, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, discussed in the academic year 2005-2006, supervisor Giovanni Dore, pp. 51-61.

<sup>10</sup> Giotto Dainelli, *Gli esploratori italiani in Africa*, vol. II, Turin, Utet, 1960, p. 639.

<sup>11</sup> G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, pp. 8-10. E. Ferrando, *Le spedizioni africaniste di G. De Reali*, pp. 51-61.

<sup>12</sup> G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, pp. 8-10.



Amelia Pigazzi,<sup>13</sup> who gathered her personal impressions in the diary *Alcuni appunti del mio viaggio al Congo* [Notes about my trip to Congo].<sup>14</sup> Although this is a rather bare text, it is nonetheless an important document for a reconstruction of the couple's approach to the journey and to their encounter with what we nowadays call "otherness".

While De Reali's relation to the African continent cannot be examined in detail due to the absence of direct accounts, his passion for the big game offers an important interpretative key. Indeed, while the Scramble for Africa was in full motion, hunting represented a popular recreational pursuit both in the aristocratic and in the scientific world, as well as a symbolic ritual and a metaphor for the colonial encounter itself.<sup>15</sup> An adventurous spirit and curiosity for the most remote angles of a continent many nations were in the process of dividing up played an equally important role.

Contrary to the traveller De Reali, Nello Puccioni was a scientist, anthropologist, anthropometrist, ethnologist, a scholar of prehistory and an intellectual.<sup>16</sup> For a long time, he collaborated with two important Florentine institutes: the Italian Society of Anthropology and Ethnology and the Italian Institute of Human Paleontology. He was elected a member of the former as early as 1902, after his enrolment in the School of Medicine and two years before obtaining his first degree in Physical and Natural Sciences at the University of Florence.<sup>17</sup> Later, he maintained his membership — according to the wishes of the founder, Paolo Mantegazza — taking up an assistant position at the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology, of which he was eventually elected director (from 1931 until his death).<sup>18</sup> Instead, he joined the Italian Institute of Human Paleontology when it was founded in 1912, and remained "one of its most distinguished members".<sup>19</sup>

Between the beginning of the twentieth century and the 1930s, Puccioni went on various expeditions in Italy and North-East Africa, which served the

<sup>13</sup> Amelia Pigazzi accompanied De Reali during five of the 12 expeditions. For more information see: letter from Amelia De Reali to the Venice Municipality, 16 August 1938, in Archivio Municipale di Venezia (hereafter AMV), Affari trattati dalle sezioni municipali, 1941-1947, IX istruzione pubblica, 11 musei, 8 Museo di Storia Naturale.

<sup>14</sup> Amelia De Reali, *Alcuni appunti del mio viaggio al Congo*, Treviso, Longo & Zoppelli, [1925].

<sup>15</sup> James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire. Photography and the visualization of the British Empire*, London, Reaktion Books, 1997, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> In 1904, in Florence, Nello Puccioni was one of the founding members of the journal "Hermes", along with Giuseppe Antonio Borgese, Luigi Dami, Maffio Maffii, Marcello Taddei and Nello Tarchiani.

<sup>17</sup> Francesco Surdich, *Puccioni, Nello*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 2016, vol. 85, p. 614; *Commemorazione di Nello Puccioni*, "Archivio per l'antropologia e la etnologia", 1937, vol. LXVII, p. 12.

<sup>18</sup> F. Surdich, *Puccioni, Nello*, pp. 614-616.

<sup>19</sup> *Commemorazione di Nello Puccioni*, p. 9.

purpose of determining “the major and minor varieties of man”.<sup>20</sup> More specifically, Puccioni visited the African continent four times in the course of three expeditions. The first trip dates back to 1924, when he participated — on behalf of the Italian Geographic Society — in Giuseppe Stefanini’s second expedition, aimed at exploring Somalia (the sultanates of Hobyo and of the Majeerteen); a second occasion presented itself when Puccioni was teaching Anthropology at the University of Pavia.<sup>21</sup> Thus, in the academic year 1928-1929 he travelled to Libya twice on invitation of the Cyrenaica government, on a mission aimed at studying local populations. His last trip did not take place until 1935; on behalf of the Accademia d’Italia and accompanied by Paolo Graziosi, Puccioni went on a mission that served to study the populations of the Giuba and the “Oltregiuba”.<sup>22</sup> While these expeditions produced scientific monographs and essays, the last expedition also resulted in the publication of a more didactic text: *Giuba e Oltregiuba. Itinerari della Missione della R. Accademia d’Italia 1935* [Giuba and Oltregiuba. Itineraries of the Mission of the R. Accademia d’Italia 1935].<sup>23</sup> No longer a purely anthropometric text, the latter is a travel diary with descriptions and comments that are typical of colonial literature. In doing so it contributed to an interpretation of the photographic documentation he had gathered and partially included in the text.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, throughout the years Puccioni was involved in the organisation of events such as the Third Colonial Congress,<sup>25</sup> and he was among the collaborators of the *Enciclopedia Italiana*, for which he wrote the entries on: *Berberia, Cirenaica, Darod, Deformazioni e mutilazioni, Dighil, Egitto, Etiopici, Gobahin, Hauia, Oltregiuba, Pittura del corpo, Poggiatesta*.<sup>26</sup> The entries

<sup>20</sup> *Commemorazione di Nello Puccioni*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> As of 1925, he taught the following courses at the University of Pavia: Anthropology and Human Anatomy (1925-1926), Anthropology, Ethnography and Paleontology (1926-1927 and 1927-1928), and Anthropology (1928-1929). From 1929 onwards he taught classes in Geography and Ethnography of the colonies and in Monographic illustration of the Italian colonies at the Istituto Superiore di Scienze Sociali “Cesare Alfieri”. In 1931 Aldobrandino Mochi’s death offered Puccioni a double opportunity: he took up the position of professor in Anthropology, Ethnology and Paleontology at the University of Florence, and he became the director of the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology.

<sup>22</sup> F. Surdich, *Puccioni, Nello*, p. 615.

<sup>23</sup> Nello Puccioni, *Giuba e Oltregiuba. Itinerari della Missione della R. Accademia d’Italia 1935-XIII (con fotografie dell’autore)*, Florence, Sansoni, 1937.

<sup>24</sup> Recently, scholars have rediscovered the unpublished accounts of the journeys of 1928 and 1929. See Beatrice Falcucci, Fausto Barbagli, *La missione in Cirenaica del 1928 nei diari inediti di Nello Puccioni*, “Archivio per l’antropologia e la etnologia”, 2017, vol. CXLVII, pp. 71-85. Not long ago the manuscripts have been published in Fausto Barbagli, Beatrice Falcucci (eds.), *Affrica all’acqua di rose. Le missioni in Cirenaica del 1928-1929 attraverso i ‘Diari’ di Nello Puccioni*, Florence, Edizioni Polistampa, 2019.

<sup>25</sup> *Commemorazione di Nello Puccioni*, p. 25. The administrative documents of the congress are held in the Historical Archive of the University of Florence, year 1936, b. 100.

<sup>26</sup> Giuseppe Vedovato, *Una vita operosa: Nello Puccioni*, Florence, Tipografia Enrico Ariani, 1937, p. 38.

*Berberia*, *Cirenaica* and *Egitto* deserve particular attention, as they were the outcome of a negotiation between Puccioni, Renato Biasutti, Gioacchino Sera and Giovanni Gentile that occurred between 1927 and 1928. They likely reflect a wider debate concerning the anthropological position of North African populations,<sup>27</sup> which should originally have been included in the entry on “Afro-Mediterraneans”. Sera and Biasutti suggested to change this title into “North Africans”, but their proposal was not approved by the Encyclopaedia’s director, who at that point preferred splitting them up.<sup>28</sup>

### The photographic collections: staging the African continent and its populations

De Reali and Puccioni documented their journeys across the African continent through numerous photographs and, occasionally, also through films, which are currently no longer traceable.<sup>29</sup> I have decided to focus my attention on the collections’ iconographic elements, at the expense of the zoological-ethnographic ones, for two reasons: the role photography played throughout the Italian colonial project and the force that is inherent in this medium when it comes down to representing stereotypes and mental categories.<sup>30</sup> Indeed, the

<sup>27</sup> See Barbara Sorgoni, *Parole e corpi. Antropologia, discorso giuridico e politiche sessuali interraziali nella colonia Eritrea (1890-1941)*, Naples, Liguori Editore, 1998; David Forgacs, *Margini d’Italia. L’esclusione sociale dall’Unità a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2014, pp. 59-140.

<sup>28</sup> See the Historical Archive of the Institute of the Italian Encyclopedia, 1925-1939, sezione II Attività scientifica e redazionale, 1925-1939, s. 5 Corrispondenza, lettera P, 1925-1938, fasc. 1110 Puccioni Nello, b. 27.

<sup>29</sup> Only written sources survive that testify to the use of the film medium for documentary purposes on behalf of the traveller and the anthropologist. In both cases, the sources regard travel diaries. For examples see: A. De Reali, *Alcuni appunti del mio viaggio al Congo*, pp. 13-14 e p. 30; N. Puccioni, *Giuba e Oltregiuba*, p. 46.

<sup>30</sup> With regard to the broad theme of photography in a colonial context see: Adolfo Mignemi (ed.), *Immagine coordinata per un impero. Etiopia 1936-1936*, Turin, Gruppo Editoriale Forma, 1983; Nicola Labanca, *Uno sguardo coloniale. Immagine e propaganda nelle fotografie e nelle illustrazioni del primo colonialismo italiano (1882-1896)*, “AFT. Rivista di storia e fotografia”, 1988, n. 8, pp. 43-61; Alessandro Triulzi, *Fotografia coloniale e storia dell’Africa*, “AFT. Rivista di storia e fotografia”, 1988, n. 8, pp. 39-42; Luigi Goglia (ed.), *Colonialismo e fotografia. Il caso italiano*, Messina, Sicania, 1989; Silvana Palma, *La fototeca dell’Istituto Italo-Africano: appunti di un lavoro di riordino*, “Africa”, 1989, n. 4, pp. 595-609; Christraud M. Geary, *Pratica fotografica in Africa*, “AFT. Rivista di storia e fotografia”, 1995, n. 21, pp. 38-51; Silvana Palma, *Le collezioni fotografiche della Società africana d’Italia e dell’ex Museo coloniale*, in Alessandro Triulzi (ed.), *Fotografia e storia dell’Africa* (International Conference Proceedings, Naples-Rome 9-11 settembre 1992), Naples, Istituto Universitario Orientale, 1995, pp. 199-212; James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire. Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire*, London, Reaktion Books, 1997; Enrico Castelli (ed.), *Immagini & colonie*, Montone, Centro di documentazione e Museo etnografico Tamburo Parlante, 1998; Silvana Palma, *L’Italia coloniale*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1999; Paolo Bertella Farnetti (ed.), *Sognando l’impero. Modena-Addis Abeba (1935-1941)*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2007; David Forgacs, *Margini d’Italia. L’esclusione sociale dall’Unità a oggi*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2015.

photographs did not only offer a means of recording phenomena or happenings, which becomes particularly evident when looking at De Reali and Puccioni's photographs; they were also considered true forms of communication.<sup>31</sup> Being more than a mere personal recollection, they testified to the fact that the pictured event-object had actually happened, and that the photographer had physically been in that specific location. If we take De Reali's collection into consideration, we notice how the traveller used the pictures as a support for his collection of hunting trophies, like memories in a private photo album being exposed to an audience in the family's villa, demonstrating the courage and the bravery of his endeavours. By contrast, Puccioni's photographs — before (partially) becoming the visual apparatus of the museum's ethnographic collections — had been stored within the institute's photographic archive, as a further proof of his desire to share them with academic and national communities.

If, throughout the whole expansionist project, the photographs helped to maintain the coloniser's power from a propaganda point of view, at the same time they were part of a process in which the specific power relations of the colonial encounter were also represented and enacted in a visual form. This was a power that was not always exercised in a conscious way, but which nevertheless became part of the photographic image,<sup>32</sup> as in the case of the Venetian traveller. Thus, while he never seems to have openly expressed a desire to dominate the places and the people he met, for whom he rather showed fascination and curiosity, the unequal position that is intrinsic in the relation between Europeans and Africans constantly emerges in his pictures, as if it was impossible not to take into account the distance that separates a world one imagines to be highly civilised, and one considered primitive. However, with regard to the inventories, Giuseppe De Reali seems never to have documented the contents of his photographs in any way. He likely felt that the pictures were self-explanatory when placed alongside his trophy collection: arguably the photographs served as captions for the big game hunting trophies, the latter being the real protagonists of his collection.<sup>33</sup> In fact, in the safari the pictures' function was not exclusively linked to taxidermy,<sup>34</sup> but also served as a visual

<sup>31</sup> See D. Forgacs, *Margini d'Italia*, p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> See D. Forgacs, *Margini d'Italia*, pp. 139-140.

<sup>33</sup> Although De Reali's pictures did not originally contain any captions, today the photographs have been made into an inventory and identified using wordings that seek to compensate for the lack of information. It is assumed that Giampaolo Rallo wrote these short captions in the 1980s and 1990s, in occasion of the research that resulted in the following text: G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*. Given that these are not the original captions, I will mark them in roman in order to distinguish them from Puccioni's captions (written, instead, at the time and probably by the photographer himself), which will be marked in italic, and from my own captions, which will be placed in between square brackets.

<sup>34</sup> At the time, the main reference text on the theme of the big game was Rowland Ward's *Records of big game with their distribution, characteristics, dimensions, weights and horn & tusk measurements*, London, Ward, 1910, of which De Reali owned a copy (donated to

confirmation of the “heroic endeavours” that allowed travellers such as De Reali to gain notoriety and fame.<sup>35</sup> Such confirmation necessarily occurred through the hunter’s self-representation next to the dead prey or the conquered trophies.<sup>36</sup> Within this context, Amelia Pigazzi had repeatedly adopted a similar — “typically” virile and masculine — position, evidence of the fact that De Reali’s wife had a certain weight in the African journeys (fig. 1).

*Fig. 1 — The Count and Countess De Reali in proximity of a shot equine or roan antelope (Hippotragus equinus), in Natural History Museum of Venice (hereafter MSNVE), Giuseppe De Reali Collection, photographic archive, AF 32*



If De Reali’s journeys were nurtured by a hedonistic interest in capturing an unviolated, primitive and wild Africa, which he himself — as a “civilised”

the Natural History Museum). Ward considered photography an essential part of the taxidermic process as it allowed to conserve evidence of the specimen before it deteriorated. In this regard, we must also mention the manual *Istruzioni per lo studio della colonia Eritrea*, published in 1907 by the Society of Geographic and Colonial Studies and by the Italian Society of Anthropology and Ethnology (the first of its kind to appear in Italy). If we may take for granted that Puccioni was acquainted with this text, which was intended specifically for colonial officials (after all, the scholar had been a member of the Italian Society of Anthropology and Ethnology ever since 1902), the same cannot be said for De Reali in the absence of contemporary sources that could prove this.

<sup>35</sup> See S. Palma, *L'Italia coloniale*, p. 33.

<sup>36</sup> J.R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, p. 99.

European — had managed to domesticate, Puccioni's expeditions were simply aimed at obtaining knowledge, exercising control over and supervising the new colonial possessions. What mainly distinguishes the two collections is, then, the different purposes of the pictures. If we focus on the ethno-anthropological pictures, the purpose might be described in terms of what Francesco Faeta has dubbed the juxtaposition of an anthropological *studium* and *otium*: the difference between a systematic anthropological photography and an occasional, non-professional one.<sup>37</sup> In fact, on one side we have Puccioni's photographed subjects, selected on the basis of a predominantly scientific interest with the aim of studying their physical characteristics and cultural traditions (fig. 2); on the other, we have the pictures shot by De Reali, who moved about more freely, with a pictorial and aestheticising intention, which resulted in static and controlled framings (fig. 3).

*Fig. 2 — Nello Puccioni, Tenda da inverno a Derna, 1928-1929, Libya, in Museum of anthropology and ethnology in Florence (hereafter MAEFI), photographic archive, cart. XVI (2342-2519), n. 2399*



<sup>37</sup> Francesco Faeta, *L'immagine e il senso. Appunti sull'uso della fotografia in etnografia e antropologia*, in Francesco Faeta, *Fotografi e fotografie. Uno sguardo antropologico*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2006, pp. 66-67.

Fig. 3 — Giuseppe De Reali, *Group of natives: women with armed men nearby, in MSNVE, Giuseppe De Reali Collection, photographic archive, AF 38*



In both collections, the “predatory” aspect of the photographic medium manifests itself in a tangible and aggressive way,<sup>38</sup> highly characteristic of contexts such as the colonial one.<sup>39</sup> If we examine De Reali’s collection, the camera — about to shoot a picture — seems to become a prefiguration of and a metaphor for the firearm.<sup>40</sup> In this context, it seems as if even the natives immortalised by the traveller undergo a “taxidermic” treatment, forced as they are to take up rigid postures in the presence of members of the expedition group. This type of iconography could refer to what James R. Ryan has described in the context of British imperialism, where natives were represented as “form[s] of wildlife”: as an integral part of the natural world, that is, equal to the animals (figs. 4 and 5).<sup>41</sup>

<sup>38</sup> See Susan Sontag, *Sulla fotografia. Realtà e immagine nella nostra società*, Turin, Einaudi, 2004, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Maria Francesca Piredda, *Hic sunt leones. Fotografia missionaria e immaginario esotico: l’incontro con l’Altrove*, in Enrico Menduni, Lorenzo Marmo (eds.), *Fotografia e culture visuali del XXI secolo*, Rome, RomaTre-Press, 2018, pp. 256-257.

<sup>40</sup> See S. Sontag, *Sulla fotografia*, p. 13.

<sup>41</sup> J.R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, p. 139.

*Fig. 4 — Giuseppe De Reali, The hunting companion Dionisio in between two elephant paws (Loxodonta africana) held up by natives, in MSNVE, Giuseppe De Reali Collection, photographic archive, AF 39*



*Fig. 5 — Giuseppe De Reali, Shot down giraffe (Giraffa camelopardalis) surrounded by some natives, in MSNVE, Giuseppe De Reali Collection, photographic archive, AF 4*



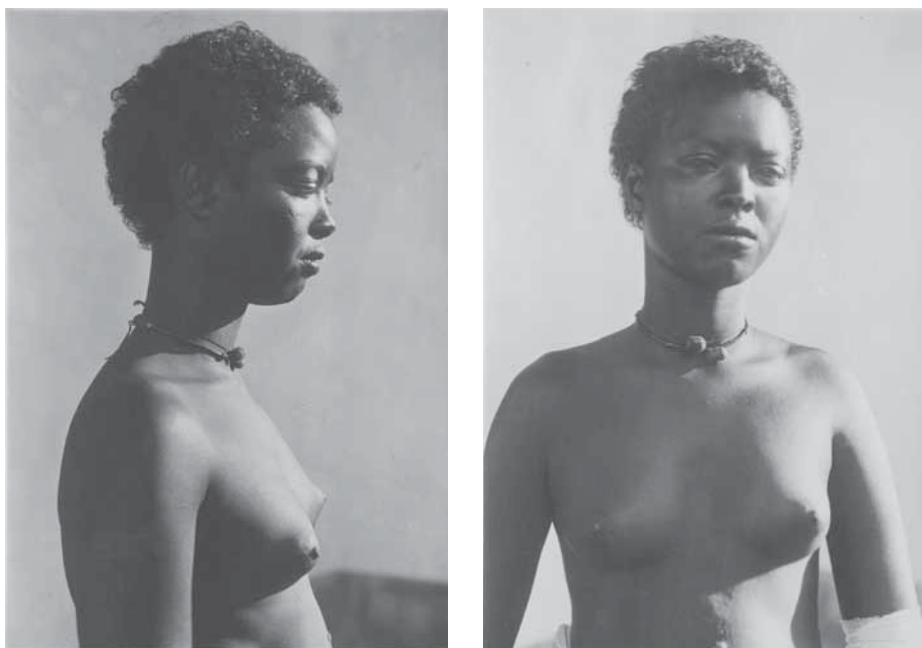
With regard to Puccioni's pictures, while the technique of the anthropometric photograph — an iconographic typology that constitutes the centre of the collection — itself carries with it a violent charge, one prescribed by the imposed posture and the obligation to have one's picture taken, the photographs testify to an even greater aggressiveness when the depicted subjects are women; their nudity was very likely forced upon them, especially in predominantly Muslim areas (figs. 6 and 7).

Nevertheless, the “predatory” aspect of photography resides not only in the way of posing the subjects, which was fundamental in the anthropometric genre and for those like De Reali who shot pictures using glass panes;<sup>42</sup> it also lies in the actual ethnographic *mise en scène*. Although part of the iconographic corpus of Puccioni's collection is composed of photographic sequences that suggest a more impromptu approach, the anthro-

<sup>42</sup> With regard to the use of glass panes, only some of the positives can be identified as prints produced by negatives of this type. Although the Natural History Museum does not hold any original negatives, there are 48 printed photographs drawn in 1997 from glass panes considered to be “original”, which are nowadays in the custody of the De Reali heirs.



Figs. 6 and 7 — Nello Puccioni, Fai Ibrahim, [woman], Somala Hauia, Abgal (card n. 39), 1924, Somalia, in MAEFI, photographic archive, cart. XV (2208-2341), n. 2269-2270



polologist could not refrain from using this method in order to document certain cultural practices. For example, if we consider the consecutive images of a singing and dancing ritual of “Elai” and “Gobauin”, narrated and depicted in the anthropologist’s diary,<sup>43</sup> it turns out that we are dealing with an actual choreography Puccioni himself had commissioned from the Resident Michele Pirone for the purpose of his documentation (figs. 8 and 9).<sup>44</sup> In sum, the ethnographic *mise en scène* was a practice that required the collaboration of photographic subjects, be it a forced collaboration or one obtained via some form of negotiation with the subject.<sup>45</sup>

It is only through certain secondary or casually captured, involuntary — thanks to Roland Barthes’ *punctum* — elements in the photographs that the document’s examination can be opened up to new interpretations.<sup>46</sup> Let us take the anthropologist Puccioni’s picture of the Soluch mosque in Libya as

<sup>43</sup> N. Puccioni, *Giuba e Oltregiuba*, p. 46.

<sup>44</sup> N. Puccioni, *Giuba e Oltregiuba*, p. 46.

<sup>45</sup> C.M. Geary, *Pratica fotografica in Africa*, pp. 35-40.

<sup>46</sup> Roland Barthes, *La camera chiara. Note sulla fotografia*, Turin, Einaudi, 2003, pp. 27-29 and p. 43.

*Figs. 8 and 9 — Nello Puccioni, Ischia Baidoa: l'orchestra della fantasia Elai, 1935, Somalia, in MAEFI, photographic archive, cart. XVI (2342-2519), n. 2426-2427*



Fig. 10 — Nello Puccioni, Moschea di Soluch, 1928-1929, Libya, in MAEFI, photographic archive, cart. XVI (2342-2519), n. 2392



an example (fig. 10). Although he probably just wanted to show the mosque, choosing a perspective that would exclude any disturbing elements, we may in fact see how the shadow at the bottom of the picture of an element placed behind the photographer (presumably a lattice tower) — not to mention the presence, at the horizon, of a small wooden tower of an Italian fortification<sup>47</sup> — allow the viewer to see the small city of Soluch for what it really was: not so much a place outside of history symbolised by an abandoned building, but an important centre for the Cyrenaica government, namely the headquarters of a prison camp for Libyans where, some years later, Omar al-Mukhtar would have been hanged.<sup>48</sup> Similarly, thanks to certain details in the background that should have remained neutral, and bandages worn by the depicted subjects, one may

<sup>47</sup> Istituto Nazionale Luce, *Cirenaica. Parte prima. La capitale della colonia e il sud bengasino. Parte seconda. Il Gebel Akdar (il monte verde). Parte terza. Verso Porto Bardia. Parte quarta. Autocolonna in cammino nel deserto*, 1930, M013505, available at: <https://goo.gl/HrIENC> (last accessed 10/05/2020). In the video the fortification is described as follows: “The small fort of Soluk that, in the shadow of the Italian national flag, protects and overlooks thousands of Bedouins with their very rich weaponry”.

<sup>48</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Oltremare. Storia dell'espansione coloniale italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2002, p. 175.

sense that Puccioni's anthropometric photographs were obtained in situations of forced "residence": hospitals, police stations and prisons (figs. 6 and 7).<sup>49</sup>

Finally, an analysis of these photographic collections demonstrates that the recurrent iconographic themes are once again those of the "savage", the colonial subject, the "Black Venus", big game hunting, the "primitive" jungle, the "racial types", poverty and nudity — all themes that were already widespread at the end of the nineteenth century and which were reinforced in subsequent decades. This observation raises a further issue: the construction of the "other" that was put in play during the Italian expansionist phase — including through an iconographic production — also revealed to be a construction of the "I" that was functional to the mobilisation of society and the process of consolidating a national identity. This was exemplified by the overall approximate representation of people, environments, habits and customs, which gave rise not so much to an actual process of getting to know the African continent, but to an iconisation of Africa itself.<sup>50</sup>

### **From private to public collections: re-significations, persistences, representations**

As in other national contexts, in Italy museums and exhibitions played a fundamental role in the process of teaching colonial history and gaining consensus on the various stages of the imperialist experience.<sup>51</sup> By conveying myths and images that evoked hopes and dreams, they revealed to be an important means of consolidating national identity.<sup>52</sup> In different ways, De Reali and Puccioni's collections, too, contributed to this process.

Throughout his journeys, the count had amassed hunting trophies, relics and photographs that were exhibited in what De Reali and his wife defined an "African museum",<sup>53</sup> before they ended up in the Museum of Natural History. This colonial *wunderkammer* was set up in the family's villa in Dosson di Casier (Treviso), which also hosted part of the archaeological finds from the

<sup>49</sup> Puccioni himself explained the context of the photographs in Nello Puccioni, *Antropologia e etnografia delle genti della Somalia*, vol. I, *Antropometria*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1931, p. 1.

<sup>50</sup> Gianluca Gabrielli, *L'Africa in giardino*, in Gianluca Gabrielli (ed.), *L'Africa in giardino. Appunti sulla costruzione dell'immaginario coloniale*, suppl. "IBC. Informazioni, Commenti Inchieste sui Beni Culturali", 1998, n. 4, pp. 25-60.

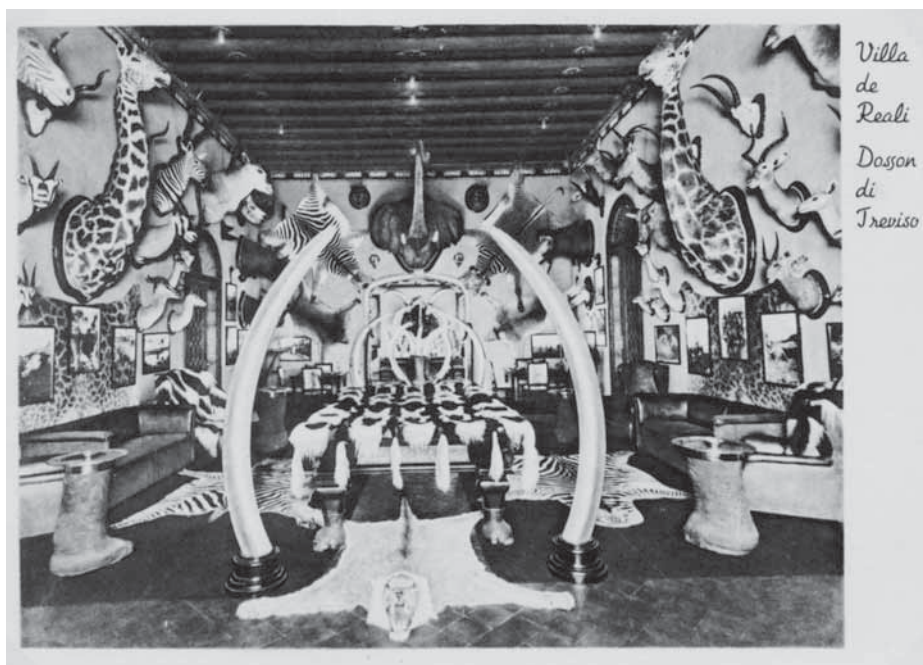
<sup>51</sup> See Nicola Labanca, *Introduzione*, in Nicola Labanca (ed.), *L'Africa in vetrina. Storie di musei e di esposizioni coloniali in Italia*, Paese (TV), Pagus Edizioni, 1992, pp. 3-4.

<sup>52</sup> Nicola Labanca, *Introduzione*, p. 1.

<sup>53</sup> The use of this expression is quite common in the documents stored in: ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario (1922-1943), b. 424, fasc. 160434; AMV, Affari trattati dalle sezioni municipali, 1941-1947, IX istruzione pubblica, 11 musei, 8 Museo di Storia Naturale; AMV, Affari trattati dalle sezioni municipali, 1940-1941, IX istruzione pubblica, 4 argomenti vari — istruzione elementare, 4 edifici scolastici — mobiliare e materiale scolastico.

excavation works in their San Michele di Quarto estate (Altino).<sup>54</sup> The result was a situation that we could call exhibitory, and a good example of the strong link between archaeology, colonialism and practices of identity construction, which developed from the end of the nineteenth century to the 1930s. Various elements created a whole — nowadays close to what we call kitsch, but representative of the taste of the time — in which carpets, animal skin rugs and trophies on the walls were juxtaposed to elephant paws used as coffee tables. Even today, this rather clear image of the Italian colonialist-imperialist imaginary emerges from an illustrated postcard,<sup>55</sup> which proves that the De Realis had some awareness of their possessions, since the postcard could be considered an act of self-promotion too (fig. 11).

*Fig. 11 — Garatti, Villa De Reali. Dosson di Treviso, [1930s], in MSNVE, Giuseppe De Reali Collection, diapositive-photographic archive (early twentieth century-1998), two De Reali's original postcards about one of the African Rooms in Villa De Reali at Dosson di Casier*



<sup>54</sup> G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, p. 8; for a detailed examination of the archaeological finds of the De Reali's collection see: Sara Ganzaroli, *La collezione de Reali. Genesi e sviluppi*, Master's Degree thesis, Università Ca' Foscari Venezia, discussed in the academic year 2011-2012, supervisor Giovannella Cresci Marrone.

<sup>55</sup> It is impossible to accurately date this postcard, as the series it was part of. We may nevertheless assume that it dates back to the early 1930s given the sequence of the images in ACS, *Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario (1922-1943)*, b. 424, fasc. 160434.

Amelia Pigazzi seems to have regularly used the postcards contained in this series.<sup>56</sup> She also organised the exhibition at the Luna Hotel (Venice) in 1935, likely the first exhibition to have entirely been dedicated to the collection.<sup>57</sup> After her husband's death, the countess again had to assure that the collection would be preserved in its entirety within the villa. She thus started a procedure to have the villa and the surrounding park acknowledged as a "national monument", motivated by the fact that they contained African memorabilia and Roman archaeological finds. Although Pigazzi even made an appeal to the Duce in person,<sup>58</sup> no traces on the continuation of the procedure remain.

News about the donation to the Civic Museum of Natural History first emerged in 1937,<sup>59</sup> whereas the Venice Municipality officially accepted the collection on 9 August 1938.<sup>60</sup> Another year passed before the new De Reali rooms would be inaugurated; the opening ceremony was held on 20 July 1939, in the presence of the Duke and Duchess of Genoa, Senator Davide Giordano, Director Michelangelo Minio and other local authorities, among whom Count Volpi and the Podestà Giovanni Marcello. During the transfer, the collec-

<sup>56</sup> See five original postcards from one of the African Rooms in Villa De Reali at Dosson di Casier in ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario (1922-1943), b. 424, fasc. 160434; two original postcards of one of African Rooms in Villa De Reali in Natural History Museum of Venice (hereafter MSNVE), Giuseppe De Reali Collection, diapositive-photographic archive (early twentieth century-1998).

<sup>57</sup> On the exhibition see *Trofei di caccie africane esposti all'Albergo Luna*, "Il Gazzettino di Venezia", 21 febbraio 1935, n. 45, p. 3; *Lodierna inaugurazione della Mostra dei Cimeli Africani*, "Il Gazzettino di Venezia", 26 febbraio 1935, n. 49, p. 3; *La mostra africana del co. Reali pro Sinite Parvulos*, "Il Gazzettino di Venezia", 27 febbraio 1935, n. 50, p. 7; *La mostra benefica del co. De Reali*, "Il Gazzettino di Venezia", 7 marzo 1935, n. 57, p. 3; *Echi della Mostra pro "Sinite parvulos"*, "Il Gazzettino di Venezia", 9 marzo 1935, n. 59, p. 4. The exhibition was also visited by officials of the Istituto Luce, who subsequently produced a *Giornale Luce*: Istituto Nazionale Luce, *Giornale Luce B/B0641, La mostra di trofei di caccia grossa delle colonie dell'Africa*, Venice, 13/03/1935, available at: <https://goo.gl/hp3rKz> (last accessed 10/05/2020).

<sup>58</sup> Correspondence between Amelia De Reali and Osvaldo Sebastiani (Mussolini's secretary), July-August 1937, in ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario 1922-1943, b. 424, fasc. 160434. Although neither the villa nor the park has been acknowledged as a single "national monument", along with relics and finds that they contained, over ten archaeological objects were declared protected cultural heritage by the Italian State on 31 July 1937, the year the correspondence between the countess and Sebastiani took place and news was first released about the donation of the African collection to the Natural History Museum of Venice. On this matter see: S. Ganzaroli, *La collezione de Reali*, pp. 35-49.

<sup>59</sup> We have little information about the dynamics that led to the collection's inclusion in the Venetian museum's patrimony, but it appears to have been the count's personal desire. See AMV, Affari trattati dalle sezioni municipali, 1941-1947, IX istruzione pubblica, 11 musei, 8 Museo di storia naturale; ACS, Segreteria particolare del Duce, Carteggio ordinario 1922-1943, b. 424, fasc. 160434; G. Rallo, *La raccolta africana del Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, pp. 18-22.

<sup>60</sup> Atto podestarile n. 11048, *Donazione alla città di Venezia di una collezione di cimeli africani del defunto Conte Giuseppe De Reali*, in AMV, Atti Podestarili, 1939, trim. 3.

tion “in which Africa truly spoke” was also preserved in terms of how it had been set up in the first place.<sup>61</sup> This is demonstrated by a number of pictures the Fiorentini studio produced in 1941, on behalf of the museum director who responded to the requests of “L’Azione Coloniale”; the latter wanted to include the photographs in an article about the collection.<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, as the collection was transferred from the villa to the museum, the home-museum aspect that had characterised the De Reali residence was — perhaps inevitably — lost. Indeed, the villa’s rooms came across as real rooms that could be inhabited, where the objects and memorabilia often emerged in a crossover of “art works” and home furnishings. As often happens when objects are museumised, their functional aspect had been lost; they were now exhibited according to formal and aesthetical — or at the most naturalistic — characteristics, given that in most cases the objects were of animal origin. It is interesting to note how during this transfer the number of photographs was reduced: the new set-up mainly focused on safari scenes and hunting activities, whereas natives were depicted as “primitive warriors”, armed with spears and shields. As a whole, the exhibition contributed to an exotic and savage image of Africa, as such domesticated not only physically but also culturally. The individuals De Reali had immortalised were incorporated in an exhibition itinerary that focused on the origin and evolution of life, on one side, and on naturalistic aspects, on the other. In the visitors’ eyes, they could therefore be interpreted in two ways: both their supposed primitiveness was highlighted, and they were juxtaposed to a more natural than civilised world. This representation persisted throughout the second post-war period, as the set-up essentially remained unchanged, as demonstrated by the pictures taken for conservation and archival purposes in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s.<sup>63</sup>

In the early 2000s a process was started to renew the exhibition itinerary, which was terminated around 2010. This intervention led to an overall upgrade of the institute from a museological and museographic point of view; in this recent reorganisation, the De Reali rooms’ original set-up was not only preserved, but even rearranged with the aim of retrieving an exhibitivite sense that was even closer to the original home-museum of Dosson than the old set-up. Notwithstanding the collection’s concise contextualisation within the broad history of expeditions, big game hunting and colonialism, the iconographic apparatus nevertheless remains nothing more than an illustrative

<sup>61</sup> *I Duchi di Genova all’inaugurazione della “Raccolta africana De Reali”*, “Il Gazzettino di Venezia”, 21 luglio 1939, n. 172, p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Correspondence between Marco Pomilio (for “L’Azione Coloniale”), Michelangelo Minio and the Podestà of Venice, October-December 1941, in AMV, Affari trattati dalle sezioni municipali, 1941-1947, IX istruzione pubblica, 11 musei, 8 Museo di Storia Naturale.

<sup>63</sup> In particular, the pictures date back to the 1970s, to 25 March 1980 and to 1995, see MSNVE, Giuseppe De Reali Collection, diapositive-photographic archive (early twentieth century-1998).

support for the hunting trophies. Once again, the photographed subjects — probably chosen, for the occasion, on the basis of the horizontal shape of the print — appear decontextualised, conveying messages and meanings of colonial imprint that we cannot even fully deconstruct, as they are not sufficiently explicit.

With regard to the Puccioni collection, the items he had collected during the expeditions (i.e. anthropometric records, ethnographic objects, photographs and plaster face casts)<sup>64</sup> were directly incorporated into the exhibition itinerary and the museum's archive, that is, without first being exhibited elsewhere. Consequently, his collection went through a very different process than De Reali's; from an exhibition point of view, the anthropologist's collection — an integral part of the collections that were ascribable to the diverse expeditions — was not exhibited in a unified manner, but with single elements being displayed according to their geographical provenance.

When Puccioni took up the role of director, at the time of the museum's rearrangement in its current location (Palazzo Nonfinito), he decided that it was essential — for better communication purposes — to improve the "collections' demonstrative role" with the help of an iconographic apparatus,<sup>65</sup> following in his predecessor Aldobrandino Mochi's footsteps. At present we cannot confirm this intervention if not through a contemporary text by Stefanini,<sup>66</sup> even if recent research has managed to prove the production — between 1930 and 1932 — of "small didactic frames" (composed of a photographic image, a geographic map and a text); the latter served to identify the "peoples of the Earth" in — what scholars consider — a racist way.<sup>67</sup> The exhibition itinerary was inaugurated in 1932 in the presence of Vittorio Emanuele III, who was received by the University Dean Bindo De Vecchi and accompanied into the rooms by Nello Puccioni and Lidio Cipriani. The itinerary continued to be grounded in a Darwinian framework already present during the period of Mantegazza, who had fitted the world populations in an

<sup>64</sup> In his Somalia travel diary of 1935, Puccioni moreover narrates how in 1924, on return from his first mission, he had brought back with him a "pure" Somalian: Nur Ali. The museum's archive holds at least four photographs of Nur Ali: n. 2309-2310 e 2323-2324 in Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology of Florence (hereafter MAEFI), photographic archive, cart. XV (2208-2341). N. Puccioni, *Giuba e Oltregiuba*, p. 15.

<sup>65</sup> Giuseppe Stefanini, *In memoria di Nello Puccioni*, for the Library of the Museum of Anthropology, Florence, n. 15, p. 219 cited in Mariangela Landi, Jacopo Moggi Cecchi, *L'antropologia coloniale: "dai popoli del mondo all'uomo del fascismo"*. *Nello Puccioni, Lidio Cipriani*, in Jacopo Moggi Cecchi, Roscoe Stanyon (eds.), *Il Museo di storia naturale dell'Università degli studi di Firenze*, vol. V, *Le collezioni antropologiche ed etnologiche*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2014, p. 24.

<sup>66</sup> G. Stefanini, *In memoria di Nello Puccioni*, p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> Francesca Bigioni, Emanuele Paggetti, *Umanità sotto vetro: i quadretti esplicativi del Museo di antropologia di Firenze*, "Museologia scientifica", new series, 2018, n. 12, pp. 33-41.



evolutionary sequence.<sup>68</sup> The oldest documentation that I could retrieve, which dates back to the second post-war period,<sup>69</sup> shows how this rearrangement — which remained unchanged also in the wake of the museum's temporary closure due to the Second World War — was based on the same museological and museographic criteria of the original museum, and how the many elements contained in the collection — including photographs — served as an instrument to convey a very precise image of Africa, along with elements from other Florentine collections.

The museum's reopening in the 1950s did not lead to any changes in the exhibition itinerary, which still began in the African rooms; in the 1930s, this implied a celebration of the (more or less recent) colonial conquests.<sup>70</sup> Hence, not only had the subdivision of the permanent collection in geographic areas remained the same throughout the decades, and in spite of the end of Fascism; the very arrangement of the objects within the showcases had also not changed. According to the museum organisation, firstly, objects had to be divided per type to highlight the fact that “primitive” populations adopted “backward” solutions for everyday problems; secondly, within each typology, the objects were displayed according to their form, and once again in an evolutionary perspective — from the simplest to the most complex form.<sup>71</sup> The museum itinerary proposed a static vision of each ethnic group — or “race” — that was presented to the audience in its “purest” form, through a collection of objects, artefacts and photographs, thus creating a direct link between the evolutionary level of the material culture, the “race” of belonging and the somatic traits that mark each group. For example, next to the objects of the section on Somalia, which had mainly been collected during the expeditions of Stefanini-Paoli (1913), Stefanini-Puccioni (1924) and Puccioni-Graziosi (1935),<sup>72</sup> the few pictures that were exhibited — taken by the anthropologist and probably also framed by the latter, except for one case that is difficult to attribute, whose iconography recalls that of a commercial postcard — not only depicted the subjects in a characterising way, but ended up conveying an even more generalising and objectifying aspect the moment they were juxtaposed to objects that typified a specific culture (figs. 12, 13 and 14).

<sup>68</sup> Monica Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di storia naturale di Firenze: storia e prospettive museologiche e museografiche*, “Museologia scientifica”, new series, 2014, n. 8, pp. 58-59.

<sup>69</sup> *Somalia. Sala XI*, 8 February 1973, Florence, in MAEFI, photographic archive.

<sup>70</sup> M. Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di storia naturale di Firenze*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>71</sup> M. Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di Storia Naturale di Firenze*, p. 58.

<sup>72</sup> The ethnographic collections concerning Somalia nowadays also contain some elements taken from naturalistic expeditions conducted by the University of Florence, with the CNR's support from 1959 onwards. Monica Zavattaro, *Collezioni Somalia*, in Jacopo Moggi Cecchi, Roscoe Stanyon (eds.), *Il Museo di storia naturale dell'Università degli studi di Firenze*, vol. V, *Le collezioni antropologiche ed etnologiche*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2014, pp. 68-71.

Figs. 12, 13 and 14: [Small illustrative frames], [1930s], section Somalia, MAEFI. The original pictures that have been identified correspond to: fig. 12: Nello Puccioni, Cadigia Hussein Mohamed, [woman], 20 years old, Dighil Dabarre group (card n. 37), 1935, Somalia, in MAEFI, photographic archive, cart. XIII (1759-1952), n. 1840; fig. 13: Nello Puccioni, Ischia Baidoa. Gemia Muctar della tariqa Salika. Tre mogli dei santoni, 1935, Somalia, in MAEFI, photographic archive, cart. XVI (2342-2519), n. 2431.



*Pendagli per l'acconciatura della testa  
di una donna del gruppo DIGHIL =*



*Le mogli dei Santoni di Baidoa  
usano portare sotto la futa un  
giacchetto e coprirsi le gambe  
con gambali di tela*



*Acconciatura della testa  
delle donne*

*—SOMALIA—*

Along with the photographs, the plaster facial casts also played an important role. Today, this collection contains over 600 samples, thanks in part to the anthropologist's efforts.<sup>73</sup> The casts granted a tangible concreteness to the photographs, representing a form of "heightened reality" of the exhibited images and helping to re-enforce their apparent veracity and scientific reliability.

At present, the section on Somalia hosts the same images as during the second post-war period, despite the fact that the exhibition was partially changed in 2003, and a larger print of the fourth photograph — originally included in the display cabinets — now accompanies the exhibition dedicated to Somalia.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, recent changes coincided with a revision of the exhibition itinerary. Indeed, it was not until the early 2000s that the latter was inverted; it now started with the rooms dedicated to the Medicean collections and to the objects of the "New World"; in sum, the itinerary no longer opened with the rooms that celebrated Italian colonialism.<sup>75</sup> In the same way, the "small didactic frames" of the fascist period — which were when Puccioni was the museum's director — were removed only in 2016.<sup>76</sup> As demonstrated by the inertia that characterises it, for a long time the Florentine museum remained outside of the international debate, which has involved the main European and American ethnographic museum institutes ever since the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>77</sup> Furthermore, throughout the second half of the twentieth century, the excuse of having to respect an alleged loyalty to the museum's "historical memory" prevented the exhibition from undergoing any changes; instead, it continued to reflect a taxonomic-comparative arrangement. In reality, though, what was considered a "historical" exhibition was not, and still is not, "original" in that the exhibition rooms have partially been changed and adjusted by the museum operators throughout the decades.<sup>78</sup>

Notwithstanding the partial, recent attempts at rearranging the exhibition, then, the Florentine institute's museum itinerary continues to offer a static vision of those identities that have changed from "races" to "cultures", conveying a self-referential image wherein geographic provenance, material culture and somatic traits are strongly linked. In other words, an exhibition that will probably continue to nurture the creation of stereotypes, at least until the enactment of a "radical revision".<sup>79</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Jacopo Moggi Cecchi, *Le collezioni antropologiche*, in Jacopo Moggi Cecchi, Roscoe Stanyon (eds.), *Il Museo di storia naturale dell'Università degli studi di Firenze*, vol. V, *Le collezioni antropologiche ed etnologiche*, Florence, Firenze University Press, 2014, pp. 192-193.

<sup>74</sup> The photograph in question is: Nello Puccioni, *Margherita: Musciungullo coi crepitacoli*, 1935, Somalia, in MAEFI, photographic archive, cart. XVI (2342-2519), n. 2417.

<sup>75</sup> M. Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di storia naturale di Firenze*, p. 60.

<sup>76</sup> F. Bigioni, E. Paggetti, *Umanità sotto vetro*, p. 34.

<sup>77</sup> M. Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di storia naturale di Firenze*, p. 56.

<sup>78</sup> M. Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di storia naturale di Firenze*, p. 59.

<sup>79</sup> M. Zavattaro, *Le collezioni etnografiche del Museo di storia naturale di Firenze*, p. 64.

## Conclusion

In the decades ranging from the end of the nineteenth century to 1937, Giuseppe De Reali and Nello Puccioni developed — albeit with different backgrounds — analogous iconographic themes and applied similar representational techniques that refer to the most widespread typologies of colonial photography *tout court*. These can be summarised in the images of Africa as a “virgin land”, of the native “warrior”, and of the atavistic “primitiveness” of African populations. While the traveller De Reali distinguished himself through a pronounced pictorialism and a strong aesthetical sense that generally translated itself in celebrative images of his “heroic” endeavours, Nello Puccioni instead produced photographs that seemed more extemporaneous (with the exception of the anthropometric pictures), driven by the intention to document and classify the populations of North-East Africa.

Following different paths in the process of collecting, organising and classifying the photographs, during the first 30 years of the twentieth century, the two collections were thus set up and exhibited in the Venetian museum and the Florentine institute in conjunction with the widespread retrieval of pre-existing museum collections and with the creation of new, temporary exhibitions by the fascist regime, as part of a detailed propaganda agenda aimed at creating a colonial visual imaginary capable of involving the crowds in the imperialist experience.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, especially in the years of the regime’s racist turn, to exhibit “otherness” meant advancing a specific idea of fascist “Italianness” that could also be distinguished and defined according to its racial traits.

More than 80 years on, the exhibition choices that I have described in this essay — which have survived the colonial project, its demise after the fall of Fascism and, subsequently, the loss of the colonies — are therefore a visible testimony of the original museographic and museological solutions, while only partially calling into question the concepts that had produced them. After all, if we look at the national context, the fall of the Empire and the subsequent beginning of the Republican phase were not accompanied by a critical re-elaboration of the Italian experience abroad. Already at the end of the Second World War, new (post)colonial aspirations had started to gain space drawing on the theme of labour, so as to reclaim Italy’s right to return to Africa.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, even if the Somalian case was the only one to have witnessed an actual continuity at the political, administrative and cultural level, the relations between Republican Italy and the former colonies were prolonged for quite

<sup>80</sup> See Adolfo Mignemi, *Mostre e musei coloniali*, in Adolfo Mignemi (ed.), *Immagine coordinata per un impero. Etiopia 1936-1936*, Turin, Gruppo editoriale Forma, 1983, pp. 183-187.

<sup>81</sup> Massimo Zaccaria, *Rimuovere o riscrivere il colonialismo? Il lavoro degli italiani in Africa*, in Antonio M. Morone (ed.), *La fine del colonialismo italiano. Politica, società e memorie*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2018, p. 87.

some time — they had not even ended by 1960.<sup>82</sup> Indeed, Africa “never disappeared from the Italians’ mental horizon”,<sup>83</sup> which allowed the colonial-type imaginary to continue being transmitted and spread constantly.<sup>84</sup> The images gathered by Puccioni and De Reali — which continued to occupy just about the whole original positions without ever being seriously called into question — offer a representative example of this long-term dynamic.

If, in other European states, the expansionist experience found an institutional expression in large museum institutes whose history runs well into the present,<sup>85</sup> in a national context like that of Italy — where no museum played a comparable role (think of the Colonial Museum of Rome, the first to earn a similar definition, which was closed a year after the Empire was proclaimed to open again only in 1947, then permanently closed in 1971)<sup>86</sup> — it therefore becomes essential to consider, from a broader perspective, the dozens of collections currently scattered across the peninsula.<sup>87</sup> The photographic collections of the two protagonists therefore come to represent the still visible traces and persistent vehicles of a (not so distant) colonial past, and of the “racial” inferiorisation Italy has not yet come to terms with. While taking into due consideration the legal-bureaucratic complexity that cultural assets are subjected to in Italy, the various adaptations made in recent decades remain insufficient to undermine and deconstruct the meanings these collections carry with them. Furthermore, the lack of important interventions highlights the fact that the awareness of the Italian colonial history and the need to come to terms with it — despite its temporal closeness to and repercussions in the present — still are not considered a priority within public debates. In other words, colonialism continues to represent, in many ways, an unresolved issue in Italian collective memory.

<sup>82</sup> For a more comprehensive overview of the events concerning the end of the Empire and its legacy see: Antonio M. Morone (ed.), *La fine del colonialismo italiano. Politica, società e memorie*, Florence, Le Monnier, 2018.

<sup>83</sup> M. Zaccaria, *Rimuovere o riscrivere il colonialismo?*, p. 85.

<sup>84</sup> See E. Castelli (ed.), *Immagini & colonie*.

<sup>85</sup> Think, for example, of the Musée du Congo in Bruxelles, Amsterdam’s Tropenmuseum and the Musée d’Ethnographie du Trocadéro in Paris.

<sup>86</sup> Francesca Gandolfo, *Il Museo coloniale di Roma (1904-1971). Fra le zebre nel paese dell’olio di ricino*, Rome, Gangemi Editore, 2014, p. 23.

<sup>87</sup> See B. Falcucci, *Sources for colonial historiography*.

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## **Rethinking welfare history through a transnational and global lens. A gender-focused analysis of the Italian case**

**Silvia Inaudi\***

This article examines recent Italian historiography on welfare, with a particular focus on gender-oriented research. It relates recent Italian studies to the international debate, in order to identify acquisitions, open problems and perspectives. Its aim is to show how these studies could improve if a transnational and, broadly speaking, global approach was adopted, and it discusses a series of possible themes and issues to be addressed.

**Key words:** Welfare State, Gender, Transnational and Global History, Italy

### **Welfare history and the challenges of the global and transnational approach**

Welfare continues to be considered — from many points of view — a topic deeply anchored not only in national cases, but also in the nation-state category itself. For this reason, welfare and, more generally, social politics are struggling to be included in the preferred research areas of the new, global strand of historiography. If the way the purists of global history are looking at welfare history seems reductive, it must be said that the majority of the historians of welfare itself, with a few important exceptions,<sup>1</sup> remain largely indifferent to world history, and to global history at large. Besides, while the comparative approach has often fruitfully been adopted by the historiography of welfare, the transnational perspective has not yet fully been embraced. However, recent research has shown the benefits of going beyond the focus of the nation-state, viewed in terms of a hypostatic and a static entity.<sup>2</sup> It seems to me that, when

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<sup>1</sup> Kiran Klaus Patel, *The new deal. A global history*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2016; Alvin Finkel, *Compassion. A global history of social policy*, London, Red Globe Press, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> On this see Daniel Rodgers, *Dallo spazio al movimento*, “Contemporanea”, 2004, n. 1, pp. 99-106; Pauli Kettunen, Klaus Petersen, *Introduction: rethinking welfare state models*, in

faced with the challenges of the global and transnational approach, a gender-focused analysis can offer important insights to develop new directions in welfare history.

Over the last decades, gender studies on welfare politics have increased dramatically, to such an extent that it is both difficult to quantify them and impossible to discuss them in this article. Indeed, a long time has passed since the publication of the studies of Lewis and Sainsbury,<sup>3</sup> who lamented the complete absence of a gender-oriented approach in key publications such as those by Esping-Andersen.<sup>4</sup> It has become ever more difficult for scholars of all disciplines to avoid confronting themselves with a similar perspective.<sup>5</sup> With specific regard to the historical discipline, women's and gender history have certainly been more inclined than other historiographical currents to engage in comparative, international, connected and transnational history,<sup>6</sup> and more recently also in global history, despite difficulties and suspicions harboured by both approaches.<sup>7</sup> It is precisely welfare that emerges as one of the growing topics in gender analyses that adopt similar historiographical perspectives.<sup>8</sup>

Studies conducted from a gender perspective — not least those of a comparative nature — have undoubtedly formed the basis of analyses that have changed the categories of the historical dynamics of welfare and enhanced the understanding of these. The so-called maternalist approach has definitely obtained the most significant results; over the years, it has been widely discussed and it has acquired different *nuances*, up to the point of broadening into studies that maintain very feeble connections with studies about the welfare state.<sup>9</sup> Now

Pauli Kettunen, Klaus Petersen (eds.), *Beyond welfare state models. Transnational historical perspectives on social policy*, Cheltenham, Northampton, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2011; Cristoph Conrad, *Pour une histoire des politiques sociales après le tournant transnational*, in Axelle Brodziez-Dolino, Bruno Dumons (eds.), *La protection sociale en Europe au XXe siècle*, Rennes, PUR, 2014.

<sup>3</sup> Jane Lewis, *Gender and the development of welfare regimes*, "Journal of European Social Policy", 1992, n. 3, pp. 159-173 and Ead., *Gender and welfare regimes: further thoughts*, "Social Politics", 1997, n. 4, pp. 160-117; Diane Sainsbury (ed.), *Gendering welfare states*, Newbury Park, Sage, 1994.

<sup>4</sup> Gosta Esping-Andersen, *The three worlds of welfare capitalism*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990.

<sup>5</sup> In 2009, the same Esping-Andersen published a study entirely dedicated to the relation between women and welfare. See Gosta Esping-Andersen, *Incomplete revolution: adapting welfare states to women's new roles*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Oliver Janz, Daniel Schönplflug, *Introduction*, in Ead. (eds.), *Gender history in a transnational perspective. Networks, biographies, gender orders*, New York; Oxford, Berghahn, 2014.

<sup>7</sup> Angelika Epple, *Storia globale e storia di genere: un rapporto promettente*, "Storia e regione", 2012, n. 1-2; Merry Wiesner-Hanks, *Gender history and global history: borders and intersections*, "L'Homme", 2012, n. 2.

<sup>8</sup> O. Janz, D. Schönplflug, *Introduction*, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Gisela Bock, Pat Thane (eds.), *Maternity and gender policies. Women and the rise of the European welfare states, 1880s-1950s*, New York, Routledge, 1991; Seth Koven, Sonya Michel (eds.), *Mothers of a new world. Maternalist politics and the origins of welfare states*, New York,

even this category is being re-examined, if not openly put into question by the studies of researchers on (and often coming from) the East, Asia, and Central and South America. Thanks to the emergence of a new generation of female scholars,<sup>10</sup> new questions emerged following the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the downfall of the socialist states in Eastern Europe and Central Asia, especially with regard to the concepts of democracy, free market and consumption, and citizenship — all questions that directly concern welfare history.<sup>11</sup> The maternalist category, like that of familism, is thus redefined and updated to better adhere to societies that have seen welfare politics being developed in more recent times, as opposed to most Western countries, and in radically different social and cultural contexts, where the application of models such as that of the male breadwinner proves to be inadequate. Additionally, even in this area of research, the problems generated by transformations in present-day society (e.g. globalisation, migratory fluxes, changes in family structures and the job market, the progressively aging population), in which women are subjected to continuous challenges and tensions, raise new questions and doubts that cannot but impact on the very nature of the research.

Moreover, to deal with the topic of welfare in a transnational perspective is by no means an easy task. In the first place, there is an intrinsic complexity — typical of many objects of historical research — that goes beyond the national dimension. The difficulty of mastering multiple languages and analysing primary sources held in various locations might lead to attempts to draw comparisons based exclusively on secondary sources (which have fortunately become more accessible thanks to the internet and digitalisation processes). This is even more so for Italy, where global and world history studies are being conducted despite many difficulties, including economic ones; it is not a surprise that they are being often carried forward by Italian scholars based in foreign universities.<sup>12</sup> Paradoxically, the shift from a mainly political and legal analysis to a fully historical approach to welfare could lead to a setback in research, given that one of the determining factors for a proper understanding of welfare is archival research.<sup>13</sup>

In second place, there are also methodological difficulties, starting from the problem of terminology; it is not always easy to find a translation that

Routledge, 1993; Karen Mead, *Beneficent maternalism: Argentine motherhood in comparative perspective, 1880-1920*, "Journal of Women's History", 2000, n. 3, pp. 120-145; Marian van der Klein et al. (eds.), *Maternalism reconsidered. Motherhood, welfare and social policy in the twentieth century*, Oxford, New York, Berghahn Books, 2012.

<sup>10</sup> In this context I intentionally make reference to female scholars, given that the majority of these studies is the work of female researchers.

<sup>11</sup> Bonnie G. Smith, *Introduction*, in Bonnie G. Smith (ed.), *Women's history in global perspective*, vol. II, Urbana & Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2005, p. 3.

<sup>12</sup> Marco Meriggi, *Intervento sulla world history*, "Giornale di storia", 2015, n. 17, p. 5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Paolo Mattera, *Global e welfare: bilanci e prospettive per la storia sociale del lavoro*, "Società e storia", 2019, n. 163, p. 127.



can reflect specific implications and complexities. Think, for example, of the polysemous concept of *maternità*, which in English-language countries is often translated — with varying *nuances* — as motherhood and maternity.<sup>14</sup> More generally speaking, words such as family, work, politics and the very concept of the nation, have different meanings and imply different strategies the moment one crosses the boundaries of the West.<sup>15</sup> Yet, we must take into account — as Laura Downs recalls — that often “national culture and differences in state structures defined distinctive routes to what were, in many important respects, rather similar outcomes.”<sup>16</sup> In many cases, in social politics as in other areas, this outcome is the continuation of gender inequality.

Thirdly, when it comes to the actual historiographical product, the results tend to thin out as the perspective gradually widens. In the summaries dedicated to the issue of gender in world history publications, the themes of welfare and social politics either are not present or resurface to the background of studies about family, sexuality, work and education at a global level, given the obvious connections between welfare and these areas.<sup>17</sup> A first attempt at synthesis is that offered in the section *Welfare State* of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Women in World History*,<sup>18</sup> whereas themes related to social politics and welfare also appear in *The Palgrave Dictionary of Transnational History*, albeit not in a substantial way.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, summaries — like macro-historical analyses — risk creating inappropriate generalisations, especially in an area such as welfare. The most ambitious studies, as is evident in the case of analyses of maternalism, frequently present themselves as overviews of research conducted by female scholars from various countries, aimed at enriching — by offering a complete reading — the vast body knowledge of different geographical areas. The same modality is adopted in the first collective works that seek to widen the perspective beyond the West.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>14</sup> On this aspect see Anne Taylor Allen, *Lost in translation? Un regard transnational et comparatiste sur l'histoire des femmes*, in Anne Cova (ed.), *Histoire comparée des femmes*, Lyons, ENS Édition, 2009.

<sup>15</sup> B.G. Smith, *Introduction*, p. 3.

<sup>16</sup> Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing inequality. Gender division in the French and British metalworking industries, 1914-1939*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, 1995, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> See, for example, Teresa A. Meade, Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks (eds.), *A companion to gender history*, Malden, Oxford, Blackwell, 2004 and Peter N. Stearns, *Gender in world history*, New York, Routledge, 2006 (2. Ed.). See also the volumes dedicated to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries of the *World history* recently translated by Einaudi (Cfr. *Storia del mondo*, 6 voll., Turin, Einaudi, 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Denys P. Leighton, Mary Lynn Stewart, *Welfare state*, in Bonnie G. Smith (ed.), *The Oxford encyclopedia of women in world history*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2008.

<sup>19</sup> Akira Iriye, Pierre Yves Saunier (eds.), *The Palgrave dictionary of transnational history. From the mid-19th century to the present day*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Lynne Haney, Lisa Pollard (eds.), *Families of a new world. Gender, politics, and state development in a global context*, New York, Routledge, 2003 and Ellen Fleischmann et al. (eds.), *Transnational and historical perspectives on global health, welfare and humanitarianism*, Kristiansand, Portal Books, 2013.

Nevertheless, to conduct an analysis from a global and transnational perspective seems to be less common in mainland and southern Europe (with the important exception of Germany) than it is in American or British historiography. Hence, a large part of historical research on the welfare state that has been conducted in European countries, be it in a gender perspective or not, continues to focus on national contexts or limits itself to comparisons between two or more — very often Western — countries.<sup>21</sup>

### Italian historiography and new trends

What, then, is the situation in Italy? What is happening in the historiography of welfare? To answer these questions, we must take a number of premises into account. The study of the welfare state in the historical discipline is a relatively recent phenomenon; for a long time, analyses of welfare — especially those of general or comparative nature — have remained the exclusive prerogative of sociologists, political scientists, legal experts and economists.<sup>22</sup> This is even more so if we look at the Italian case.<sup>23</sup> The first studies from a historical perspective began to develop in the 1980s, but it was not until the second half of the 1990s that they increased in number, focusing on specific historical periods such as Fascism.<sup>24</sup> The first attempts were made at a historical synthesis, including by putting Italian welfare into perspective and comparing

<sup>21</sup> Anne Cova, *Introduction. Les promesses de l'histoire comparée des femmes*, in A. Cova, *Histoire comparée des femmes*, pp. 24-27; C. Conrad, *Pour une histoire des politiques sociales après le tournant transnational*, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Gerald Albert Ritter, *Storia dello Stato sociale*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 1996, p. 32.

<sup>23</sup> In this article it is impossible to take into account the extremely vast production on Italian welfare in the social sciences. The following are among the most important studies: Ugo Ascoli (ed.), *Welfare state all'italiana*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1984; Maurizio Ferrera, *Il welfare state in Italia. Sviluppo e crisi in prospettiva comparata*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1984; Valeria Fargion, *Geografia della cittadinanza sociale in Italia. Regioni e politiche assistenziali dagli anni Settanta agli anni Novanta*, Bologna, il Mulino, 1997; Fiorenzo Girotti, *Welfare State. Storia, modelli e critica*, Rome, Carocci, 1998; Maurizio Ferrera, Valeria Fargion, Matteo Jessoula, *Alle radici del welfare all'italiana. Origini e futuro di un modello sociale squilibrato*, Venice, Marsilio, 2012; Ugo Ascoli, Emmanuele Pavolini (eds.), *The Italian welfare state in a European perspective. A comparative analysis*, Bristol, Policy, 2015. Studies conducted from a gender perspective include: Alisa Del Re (ed.), *I rapporti sociali di sesso in Europa 1930-1960. L'impatto delle politiche sociali*, Padua, Cedam, 1991; Chiara Saraceno, *The ambivalent familism of the Italian welfare state*, "Social Politics. International Studies in Gender, State & Society", 1994, n. 1, pp. 60-82; Franca Bimbi (ed.), *Le madri sole. Metafore della famiglia ed esclusione sociale*, Rome, Carocci, 2000; Manuela Naldini, *The family in the mediterranean welfare state*, London; New York, Routledge, 2003.

<sup>24</sup> Paolo Mattera, *Introduzione: la storia del welfare state in Italia, quali basi e quali prospettive?*, in Paolo Mattera (ed.), *Momenti del welfare in Italia. Storiografia e percorsi di ricerca*, Rome, Viella, 2012, p. 15.

it with the main European systems.<sup>25</sup> The areas of analyses were originally more focused on systems of social security,<sup>26</sup> albeit with some important exceptions,<sup>27</sup> and subsequently extended to the sectors of social care<sup>28</sup> and social work (with the inauguration of a book series promoted by the Society for the History of Social Work, published by Viella),<sup>29</sup> to the health sector,<sup>30</sup> and to that of housing policies.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, emphasis has been placed on the count-

<sup>25</sup> Enzo Bartocci, *Le politiche sociali nell'Italia liberale*, Rome, Donzelli, 1999; Gianni Silei, *Lo Stato sociale in Italia. Storia e documenti*, 2 voll., Manduria, Lacaita, 2003-2004; Fulvio Conti, Gianni Silei, *Breve storia dello Stato sociale*, Rome, Carocci, 2005; Andrea Rapini, *Lo Stato sociale*, Bologna, Archetipolibri, 2010. As this article goes to print a comprehensive study has been published: Chiara Giorgi, Ilaria Pavan, *Storia dello Stato sociale in Italia*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> Arnaldo Cherubini, *Storia della previdenza sociale in Italia 1860-1960*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1977; Dora Marucco, *Lavoro e previdenza dall'unità al fascismo. Il Consiglio della previdenza dal 1869 al 1923*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1984; Istituto nazionale della previdenza sociale, *Novant'anni di previdenza in Italia: culture, politiche, strutture* (Conference Proceedings, Rome, 9/10 November 1988), Rome, Inps, 1989, which has been complemented by a more recent study by Chiara Giorgi, *La previdenza del regime. Storia dell'Inps durante il fascismo*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Domenico Preti, *La modernizzazione corporativa (1922-1940). Economia, salute pubblica, istituzioni e professioni sanitarie*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 1987; Stefano Lepre, *Le difficoltà dell'assistenza. Le opere pie in Italia fra '800 e '900*, Rome, Bulzoni, 1988.

<sup>28</sup> See, among others: Giovanna Farrell-Vinay, *Povert  e politica nell'Ottocento. Le opere pie nello Stato liberale*, Turin, Scriptorium, 1997; Stefano Sepe, *Le amministrazioni della sicurezza sociale nell'Italia unita, 1861-1998*, Milan, Giuffr , 1999; Silvia Inaudi, *A tutti indistintamente. L'Ente opere assistenziali nel periodo fascista*, Bologna, Clueb, 2008; although written by a non-Italian scholar, we must also mention Maria Sophia Quine, *Italy's social revolution: charity and welfare from Liberalism to Fascism*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002. From the early 2000s onwards, an analysis of this topic that pays attention to the republican period has been promoted by the "Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia" (cfr. Giampiero Fumi, *L'assistenza nell'Italia del dopoguerra: un nuovo progetto di lavoro dell'Archivio*, "Bollettino dell'Archivio per la storia del movimento sociale cattolico in Italia", 2002, n. 1, pp. 11-19); see, in particular, the special issue edited by Anne Cova and Michela Minesso, *Welfare in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra. L'assistenza (1945-1968)*, 2013, n. 1-2.

<sup>29</sup> Among the studies published thus far see, in particular: Maria Stefani (ed.), *Le origini del servizio sociale italiano. Tremezzo: un evento fondativo del 1946. Saggi e testimonianze*, Rome, Viella, 2012; Enrico Appetecchia (ed.), *Idee e movimenti comunitari. Servizio sociale di comunit  in Italia nel secondo dopoguerra*, Rome, Viella, 2015; Marilena Dellavalle, Elisabetta Vezzosi (eds.), *Immaginare il futuro. Servizio sociale di comunit  e community development in Italia (1946-2017)*, Rome, Viella, 2018.

<sup>30</sup> Saverio Luzzi, *Salute e sanit  nell'Italia repubblicana*, Rome, Donzelli, 2004; Chiara Giorgi, Ilaria Pavan, *Un sistema finito di fronte a una domanda infinita. Le origini del Sistema sanitario nazionale italiano*, "Le Carte e la Storia", 2018, n. 2, pp. 103-117; Ead., *Le lotte per la salute in Italia e le premesse della riforma sanitaria. Partiti, sindacati, movimenti, percorsi biografici (1958-1978)*, "Studi Storici", 2019, n. 2, pp. 417-456.

<sup>31</sup> Istituto Luigi Sturzo (ed.), *Fanfani e la casa. Gli anni Cinquanta e il modello italiano di welfare state. Il piano INA-Casa*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubbettino, 2002; Daniela Adorni, Davide Tabor (eds.), *Inchieste sulla casa in Italia. La condizione abitativa nelle citt  italiane nel secondo dopoguerra*, Rome, Viella, 2019.

less, long-term interactions between the state, civil society and intermediaries, in the construction of Italian welfare.<sup>32</sup>

Moreover, intersections already known to international historiography — though almost entirely neglected in the Italian debate — have started entering the scene. These include the link between religion and welfare, which revealed how not only the church as an institution, but also Catholic thought and doctrine influenced the construction of the welfare state;<sup>33</sup> the impact of the consumer society on the development of welfare systems;<sup>34</sup> the cause-and-effect relationship between war and the birth of welfare.<sup>35</sup>

One of the areas that has developed most is that regarding family politics and measures aimed at supporting maternity and childhood.<sup>36</sup> Annarita Buttafuoco's ground-breaking research in this field had already appropriated a transnational perspective — in a broad sense — well ahead of her time; it did so by integrating itself into the strand of studies that examined the connections and exchanges between maternalist feminist groups, which were at the origin of the very first social measures in favour of women and children.<sup>37</sup> New studies in this area have, on various occasions, adopted a comparative perspective. In particular, two books edited by Michela Minesso offer an overview of essays that is rich with suggestions on the link between the idea of citizenship

<sup>32</sup> Maurizio Degl'Innocenti, *La società volontaria e solidale. Il cantiere del welfare pubblico e privato*, Manduria, Lacaita, 2012; Anna Salfi, Fiorenza Tarozzi (eds.), *Dalle società di mutuo soccorso alle conquiste del welfare state*, Rome, Ediesse, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Edoardo Bressan, *Le vie cristiane della sicurezza sociale. I cattolici italiani e il welfare state*, in Andrea Bassi, Birgit Pfau-Effinger (eds.), *Lo spirito del welfare*, special issue of "Sociologia e politiche sociali", 2012, n. 3, pp. 91-120.

<sup>34</sup> Patrizia Battilani, Claudio Benassi (eds.), *Consumare il welfare. L'esperienza italiana del secondo Novecento*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2013.

<sup>35</sup> Giovanna Procacci, *Warfare-welfare. Intervento dello Stato e diritti dei cittadini 1914-1918*, Carocci, Rome, 2013; Ilaria Pavan, *War and the welfare state: the case of Italy, from WWI to Fascism*, "Historia contemporanea", 2019, n. 3, pp. 835-872.

<sup>36</sup> Stefania Bernini, *Family life and individual welfare in post-war Europe. Britain and Italy compared*, Basingstoke-New York, Palgrave, 2007; Maurizio Bettini, *Stato e assistenza sociale in Italia. L'Opera Nazionale Maternità e Infanzia, 1925-1975*, Erasmo, Livorno, 2008; Michela Minesso, *Stato e infanzia nell'Italia contemporanea. Origini, sviluppo e fine dell'Onmi. 1925-1975*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2007; Michela Minesso (ed.), *Welfare e minori. L'Italia nel contesto europeo del Novecento*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2011; Elisabetta Vezzosi, *Maternalism in a paternalist state: the National Organization for the Protection of Motherhood and Infancy in Fascist Italy*, in M. van der Klein et al. (eds.), *Maternalism reconsidered*, pp. 190-204; Domenica La Banca, *Welfare in transizione. L'esperienza dell'Onmi (1943-1950)*, Naples, Ed. Scientifiche italiane, 2013; Dorena Caroli, *Per una storia dell'asilo nido in Europa tra Otto e Novecento*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2013; Michela Minesso, *Madri figli welfare. Istituzioni e politiche dall'Italia liberale ai giorni nostri*, Bologna, il Mulino, 2015; Michela Minesso (ed.), *Welfare, donne e giovani in Italia e in Europa nei secoli 19.-20.*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2015.

<sup>37</sup> Annarita Buttafuoco, *Motherhood as a political strategy: the role of the Italian women's movement in the creation of the Cassa Nazionale di Maternità*, in G. Bock, P. Thane (eds.), *Maternity and gender policies*, and Ead., *Le origini della Cassa Nazionale di Maternità*, Siena, Università degli Studi, 1992.

and various advancements in social politics regarding women, childhood, and youth, in a European context.<sup>38</sup>

An interesting example of an analysis that advances a comparative and multidisciplinary dialogue is the book edited by Nunin and Vezzosi, titled *Donne e famiglie nei sistemi di welfare* [Women and families in welfare systems]. In this study, macro and micro perspectives intertwine, and the history of welfare is reconsidered from a gender perspective. In doing so, it opens up to the new issues that, from the early 2000s onwards, have dominated analyses of social politics: the transition from a male breadwinner to a dual breadwinner model; globalisation and transformation of the job market; the progressively aging population; new migrations; the current tension between economic and social citizenship.<sup>39</sup>

The need to overcome the national perspective in Italian welfare studies was recently made explicit in a special issue of the “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, edited by Paolo Mattera and Ilaria Pavan.<sup>40</sup> It contained essays that approached the evolution of republican welfare from a comparative perspective and in terms of the circulation and influence of European (i.e. English, French, Scandinavian) and international (Oil) ideas and models. The analyses contained in the special issue offer a valid example of the essential quality of a supranational approach in the acquisition of new knowledge in this area. To measure oneself against a, if not global then at least, transnational dimension therefore represents a further step that deserves to be taken, difficult and insidious as it may be. Only thus can we permanently subtract welfare history from the danger of staying trapped in an interpretation of (negative) exceptionalism, starting with those elements that — for decades now — have been identified as some of its principal characteristics: the excessive weight of private institutions, especially those of confessional nature; the continuity of fascist institutions in the republican period; ambivalent familism; degeneration related to clientelism.<sup>41</sup>

Although the prolific production of recent years promises well, it must nevertheless be stressed that the history of social politics, and gender-oriented history perhaps even more, continues to represent a fringe topic in the Italian historiographical horizon, if compared to decidedly more mainstream historical subjects and currents. Moreover, the majority of research in this area remains

<sup>38</sup> M. Minesso (ed.), *Welfare e minori*, and Ead. (ed.), *Welfare, donne e giovani in Italia e in Europa nei secoli 19.-20.*

<sup>39</sup> Roberta Nunin, Elisabetta Vezzosi (eds.), *Donne e famiglie nei sistemi di welfare. Esperienze nazionali e regionali a confronto*, Rome, Carocci, 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Paolo Mattera, Ilaria Pavan (eds.), *The Italian welfare state in a supranational perspective: history and debates*, special issue of the “Journal of Modern Italian Studies”, 2017, n. 2.

<sup>41</sup> For an in-depth analysis of this theme, within the specific context of social assistance, I take the liberty to cite an article of my own: *L'assistenza nel secondo dopoguerra tra continuità e mancate riforme. Note a margine del dibattito storiografico*, “Storica”, 2010, n. 46, pp. 79-99.

focused on local contexts. This does not necessarily impede a widening of the horizon where a glocal perspective — in its reconsideration (if not total overturning) of the relations between centre and periphery — can shed light on the connection between the two dimensions and retrieve its complexity even more effectively. Indeed, the very study of local, provincial and regional levels — which is fundamental for an understanding of Italian history — has reconsidered the apparent coherence of the nation-state: certainly of its origins, but not only, as demonstrated by Laura Lee Downs's research, for example, on aspects of social welfare for children in a traditionally "strong" state context, as is the French one.<sup>42</sup>

To conclude my observations about the framework in which historical research is located, I should add that the difficulties — not to mention impenetrability — inherent in the interdisciplinary dialogue (aside from the already mentioned exceptions) that still marks Italian academia in so many ways certainly do not help welfare historians; given the very characteristics of the subject in question, scholars can and must draw part of their lifeblood precisely from multidisciplinaryity.

### Research perspectives

This long, and inevitably incomplete, preliminary overview has served to demonstrate that, in the Italian context, too, the historical analysis of welfare can expand its horizon and take a further step beyond both national history and comparative history. In this way, it can trace the transnational connections and universal frameworks of cultural interrelation in which the nation-states have operated. Nevertheless, we must remain conscious of the undeniable continuity of the nation-state's importance for the creation of similar politics, and of the risks involved in forgetting how nation-states have structured, and continue to structure, women's lives.<sup>43</sup>

One of the most urgent actions that welfare historians must take to free themselves from the trammels of an essentially national context is that they pay attention to the mechanisms of circulation, debate, exchange, reciprocity and the adaptation of knowledge, models, legislation, and administrative procedures, which permeate the origin and development of social systems at an international level. From this point of view, gender studies turn out to be privileged, as I have already stressed, since this dimension has always been present, even in "not suspicious" times.

<sup>42</sup> Laura Lee Downs, *Histoire des colonies de vacances de 1880 à nos jours*, Paris, Editions Perrin, 2009.

<sup>43</sup> Susan Pedersen, *Family, dependence, and the origins of the welfare state: Britain and France, 1914-1945*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 124.

The discussion about, and adaptation of, welfare models has played an important role in Italy as well: if the Bismarck and the Beveridge models — the latter established during the second post-war period — represent the most known and studied models,<sup>44</sup> Belgian influences have been identified in the creation of the National Agency for Maternity and Childhood.<sup>45</sup> In view of the methodological findings, however, it is not a question of limiting oneself to the verification of similar processes via the concepts — subjected to strong contestation — of assimilation, imitation or linear distribution. Rather, one must grasp (albeit in a context of influence) the extent to which the local reformulation has generated specific characteristics, via processes of mediating — but also by opposing — foreign models. This issue becomes even more important when compared to countries outside the West.<sup>46</sup>

The debate about legislation, administrative experiences and practices has been at the foundation of social reform conferences ever since the second half of the nineteenth century and has regularly been sustained by social movements and civil society organisations. Female movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries — whose networks, as is known, crossed national and often also European boundaries — represent the most renowned and studied examples of debate and of the use of foreign welfare models, for the purpose of pushing through reforms also in social politics. This experience is not unfamiliar to Italy, as we have seen.

During the second post-war period, in the ideological context of the Cold War, the increase in female organisations at various levels (i.e. local, national, international), whether they were of secular or religious nature, related to a party or not, has offered a ground of comparison (and dispute) in which the theme of social politics — closely connected to the growth of female labour force — represented a primary issue for the development of political strategies and agendas. With regard to the female movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and to the feminist movements of the 1970s, this period largely remains to be explored for a better understanding of its contribution in terms of fights for women's rights, also in view of social citizenship. This is even more pertinent given that many female protagonists entered Parliament, thus contributing to keep the debate about social politics alive, as a recent study has demonstrated.<sup>47</sup>

<sup>44</sup> See, for example, Loreto Di Nucci, *Alle origini dello Stato sociale nell'Italia repubblicana. La ricezione del piano Beveridge e il dibattito nella Costituente*, in Carlotta Sorba (ed.), *Cittadinanza. Individui, diritti sociali, collettività nella storia contemporanea*, Rome, Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali, Direzione generale per gli archivi, 2002.

<sup>45</sup> M. Minesso (ed.), *Stato e infanzia nell'Italia contemporanea*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>46</sup> An example that regards Italy is that of the relation between the development of Japanese social politics and fascist corporate models: Bernard Thomann, *Il dibattito sul "fascismo" e la riforma sociale in Giappone fino al 1945*, "Contemporanea", 2008, n. 3, pp. 397-431.

<sup>47</sup> Michela Minesso, *Diritti e politiche sociali. Le proposte delle parlamentari nelle assemblee legislative dell'Italia repubblicana (1946-1963)*, Milan, FrancoAngeli, 2016.

Knowledge transfer also occurred in areas that have for a long time remained less open to women's presence and influence. Think, for example, of the constant exchange of information and knowledge — ever since the mid-nineteenth century — in the fields of medicine and hygiene, and in urban planning, which subsequently expanded into the social sciences (first and foremost, demography and psychology). The analysis of the contributions expert communities and networks made to the implementation of social measures in a biopolitical framework seems decisive in understanding the technocratic influence on women's bodies and lives, and, more generally, on the construction of a gender identity. Studying the transnational interconnections, rereading, and interpreting knowledge and concepts in view of national cultural contexts, especially in terms of the passage (or lack thereof) from debates to practices, may cast further light on aspects that have been neglected or have remained invisible to scholars of social politics. Take the issue of child well-being, an area in which gender and politics intersect in various ways, and often not harmoniously: one example is the transnational influence of John Bowlby's infant attachment theories during the second post-war period.<sup>48</sup>

International organisations and foundations are equally important for a contextualisation of social politics from a supranational perspective, not only in terms of knowledge transfer but also with regard to the exportation of models and practices: one example is the Rockefeller Foundation, which has had considerable global influence — and Italy is no exception — on public health issues.<sup>49</sup> In Italy, this field remains mostly unexplored, especially if considered from a gender perspective. A study of the so-called soft law, too, may reveal itself to be particularly challenging.

No less packed with consequences are the processes linked to the development of international solidarity and humanitarianism, in response to the globalisation of problems related to wars, epidemics and famine. If the roots of this international intervention can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century, it is undoubtedly after the global conflicts that international, public and private, organisations become exceptional agents not just of financial transfers, but also of models of modernisation (with all the ambiguity that this concept implies) in the social sector. Examples of these for Italy include the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration,<sup>50</sup> and Unicef and the Fao for the circulation — through social care — of models of health and food education that affected the habits and behaviours of the poorest classes,

<sup>48</sup> In Italy, too, Bowlby's studies have had a considerable influence on the debate about the rights of unmarried mothers and about adoption.

<sup>49</sup> Frank M. Snowden, *The conquest of malaria. Italy 1900-1962*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Giacomo Canepa, *The transatlantic transfers of social policies in the context of Unrra's "Rehabilitation" of post-World-War-II Italy*, in *Yearbook of transnational history*, vol. I, Madison, Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018, pp. 139-162.



in particular women and children.<sup>51</sup> These models were usually transmitted through child care providers and educators, whose relations with their beneficiaries — here as in other areas — would need to be studied more in detail.

Organisations and foundations also represented a means of mobility for the women who were active in social sector, thanks to travel grants for the study of foreign models and conference participation. Despite the difficulties involved in conducting research on people who often occupied minor positions in Italian social administration,<sup>52</sup> the experiences of these social actors deserve more scholarly attention.

If we move from the circulation of knowledge to that of people, we must inevitably address the topic of migratory processes; as is known, these are among the preferred research areas of global and gender history, having been (and continuing to be) inextricably linked to the implementation of social politics at various levels. From this perspective, a country like Italy — which has changed from being a country of emigrants to a country of immigrants — reveals itself to be an infinite source of research possibilities. One potential study area, for example, is that of the implementation of social care services during migration; a quite important role was played by the church and related authorities, whose influence would need to be studied more in depth, also in relation to the — not necessarily predictable — processes of female emancipation linked to the very phenomenon of migration. Another possible topic is the issue of welfare services for Italians abroad, and their repercussions not only on the places of arrival, but also on those of departure. In the case of Italian migration to France, for example, it has been highlighted that the political strategies of attraction and management of migratory flows generated social politics with a “gendered” connotation (indirectly and, at times, involuntarily), through specific measures such as the payment of family allowances for offspring still present on the Italian territory, notwithstanding the territoriality principle.<sup>53</sup> In this regard, it must be noted that differences and flexibility in terms of welfare may also have impacted on women’s and men’s strategies with regard to mobility, work and life choices. Finally, the relation between welfare and wage labour, unpaid or illegal work, a problem that denotes the relation between gender and welfare more generally, becomes central in the frame-

<sup>51</sup> Silvia Inaudi, *Assistenza ed educazione alimentare. l’Amministrazione per gli aiuti internazionali, 1947-1965*, “Contemporanea”, 2015, n. 3, pp. 373-399 and Ead., “Milk is life”. *Nutritional interventions and child welfare: the Italian case and the post-war international aid*, in David Gentilcore, Matthew Smith (eds.), *Proteins, pathologies and politics. Dietary innovation and disease from the nineteenth century*, London, Bloomsbury, 2018; Angela Villani, *Dalla parte dei bambini. Italia e Unicef fra ricostruzione e sviluppo*, Padua, Cedam, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> On the opacity that still pervades these actors, Marilena Dellavalle, *Gender in Italian social work: a neglected issue*, “Contemporanea”, 2019, n. 2, pp. 287-294.

<sup>53</sup> Alexis Spire, *Étrangers à la carte. L’administration de l’immigration en France (1945-1975)*, Paris, Grasset, 2005.

work of migrations. This is true also in light of the way women's relations are structured: think of the example *par excellence* of illegal work, namely domestic service and care work, which has been and often still is a prerogative of migrant women, favouring their entry into the native-born women's world of employment, but with all the difficulties of accessing social welfare benefits that migrant women are faced with.

Another issue that concerns people's mobility, which I have only touched upon in this article, is that of colonial conquests. For Italy, these represent shorter experiences than for other countries, but not for this reason are they less important. While the export of social care and social security structures to the colonial territories by Fascism is a little-known episode, it deserves further exploration, provided sources can be accessed, also in light of the fascist projects of identity construction directed at Italian men and women in foreign territories.<sup>54</sup>

The history of welfare (but clearly not just the Italian one) can therefore only benefit from a confrontation with the suggestions offered by transnational and global history. Moreover, we will need to adopt an even broader global approach — the more so in gender-focused analyses — capable of integrating a perspective that confronts itself, in an interdisciplinary way, with the debates that are redirecting welfare studies within social sciences, starting from globalisation as a phenomenon.<sup>55</sup> Only thus will we be able to continue doing what women's history and gender history excel in: making the invisible visible.

<sup>54</sup> Some preliminary observations about the activities of the National Fascist Institute of Social Security can be found in Pamela Ballinger, *Colonial twilight: Italian settlers and the long decolonization of Libya*, "Journal of Contemporary History", 2016, n. 4, pp. 817-826.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew E. Carnes, Isabela Mares, *The welfare state in global perspective*, in Carles Boix, Susan Stokes (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of comparative politics*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2007.

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## Again on 1968. Some remarks on recent Italian historiography

Marica Tolomelli\*

Although Italian — as well as international — historiography engaged with the fiftieth anniversary of 1968 in a very lively way, it was probably not groundbreaking in terms of its originality. From an editorial perspective, this liveliness has translated into the publication of a considerable amount of studies, which this article is able to examine only partially, given the variety of their approaches, analytical levels and interpretations. The article addresses a selection of these texts in order to discuss some of the most significant directions of research that emerge from them, in terms of methodological approaches, interpretations and arguments. These books are, in alphabetical order: Michele Battini, *Un sessantotto*, Università Bocconi Editore, Milano 2018; Guido Crainz (ed.), *Il Sessantotto sequestrato. Cecoslovacchia, Polonia, Jugoslavia e dintorni*, Donzelli, Roma 2018; Marcello Flores, Giovanni Gozzini, *1968. Un anno spartiacque*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018; Monica Galfré, *La scuola è il nostro Vietnam. Il '68 e l'istruzione secondaria italiana*, Viella, Roma 2019; Paolo Pombeni, *Che cosa resta del '68*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018; Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2018.

**Key words:** 1968, Italian historiography, Social movements

### Introduction

Half a century after the climax of the 1960s, as epitomised by the *annus mirabilis* 1968, Italian and international historiography still conveys a vivid interest in this complex and multifaceted topic. Such enduring interest is by no means surprising if we consider the fact that a true historiography of 1968 is a relatively recent phenomenon. In fact, during the first two decades, literature on this subject was mostly produced by former protagonists who tried to leave a testimony — and a historical interpretation — of their extraordinary life and political experiences. It was not until the thirtieth and — even more so — fortieth anniversaries that efforts were made to turn the 1968 events into a topic of historical analysis, probably as a result of the novel interest

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manifested by a younger generation of scholars. Although new approaches substantially contributed to deepening the understanding of the 1960s, studies on 1968 remained focused on the Western world, particularly on the countries in which students' protests had reached the greatest public visibility, as in the USA, France, West Germany and Italy. Only recently, some historical studies have approached this subject by adopting a wider spatial horizon. This shift was probably stimulated by both the upcoming fiftieth anniversary of 1968 and new perspectives introduced by the rise of global history. Thus, in the wake of an interrelated vision of the various events that have marked the history of the 1960s in different parts of the world,<sup>1</sup> the study of 1968, too, currently gives evidence of a greater attention to the wide range of networks and intersections in which the movement developed. This attitude has been emerging within international historiography for at least a decade now, in particular with reference to the debate on the intellectual foundations of 1968.

In the Italian editorial context, the historiographical liveliness of the fiftieth anniversary manifested itself through the publication of a significant number of studies, which we cannot possibly consider in a thorough way, given the great diversity of approaches, analytical levels and perspectives adopted in these studies. To put it in generic — and inevitably reductive — terms, it seems that a large part of the most recent publications essentially place themselves in a line of interpretative continuity with previous studies, nevertheless trying to shed light on aspects that have hitherto received little attention. This vast and variegated category includes texts that focus on themes such as the clear generational composition of the sixty-eighters; the anything but marginal role of secondary school students, and the strong involvement of women, even if the latter remained voiceless due to a pronounced male protagonism and leadership;<sup>2</sup> the countercultural dimension.<sup>3</sup> Other works seek to identify the repercussions of 1968 beyond the main urban centres, on which dominant narratives have insisted until recently, instead focusing their attention on single, local or provincial communities,<sup>4</sup> or on areas often deemed politically and socially marginalised, such as South Tyrol.<sup>5</sup> Conversely, a second strand

<sup>1</sup> For a broad description of the 1960s and the impact of certain dynamics triggered by decolonisation processes, see Samantha Christiansen, Zachary A. Scarlett (eds.), *The third world in the global 1960s*, New York-Oxford, Berghahn Books, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Paola Cioni et al. 2018. *Donne nel Sessantotto*, Bologna, il Mulino; Franca Balsamo, Marilena Moretti (eds.), *Sessantottine*, Turin, SEB 27, 2018.

<sup>3</sup> Franco Bergoglio, *I giorni della musica e delle rose. Rock, pop, jazz, soul, blues nel vortice del Sessantotto*, Viterbo, Stampa Alternativa, 2018.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Alberto Molinari, Federico Morgagni, William Gambetta, *Il Sessantotto lungo la via Emilia. Il movimento studentesco in Emilia Romagna (1967-1969)*, Rome, BraDypUS, 2018; Renzo Bertaccini (ed.), *Il Sessantotto a Faenza: storie, testimonianze, immagini*, Faenza, Tipografia Valgimigli, 2018; Antonella Soldam, *Il Sessantotto in Friuli*, Romagnano al Monte, Booksprint, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Birgit Eschgfäller, *1968. Südtirol in Bewegung*, Bolzano, Raetia, 2018.

of studies — perhaps the most innovative one, and more deeply rooted in an international debate — has tried to overcome the traditional spatial boundaries of 1968 (mostly the Western world and the first world countries); their aim has been to shift the focus to contexts of social activism that have thus far been neglected or have rarely been considered in relation to the transnational movement that irreversibly marked the year 1968, offering a reading in global terms and, therefore, with a worldwide reach.

In what follows, I will turn my attention to a select number of texts that are representative of the various tendencies outlined above. These are, in alphabetical order: Michele Battini, *Un sessantotto*, Università Bocconi Editore, Milan 2018; Guido Crainz (ed.), *Il Sessantotto sequestrato. Cecoslovacchia, Polonia, Jugoslavia e dintorni*, Donzelli, Rome 2018; Marcello Flores, Giovanni Gozzini, *1968. Un anno spartiacque*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018; Monica Galfré, *La scuola è il nostro Vietnam. Il '68 e l'istruzione secondaria italiana*, Viella, Rome 2019; Paolo Pombeni, *Che cosa resta del '68*, il Mulino, Bologna 2018; Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni*, Laterza, Rome-Bari 2018.

Before looking into each individual text separately, it is useful to highlight a somewhat paradoxical aspect that characterises all six works: the absence of a shared definition of 1968. It is as if we are dealing with a topic on which so much has already been written, and of which so much is known, that we can take it for granted and focus on new perspectives, further elaborate hitherto neglected aspects, or reflect on the effects triggered by or inherited from 1968 — an issue that will never cease to fascinate scholars. Granted, all six studies draw on a minimal and shared notion of 1968, viewed in terms of the culmination of a sequence of protests and social dissent in which the student population played a prominent role. Even if there is substantial agreement on this formal fact, which is nevertheless minimal and not very helpful for a comprehensive understanding of 1968, various divergences, instead, arise when trying to give it a meaning and evaluate the protests and social conflicts connected to that date, as well as their impact on society. Given its complexity and the many ways in which 1968 manifested itself, it is hardly surprising to see how the most diverse readings of this phenomenon continue to compete with one another.

Depending on where one wishes to place the accent, that “number” can each time be interpreted differently:<sup>6</sup> a synonym for cultural revolution, or a revolution of social mores; student uprising; generational conflict; political revolution or romanticism; explosion of subjectivities; ideological apogee, and so on. Yet, it is surprising to find how, fifty years later, notwithstanding some very significant and detailed historiographical publications, 1968 continues to remain

<sup>6</sup> Klaus Leggewie, *1968 - Ein transatlantisches Ereignis und seine Folgen*, in Detlev Junker, Philipp Gassert (eds.), *Die USA und Deutschland im Zeitalter des Kalten Krieges 1945-1990. Ein Handbuch*, 2 voll., Stuttgart, DVA, 2018.

mostly an evocative term, adaptable to different interpretations depending on the perspective from which it is being observed, and subject to different periodisations.<sup>7</sup> It would certainly be unrealistic to expect that we can develop a fixed and widely shared definition, which would encompass a complex social phenomenon that involved a plurality of subjects, and which was not without ambiguity.<sup>8</sup> Nonetheless, to settle for a minimal notion, regulated more by formal aspects than by content, while allowing scholars to reduce 1968 to a variety of heterogeneous events and developments that may or may not be interlinked, carries the risk of losing sight of the very object of research and, subsequently, of making it incomprehensible.

### A point of no return

Those most at risk of advancing a similar interpretation are Marcello Flores and Giovanni Gozzini. Although theirs is undoubtedly one of the most original publications in the Italian historiographical landscape, it nonetheless presents weaknesses, on both a heuristic and an interpretative level. The authors of *1968. Un anno spartiacque* [1968. A watershed year] explicitly declare their intention to put aside the — by now consolidated — Eurocentric approach, which focuses on students and workers in agitation, in predominantly European capital cities; Flores and Gozzini, instead, favour a global perspective that is “open to the world and not restricted to a single area”. In their opinion, this also means “broadening the cause-effect relationship [between the studied events and contexts] in space and over time, making it more flexible and less immediate and direct” (p. 92). Starting from a definition of 1968 as a “global history event”, but without explaining exactly what is intended by such an “event” except that it was “the first to occur simultaneously in the four cardinal points of the world”, the authors tentatively explain this simultaneity by referring to a global fact: the general increase of the student population. In other words, the more than proportional growth of a segment of the population

<sup>7</sup> 1968 as an event has been counterposed by a 1968 viewed in terms of a process that covered the entire decade, as expressed by the definition *années 68*, which has taken root in French historiography. See, for example, Geneviève Dreyfus-Armand (a cura di), *Les années 68. Les temps de la contestation*, Bruxelles, Complexe, 2001; Patrick Rotman, Charlotte Rotman, *Les années 68*, Paris, Seuil, 2008; Michelle Zancarini-Fournel, *Vom Mai 68 zu den 68er Jahren. Eine Geschichte der vergessenen Orte*, in Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey Hg (eds.), *1968 - vom Ereignis zum Gegenstand der Geschichtswissenschaft*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1998, pp. 101-15.

<sup>8</sup> This aspect was re-evoked in the debate published over a decade ago, edited by Simone Neri Serneri, *Il 1968 nella storia europea. Interventi di Simone Neri Serneri, Gerd-Rainer Horn, Giovanni Gozzini, Ingrid Gilcher-Holtey, Detlef Siegfried, Alberto De Bernardi, Jean-Philippe Legois*, “Contemporanea, Rivista di storia dell’800 e del ’900”, 2008, 3, pp. 471-514, doi: 10.1409/27306.

that is young and highly educated, and therefore equipped with a solid dose of cultural and social capital, to put it in Bourdieu's terms. Drawing on data they obtained from a French study on the youth rebellion,<sup>9</sup> Flores and Gozzini illustrate their hypothesis using a spatial representation of the "events of youth rebellion, October 1967-June 1968" (Fig. 1.1, p. 16). In doing so, however, they fail to assess whether those "events of youth rebellion" necessarily coincided with collective movements or could somehow be linked to that peculiar collective movement that aimed at challenging the establishment and widening democratic forms and spaces: the movement of 1968 as it made its mark in that part of the — Western — world in which it was first recognised and designated according to the period of its escalation, in the course of the year 1968.<sup>10</sup>

In fact, the authors' attempt to advance an innovative methodological approach neglects the idea of 1968 as a collective movement, as a social subject marked by a profound sense of collective belonging and directed towards specific goals; instead, they adopt the aforementioned minimal notion. Although their approach highlights the central role of intellectual or, at the least, educated youth, it nonetheless fails to take into due consideration the different directions and goals pursued in other contexts. Without going into the aspects that characterise the movement of 1968, almost as if they take its history and meaning for granted, Flores and Gozzini seem more interested in accounting for the epochal impact of the historical "moment" of 1968 — rather than of the "movement" — on a global scale. 1968 thus becomes a factor — whose nature remains implicit and unclear to the reader — that determines cultural, political and social turmoil on a global scale, albeit in different times. On the basis of similar premises, it then becomes possible to identify a 1968 moment in Arab countries (Chapter III), drawing on incidents of student protests occurring in the streets of Cairo (February 1968), even if the authors admit that this was "a quite different circumstance than those that mobilised their counterparts in different parts of the world" (p. 92), or on the uprising of Palestinian youth against the raids of the Israelian army (March 1968), in the Jordan village of Karameh. Given the relevance of these clashes for the birth of the OLP in 1969, the authors do not hesitate to claim that "the Palestinian 1968 carries the name of Karameh: this means 'dignity', in Arab", and that it also designates the location of a battle of particular importance for the liberation movement of Palestine (p. 95). Yet, how and why the clashes of Karameh should be categorised under the 1968 heading remains unclear. Likewise, it is difficult to understand why the actions of university students in Bangladesh — to the background of the profound ethnic and secessionist tensions that were affecting the young Pakistani nation —

<sup>9</sup> Jean Joussellin. *Les révoltes des jeunes*, Paris, Ed. ouvrières, 1968, pp. 13-15.

<sup>10</sup> This interpretation of 1968, also advanced by Peppino Ortleva in his *Saggio sui movimenti del 1968 in Europa e in America*, Rome, Editori Riuniti, 1988, is discussed in detail in Marica Tolomelli, *Il Sessantotto. Una breve storia*, Rome, Carocci, 2008.

ought to be counted as a 1968-global event, rather than as just another example of postcolonial nationalism (pp. 98-102).

Even if the authors focus their attention on a much wider range of examples taken from various contexts, I believe that the mere protagonism of a young intelligentsia on the rise in diverse areas of the world, in the year 1968, cannot convincingly support the idea of 1968 as a “global history event”. Rather, it would be preferable to develop a line of reasoning that could highlight the specificities of the various contexts of mobilisation that culminated in the year 1968, but without neglecting, first of all, the structural fact of a global increase in the student population and, secondly, the search for elements that might link the Bangladeshi students’ claims to those of Italian or Dutch students, to give an example. That said, it must be noted that the interpretative weakness of this study also depends on the authors’ very aim, namely to grasp the importance of 1968 as a watershed moment rather than to offer a new reading of the movement of 1968. In view of this, we cannot claim that the work does not succeed in its intentions; the authors’ global perspective enables them to highlight lines of connection, cause-and-effect relations and dynamics of wide-ranging developments between the mid-1960s and mid-1970s. These developments were often accelerated or triggered by the social, political and cultural turmoil that culminated at the end of the 1960s, and were caught up in webs of relations, communicative networks, and in the circulation of ideas and people, well beyond the ideological boundaries set out by the Cold War. Nonetheless, these dynamics were activated not only by the movement of 1968 as it developed in the Western world, even if its cultural and political origins coincided with changes taking place on a global scale, such as decolonisation and the redefinition of geopolitical balances, conflicts dictated by the bipolar order, and the crisis of Soviet socialism.

### **A 1968? *The 1968***

A book that is diametrically opposed, in a certain sense, to that of Gozzini and Flores is Michele Battini’s *Un sessantotto* [A 1968]. Battini, too, has no pretension to offer a universal or catch-all definition of 1968, focusing instead on the intellectual genealogy of the political project that guided the movement’s formation, in particular within the Italian context. In doing so, he takes as a starting point a number of essential texts that were produced during the movement’s “auroral phase”. Hence, like Gozzini and Flores, Battini is not interested in tracing the history of the 1968 movement, and although he shows a deep awareness of the movement’s transnational dimension, he turns his attention to “a” 1968: the Italian experience, “the conflicting process that spanned the period from 1966-67 to 1972-73”. At first sight, the author does not seem to be offering any new perspectives on the object in question, focusing on a limited



number of published sources that are highly familiar to experts in the field: *Università come istituto produttivo* [The university as a productive institution] and *Contro l'Università* [Against the University], published respectively in Trento and Turin in 1968, and especially the *Tesi della Sapienza* [The Sapienza theories], a “canonical” text of 1968 in Italy, written during an occupation in Pisa in February 1967. Thanks to an impressive philological sensibility, the author manages to provide an in-depth and telling analysis of this text, highlighting its political and cultural origins and, in doing so, revealing the political nature of 1968 well beyond its national boundaries. Rather than to attribute a representative value to the *Tesi della Sapienza*, Battini succeeds — by attentively rereading the document — in historicising the intellectual genealogy of 1968 well beyond the specific political context, namely that which opens with the political instability of 1956 and the rise of a transnational “new Left”.<sup>11</sup> Within the Italian context, the themes and problems outlined in the *Tesi* of 1967 were posed in terms of an almost linear continuity with some of the most essential, problematic issues to have emerged from the founding moment of republican democracy or, more specifically, from its foundational text and its implementation in post-war Italy. The author attributes these issues to the tension between the [Italian] “Constitution” and “class struggle”, that is, between a Constitution that aims to address social inequalities and, as a result, the varying degrees of citizenship practices, on the one hand; and a political situation characterised by a top-down exercise of (more economic than political) command and, therefore, by the essential role of a class struggle capable of expanding spaces of access to and participation in the creation of the political will of Italian society, on the other hand.

It is in light of these analytical premises that we might explain the structure of Battini’s short yet significant piece of work. Following a first chapter on the “Theses” and on the (Italian/transnational) student movement, the author next moves to a consideration of Art. 3 of the Constitution, “Lelio Basso’s institutional masterpiece”, according to Stefano Rodotà.<sup>12</sup> He then focuses his attention on an intermediate link between the Constituent Assembly and the activities of the student delegations that gathered in Pisa in February 1967: Raniero Panzieri’s reflections on the workers’ control, developed between 1957 and the foundation of the “Quaderni Rossi” (1961). In this politico-cultural journey, which takes the reader from the principle of Art. 3 via the development of a strategy for class emancipation (in terms of a defeat of capitalist dominion) to the declaration — by the new “labour force in training” — of the will to contrast the compromise between formal democracy and capitalism, the author

<sup>11</sup> Gerd-Rainer Horn, *The spirit of '68. Rebellion in Western Europe and North America, 1956-1976*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Michele Battini, *Un Sessantotto*, Milan, Università Bocconi Editore, 2018, p. 54.

sheds light on significant nodes of continuity. A persisting line of thought continuously animates the most critical components of the Italian Left, in part active in the institutional area but, at the same time, also fully integrated in the debate on the transnational “new Left”.<sup>13</sup>

Obviously, Battini’s analysis is not a mere philological exercise, meant as an end in itself. The author’s intention is to understand when and how the movement distanced itself from the political project that had shaped it in the first place. This project aspired to an actual extension of full citizenship to the subaltern classes, aimed at stimulating real participation and the possibility to truly influence decision-making processes, to such an extent that even a defeat of the established order was not to be excluded. Moreover, even if this project was restricted to the specific political cultures that developed in different national contexts, it had guided the formation of student movements far beyond national boundaries; from the early 1960s onwards, the movement arose first in the United States — Battini, in fact, recalls another founding text of the movement, the Port Huron Statement (1962) — and then in federal Germany, France, and subsequently also in Czechoslovakia and Poland, albeit on the basis of a shared functional approach, which did not, however, coincide in terms of contents. Finally, this project was subject — in different ways and at different times — to a process of postponement or redirection, or what the authors calls *déravage*, which determines the movement’s defeat in Italy as in the other countries affected by 1968. Battini’s intention, in fact, is to explain why the original goal of substantial democracy, to be obtained via the progressive development of participation and social citizenship practices, vanishes in favour of an impatient idea of direct democracy, which is intended more as a free and full expression of — individual or collective — subjectivity, guided neither by normative models nor by well-defined reference points. Consequently, the movement moved from challenging the institutions of “formal democracy” via provocative acts and forms of “counterdemocracy”,<sup>14</sup> the so-called “pratica dell’obbiettivo” (practice of reaching goals), to direct confrontations and battles — among which armed struggle — against institutions that had become synonymous with police repression.

At one point, a *déravage* occurred whose effects turned out to be devastating for the fates of both 1968, in first instance, and the worker’s movement and the European Left, in the long run. In the author’s opinion, the reasons behind a similar derailment could be ascribed to two main factors. In first place, there was an internal factor, related to the movement’s composite nature,

<sup>13</sup> Marica Tolomelli, “Nuova sinistra” e Psiup. Considerazioni su legami e affinità non solo teoriche, in Learco Andalò, Davide Bigalli, Paolo Nerozzi (eds.). *Il Psiup. La costituzione e la parabola di un partito (1964-1972)*, Bologna, BraDypUS, 2015, pp. 73-84.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Rosanvallon, *Controdemocrazia. La politica nell’era della sfiducia*, Rome, Castelvecchi, 2012.

both from a social and a cultural perspective. This meant that, at one point, “the rebellion took on an existential connotation that was nurtured by the alternative countercultures, from music to artistic experiences”,<sup>15</sup> not easily reconcilable with the culture of the workers’ movement. Second, Battini identifies a structural factor linked to the repressive role of the State’s methods of control and existing power relations. Latter were strongly affected by the international recession of the 1970s and by the beginning of a process of capitalist reorganisation that aimed at substituting the Fordist model (at least in the Western world). These reasons undoubtedly explain certain crucial and hardly disputable aspects of the history of 1968. More problematic, however, is the idea of a “deviation” of 1968, as the title of the book’s last chapter suggests. This seems to imply that the movement’s goals, trajectories and stages had been clearly outlined from its earliest phase, and that its success would have been guaranteed by following the movement’s political programme. Battini is by no means naive about this point, and expresses clear awareness of the uncertainties and the insufficient solutions offered by the movement to the problems it had itself raised: “with regard to constitutional democracy, in 1967 the student movement seems to adopt a contradictory attitude, which goes beyond the claim of the right to an education viewed as a case of the right to work. A similar contradiction is of utmost importance to understand the reasons behind the limits of the movement’s political culture, which prevented its informal ‘leader groups’ to develop a strategy capable of creating unique forms of participatory democracy within a constitutional framework”.<sup>16</sup>

We must, however, note that 1968 was a collective movement: a highly composite subject that was constantly forced — as a movement — to redefine its goals, strategies and forms of action so as to maintain a good level of mobilisation, which was its life and soul. As the sociology of movements has demonstrated more than once, those movements aimed at radically changing the existing social order differ from organised political forces (e.g. political parties) and mobilisations born from single events, in that they cannot become definite within a strictly invariable platform.<sup>17</sup> This is also what happened to 1968: having taken shape with a certain horizon of aspirations, the movement unfolded in a continuous confrontation with new problems and in the search for answers, in a chain of reactions and counter-reactions provoked by the daily challenge to authorities and the established order. The movement’s political horizon was, in a certain sense, clearly recognisable from its very

<sup>15</sup> P. Rosanvallon, *Controdemocrazia*, p. 90.

<sup>16</sup> P. Rosanvallon, *Controdemocrazia*, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup> Studies that remain a classic point of departure include those by Donatella della Porta in the Italian context; Dieter Rucht, Joachim Raschke and Hanspeter Kriesi in German-language academia; Alain Touraine in the French academic world. Authors such as Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer N. Zald remain essential references in an Anglo-American context.

*statu nascenti*, but it was also an open horizon, composite and — especially — in continuous evolution. The “instances of existential liberation, supported by cultural suggestions that are unrelated to the cultures of the workers’ movement and inspired by psychoanalysis, anthropology and the various ‘sciences of language’, up to the point of developing autonomous practices”, to which the author makes reference,<sup>18</sup> didn’t emerge until later. Although perhaps easier to identify in contexts other than the Italian one, even in Italy these instances were a fundamental part of the cognitive orientation of 1968 ever since its creation. However, for some time they remained in the shadow of the intellectual authority of the “older militants and leaders, who had been trained between the late 1950s and the 1960s”; the latter were more distinctly directed towards the “heretical cultures of the workers’ movement (anarcho-unionism, workers’ councils, critical neo-Marxism)”.<sup>19</sup>

### Studying “anthropological substances” under the microscope

This brings us to the issue Francesca Socrate analyses in depth in her *Sessantotto. Due generazioni* [1968. Two generations]. Although it falls under the category of those texts that consider 1968 a global movement, which started with the climactic moment of the student protests in 1967-1968, thus consistent with the reading offered by Flores and Gozzini, Socrate’s study focuses on the Italian context in order to critically re-examine the movement’s generational dimension. As the title indicates, this re-examination aims at shedding light on the mixed nature of the “anthropological substance” that shaped the movement, and subsequently developed it from an age and gender perspective. In line with the clash between older and younger students that Battini also highlights, Socrate examines this aspect more in detail, and comes to identify two *social generations*, distinguished — and even separated — by an “anthropological break”.<sup>20</sup> It is in the composite nature of the alleged *generation of 1968* that the author traces one of the main reasons behind the famous ambiguities or contradictions — up to the *déravage* that Battini underlined — that are generally ascribed to 1968.

This generation is composed of at least two generations, distinguished by a small yet decisive age difference. The older generation grew up during the post-war transition period and was profoundly affected by the climate of the late 1950s, dense with political and cultural tensions, as well as by the crucial turning point of the crisis of July 1960. A generation anchored in and marked by the *statu nascenti* of the new democratic-republican order, which focused

<sup>18</sup> M. Battini, *Un sessantotto*, p. 89.

<sup>19</sup> M. Battini, *Un sessantotto*, p. 89 e ss.

<sup>20</sup> Francesca Socrate, *Sessantotto. Due generazioni*, Rome-Bari, Laterza, 2018, p. XV.

on the central role of highly organised parties that were structured around the country's political life. Moreover, it was very sensitive to Art. 3 of the new constitutional charter, as Battini also observes. The younger (though only by a few years) generation was born and grew up during the ascending phase of the *golden era*; it was lured by an exciting horizon of resources — economic but also, and mainly, cultural ones (an element discussed also in Galfré's study, which will be analysed further ahead) — and far more distant from political institutions. This is demonstrated by the decline in participation in all political youth organisations throughout the 1960s. Halfway the decade, the most perceptive sociological studies on youth behaviour — Socrate specifically refers to a study by Guido Martinotti — had already spotted meaningful links between the increasing signs of disaffection towards institutional politics and expressions of “accentuated radicalism”, which stressed “a more intense interest in certain basic values and a stronger inclination to engage in actions with other individuals not connected by a friendship relation”.<sup>21</sup>

In her analysis of the various aspects that define the two different generations, Socrate does not exclusively rely on statistics, sociological studies, texts produced by the movement and audio-visual sources. An expert in the use of oral sources, the author also falls back upon the personal accounts of former protagonists, both men and women. She thus manages to reconstruct — in an exceptionally unique way — the memory of 1968 that emerges from the numerous subjective narrations. Indeed, the author makes use of a kind of database composed of 63 oral history interviews, gathered over a period of 10 years, which have been transcribed, analysed and re-examined using a computational linguistics method, of which Socrate provides a brief technical explanation in the introduction. The full data and graphical representations of the used materials are presented in an appendix. Thanks to this possibility of extracting from the body of interviews a *characteristic vocabulary* and a *specific vocabulary*, as well as a *peculiar language* and *co-occurrences*, based on varying criteria (sex, year/place of birth, location of university enrolment in 1968, etc.), the computational linguistics method has enabled Socrate to widen the perspective, enhance the understanding and enrich the historical analysis of the object of her research in a highly original way. As a result, she is able to unravel and then critically reconstruct the question of the generational dimension of 1968. In fact, the words, the verb tenses and personal pronouns, the adverbs and the specific vocabulary, recognisable thanks to the author's unique linguistic analysis, manage to express and account for the differences in political socialisation and in worldly values, as well as for differences in gender and social belonging, around which *the* generations of 1968 are constructed. Consequently, differences emerge that should be traced back not so much to

<sup>21</sup> Guido Martinotti, *La partecipazione politica dei giovani*, in “Quaderni di Sociologia”, n. 3-4, 1966, pp. 366-368, cit. in F. Socrate, *Due Generazioni*, p. 24.

heterogeneous, cultural orientations; rather, they constitute the movement's composite anthropological substance, and may help to understand the nature of those ambiguities and contradictions that characterise 1968, which form the starting point of Socrate's study.

### **The youngest among the young**

Another essay that deals with the composite nature of the subjects linked to the generation of 1968, although motivated by a different interest in the matter, is Monica Galfré's *La scuola è il nostro Vietnam* [School is our Vietnam]. Based on largely unpublished and hitherto neglected sources, this study enhances the state of the art of existing historiography, as it takes into serious consideration the world of Italian secondary education. In tune with Gozzini e Flores's hypothesis regarding the global rise of the student population, the author highlights the leading role of a *third* generation, so to speak, which was also present within the movement: the first generation "to have attended a unified secondary school, which contributed to increase the distance between the level of education and cultural adaptation of new generations and that of previous generations".<sup>22</sup> Compared to the cultural profile of the university students, Galfré sustains that this third generation was a more homogeneous group, more deeply integrated "in the mass society of the economic boom and of consumer goods", having been immersed in it ever since infancy.<sup>23</sup> Clearly the author is referring to a homogeneity in worldly values, universal languages (transmitted to adolescents in a particularly strong way through music) and behavioural dispositions, which obviously does not cancel out the heterogeneous composition and social position of youth aged between 14 and 19 years. Nevertheless, the protests that shook up the world of Italian secondary education between autumn 1968 and spring 1969 highlight the dominance of cultural homogeneity over social heterogeneity. Drawing on the extremely rich documentation produced by headmasters, superintendents, ministerial supervisors and police prefects, held at the Central Archive of the State in Rome, in addition to texts produced by the students themselves (e.g. magazines, flyers, public statements), Galfré accurately and meticulously reconstructs a form of mobilisation that indiscriminately involved students attending upper secondary schools, technical schools and professional institutes.

On closer inspection, the new subjects that emerge from 1968 in the context of secondary education are mainly technical school students as well as students attending professional institutes, the latter at a later stage. This part of the student population coincides with those individuals that are the most explicit

<sup>22</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 121.

<sup>23</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 119.

expression of the “new educational claims of the subaltern classes”.<sup>24</sup> The upper secondary school students, by contrast, were equipped with more cultural tools and spaces of self-expression; consequently, they anticipated — to some extent — or launched the school protests even before the mobilisation took off. Thus, the context of Milan, which represented the movement’s “innovative peak”, had made its mark as early as 1966, with the notorious scandal involving students of the Parini high school; guilty of having discussed the topic of sexuality with their fellow students in ways hardly fitting with the prevalent puritan moral of the time, the students again caught public attention following an occupation in March 1968, which had a contagious effect.<sup>25</sup> In sum, if the upper secondary school students were most accustomed to the capture of speech among the students in secondary education that participated in the movement, those of the technical — mostly industrial — schools and professional institutes present themselves, instead, as the most vivacious part of the “anthropological substance” — to use Francesca Socrate’s words — of the protests. This is because, other than fully experiencing the classist nature of the school system, the latter also represent the crucial joining link that can convey the idea of “students and workers united in the battle” that was so dear to the Italian 1968 movement.<sup>26</sup>

In view of these rather heterogeneous social backgrounds, there are ultimately two facts that unite the school protests: the first must be linked to the struggle for the right to assemblies during school hours. This demand, which indiscriminately cuts across the most varied contexts of student mobilisation and responds to the students’ heartfelt need for debate, confrontation and decision-making, takes on a profound symbolic meaning. Viewed as a “freedom of expression of the base” or as “an effective weapon in the hands of the student population”,<sup>27</sup> the assembly represents a crucial instrument of direct democracy in the struggle against authoritarianism — of which the school was the “main centre of reproduction and legitimisation” — and against all those who express such authoritarianism:<sup>28</sup> school headmasters, the “treacherous” (yet often allied) teachers, parents, police or state authorities. The second essential fact, which characterises 1968 *tout court* and therefore not just the specific context analysed in this study, relates to the profound awareness of the links between the protests in the educational world, society as a whole and the numerous, ongoing conflicts in other parts of the world. The slogan chosen for the title of Galfré’s book explicitly conveys the continuous cross refer-

<sup>24</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 85.

<sup>25</sup> In this regard, the author cites the words of the superintendent of Milan who, in a letter to the Ministry of Public Education, defined the Parini occupation “the first breeding ground and centre of contagion of the [student] protest”. Ivi, p. 45.

<sup>26</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 86.

<sup>27</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 165.

<sup>28</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 115.

ences between the most diverse situations of social conflict and the insistence on self-representations aimed at putting the Italian secondary school students on the same level as the “youngsters of Vietnam, Latin America, Guinea, Mozambique and Angola who fight and die for their freedom”.<sup>29</sup> From this perspective, the historian’s analysis enriches the history of 1968 by including the secondary school students, with full rights, among the movement’s leading actors and with an autonomy of their own: no longer, then, as “the last wheel of the car” being pulled along by older brothers and sisters. Thanks to this shift in focus, Galfré not only manages to add a missing piece to the composite mosaic of 1968, but she also provides elements for a more complete understanding of the specific dynamics of the movement’s development and duration in Italy. Thus, if we consider the crisis that the university protests were going through in autumn 1968, as became evident during the national assembly held in September of that year at Ca’ Foscary University of Venice, the growth of the mobilisation in schools up to spring 1969 — accompanied by a continuous search for links with wider social conflicts — greatly contributed to stir up the protests and eventually trigger the worker’s Hot Autumn. In sum, from Galfré’s reconstruction it emerges that the function of secondary school students as a “third generation” of 1968 was anything but secondary in assuring the movement’s astonishing duration, if compared to other geographical contexts, such as the German one.

### A game of scales: from a global perspective to Eastern Europe

By shifting the focus from a global dimension to Eastern Europe, part of the historiography under examination here looks with new interest at the events of 1968 that left deep wounds beyond the Iron Curtain, leading to an irreversible crisis. This is particularly the case of Guido Crainz’s edited volume, *Il Sessantotto sequestrato* [The abducted 1968], although we should also mention a recent special issue of the journal *Europa Orientalis*. The latter, though, was more centred on the literary reception and cultural impact of these events.<sup>30</sup> Based on the premise of a “substantial indifference of the Western Left, beginning with the brief period of student movements”, Crainz aims to give a voice to those who were left unheard in the historical context of the late 1960s. He thus presents the reader with texts — backed up by additional documentation — written by others: Pavel Kolář on the Prague Spring; Wlodek Goldkorn on the Polish 1968 that “the West refused to see”; Nicole Janigro on the peculiarity of the very brief but intense 1968 in Yugoslavia. The volume ends with

<sup>29</sup> Flyer by student committees of Bologna, n.d., M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 120.

<sup>30</sup> Cristiano Diddi, Viviana Nosilia, Marcello Piacentini (eds.), *L'altro Sessantotto: Politica e Cultura nell'Europa centro-orientale e orientale*, “Europa orientalis”, XXXVIII, 2019.



an essay by the historian Anna Bravo. Linking back to Crainz's introductory chapter,<sup>31</sup> Bravo offers her thoughts on the possible reasons behind the failed dialogue — not to speak of solidarity or interaction — between the movements that emerged in the two areas of divided Europe.<sup>32</sup>

It goes without saying that neither Vietnam nor the sophisticated mechanisms of alienation that marked prosperous societies, capable of neutralising the oppositional force of the workers' movement, blinded as it was by dazzling mass consumption, inspired the university students of socialist countries such as Poland and Czechoslovakia, or the forgotten Yugoslavia. Nonetheless, the nature of the conflicts that sparked social mobilisation in these contexts can be attributed to the tension between Constitution and class struggle that Battini considers as the origin of “that” 1968 he analysed in his essay, but which — as I have already mentioned — was at the basis of the movement on a transnational scale. This was a tension between principles of social equality and supremacy of the popular classes, and a reality structured around hierarchies contingent upon obedience to the power that had given shape to peculiar forms of social disparities, and from which new economic elites had emerged. It was also a tension between principles of fundamental freedoms — “of speech, press, assemblies, political meetings, marches, demonstrations”, as declared by Art. 71 of the Constitution of the Popular Republic of Poland — and daily practices marked by systematic bans and censure, which occurred in the most diverse expressive circumstances, mostly cultural ones.<sup>33</sup> In a certain sense, as had happened in Western Europe, the clash between shared egalitarian values (none of the protests in Eastern Europe were antisocialist in nature) and a reality permeated with lies and mystifications was probably at the foundation of a discontent that was perceived and expressed — not by chance — mostly by a young intelligentsia that had evolved in the second post-war period. Still, beyond the mere functional equivalence that emerges from references to the foundational principles of post-war democratic governments, there was no substantial coincidence in goals and aspirations. As the chapters of Crainz and Bravo clearly point out, in Western Europe the movement aimed at overcoming the democratic semblances that post-war capitalism had adopted so as to guarantee a new validating basis; it aspired to a substantial democracy that would not settle for fundamental (read formal) freedoms and rights. In short, with regard to the demands that had emerged from the student protests in the

<sup>31</sup> Guido Crainz, *L'Europa che non abbiamo capito*, in Id. (eds.), *Il Sessantotto sequestrato*, Rome, Donzelli, 2018, pp. 3-62.

<sup>32</sup> Anna Bravo, *Parigi/Praga: dalla differenza alla separazione*, in G. Crainz, *Il Sessantotto sequestrato*, pp. 161-186.

<sup>33</sup> The Article is cited in the document by Zygmunt Bauman, *Contestazione a Varsavia*, p. 118, and has been partially reproduced in the book edited by G. Crainz, *Il Sessantotto sequestrato*, in the open section that contains Wlodek Goldkorn's contribution, *La Varsavia che l'Ocidente non ha voluto vedere*, pp. 101-121.

socialist world, the Western 1968 movement felt that it had reached a decisively more advanced stage. In other words, it noted a change of direction — in terms both of social criticism and goals — that could only enhance the distance from and scepticism towards the events happening on the other side of the Iron Curtain.

What further obstructed the possibility of dialogue was the fact that the reform movement in Czechoslovakia did not represent a uniquely grassroots opposition to authorities; rather, it was closely linked to aspirations shared also by the Communist party and by government bodies. This fact inevitably raised doubts and reticence among those who considered a grassroots mobilisation in open defiance to the State decisive in a successful strategy of deep social transformation. It is true that there were also more carefully considered attempts, at least in the case of the Prague Spring, as Crainz recalls, whereas Goldkorn and Janigro observe that the protests in Poland (March 1968) and Yugoslavia (June 1968) went unnoticed. Rudi Dutschke visited Prague as early as April 1968, announcing his solidarity with a shareable aspiration to a “socialist democracy”,<sup>34</sup> or a “democratic socialism”, as the students of Belgrade would announce not long thereafter.<sup>35</sup> Despite the importance that the words of a charismatic leader such as Dutschke might have had on the German student movement, widespread scepticism and a fundamental lack of willingness to understand the Czechoslovakian events nevertheless prevailed. The Western 1968 movement remained focused on more distant and “exotic” contexts, which could thus be interpreted and adapted more easily to the claims and aspirations of the movement itself. Not surprisingly, the cases of Vietnam, China and Cuba continued to exert an almost hypnotic fascination even after the limits and contradictions of these societies had become evident.

Although the distance and unrelatedness of the type of socialism these countries embodied undoubtedly nurtured distorted readings, if not actual mythicisations, the reasons behind the failed interest in Prague, Warsaw and, in particular, Belgrade, did not lie exclusively in the exotic charm of distant countries. One factor that does not emerge from the volume edited by Crainz, but which seems relevant to understand the Western movement’s weak empathy

<sup>34</sup> The text was swiftly translated in Italian, under the title *Dutschke a Praga*, Bari De Donato, 1968.

<sup>35</sup> A year on from the week that marked 1968 in Yugoslavia, in June 1969, *The three thousand words* was published; this document reiterated the fact that the students were, and continued to be, in support of a “democratic socialism” that had not yet been fully accomplished, in spite of the principles set out in the Constitution. Significantly, the document evoked the Prague Spring (and not the Western movement), calling back to mind a famous document — *The two thousand words* manifesto — written by Czechoslovakian intellectuals in June 1968, prior to the invasion. See Nicole Janigro, *Ambiguità e doppipezze del Sessantotto jugoslavo*, pp. 123-43, especially p. 136. Part of *The two thousand words* manifesto has been reproduced in Janigro’s book, pp. 89-93.

with its Eastern European counterparts, is that the socialist world of the Soviet Bloc had already lost its charm long before the “finishing blow” generated by 1968. Thus, any hopes for reform and evolution in terms of the completion of a socialist democracy had vanished completely with the events of 1956, from the criticism of Stalinism to the invasion of Hungary — more than a decade prior to 1968. The disappointment these events had generated played a decisive role in shifting the focus to more convincing — or, at the least, different — alternatives to a Soviet model no longer capable of raising hopes of real social change. Moreover, we mustn't forget that, among the intellectual origins of 1968 in the West, there was the transnational and multifaceted idea of a “new Left” that emerged, not surprisingly, after the divide caused by 1956, as part of the search for an alternative to Soviet socialism. All these elements enable us not to justify or judge, but to explain the reasons for which — in spite of the energies, the originality of thought and the human costs of the Eastern European uprising between the spring and summer of 1968 — the Western movement remained reserved and biased. We could therefore assert that in the context of the time, things could not have gone differently. The Western students weren't necessarily obtuse or insensitive; their hopes simply resided elsewhere. In other words, they thought they would find answers to their questions and aspirations in places where socialism was still in progress, especially in postcolonial contexts, rather than a universe trapped in rigid dogmatism and intolerant of attempts to change it from the inside.

It is understandable that, 50 years on, and especially in light of the relentless global crisis of the Left, one feels the need to reconcile with the insensitivity of the past, directing one's attention to a part of the world that has long been neglected. It is therefore comprehensible — as Anna Bravo reminds us — that certain leaders of the Italian 1968 should travel to Prague, as happened in 2008, to pay tribute to Jan Palach's memory. Bravo also points out that it is equally comprehensible, in retrospect, to feel utter embarrassment when remembering that “half a million of soldiers and 5,000 tanks were not enough to shift our politics of the time by a millimetre” and that we “ranked our pain on a scale of 1 to 10”.<sup>36</sup> However, it is not a matter of taking 1968 once again to trial for its limits and undeniable inconsistencies. Rather, we must try to fathom the reasons behind those reactions and find clues that may render 1968 understandable in all its different aspects. In sum, if the places of the memory of 1968 remain Paris or Berkeley, Berlin or Trento (the cover of Flores and Gozzini's book, too, features a symbolic image of “May '68”, despite the declared intention to adopt a global history perspective), this is because it was in the Western world that 1968 had most impact. Other than reaching extraordinary levels of radicalism, in the West it manifested itself in remarkable ways

<sup>36</sup> A. Bravo, *Parigi/Praga*, p. 136.

and with a certain coherence of its own: it managed to impose itself on the public scene more than in any other context of mobilisation, it openly challenged authorities, and it continued to produce effects and dynamics for years to come. Obviously the Prague Spring also played its part, becoming none other than “a watershed that anticipated the successive decline of the Left on a global scale, a moment in which a bold idea of democratic socialism merged with anti-utopian scepticism”.<sup>37</sup> Yet, if this event represented a turning point in the history of the European Left, it proved far less important for the idea and the practices of 1968 that the Western students were giving shape to.

For clarity, 1968 in the West took on a overt anti-systemic connotation, whereas in Eastern Europe it aspired more to humanise socialism and reconduct it to the path it had long derailed from, on the basis of a debate that was different — and, regrettably, also divided, Bravo observes — from the watchwords proclaimed in the Western capitals. These words are not nurtured by any love for deeply-rooted Eurocentric paradigms: I simply feel that not all epoch-making events that occurred in the year 1968 can be ascribed to the 1968 movement. To sustain the opposite means to continue harbouring a myth that history has no need for whatsoever.

## Legacies?

This statement brings me to the last publication under examination in this review: a “booklet” — as the same author defines it — about the legacy of 1968, from the hands of Paolo Pombeni. Published by il Mulino, in a series called “voices”, *Che cosa resta del '68* [What remains of '68] isn't the result of in-depth research, but a balanced reflection in which the expert and competent point of view of a historian intertwines with that of a citizen and former participant in the movement, albeit “from the fifth row”, as the author ironically states. Without claiming to be complete and avoiding — like all other essays examined here — a precise definition of a movement the author considers difficult to label given its multiple facets, Pombeni limits his reflection to the Italian context. He thus probes for traces and legacies of a movement to whom he attributes, much like Gozzini and Flores, dividing effects. From a methodological perspective, this is by no means an easy enterprise; as a collective movement, from its very beginning 1968 interacted with its surrounding environment, at times also triggering unintentional dynamics and effects. Consequently, it becomes even more arduous to distinguish between effects that can clearly be ascribed to 1968 and those following from the

<sup>37</sup> Kolář, p. 87. On the explosive impact of the Prague Spring on the Left, see Maude Bracke, *Which socialism? Whose Détente? West European communism and the Czechoslovak crisis, 1968*, New York, Central European University Press, 2007.

interaction with other social actors. However, 50 years is a long time, and if one considers the national history of the last five decades, it is evident that numerous profound changes have taken place: the very composition of Italian society has altered, as have the people and forms of representation, political cultures and, needless to say, the international context. All this makes it rather difficult to conduct an archaeological study of 1968, a fact that neither alarms nor scares the author.

Drawing on a professional competence developed over years of research, Pombeni simplifies his methodological approach by identifying a number of essential issues that the movement raised, to then move ahead in time so as to examine how these issues manifest themselves still in the present. His analysis thus unfolds along the lines of certain main points: the school system and education, in general; work and the role of the working classes; gender relations and forms of cohabitation that are alternative to the small middle-class family; the religious dimension; power relations and world views. What emerges is an indefinite picture, of which one may grasp both virtues and vices, as the author rightly observes, without drifting towards one-sided judgements of the movement, be they substantial condemnations or hagiographic glorifications. All in all, Pombeni's observations highlight the importance of what he considers the *pars destruens* of 1968 and the fragility of the *pars construens* the movement has given proof of. In other words, 1968 — at least within the limits of the Italian context — predominantly called into question, challenged, condemned and attacked the established order, though without having “[sufficiently] strong legs” to follow a trajectory of change: or, better still, to implement a profound social transformation on the basis of the pursued values. All this happened regardless of whether one considers the school system — where “the idea itself of school and education went into crisis”,<sup>38</sup> as Galfré aptly demonstrates — or interpersonal and gender relations, the reorganisation of work and production, the movement's interactions with the institutional arena of politics, or its judgement of the world. However, in these fragilities the author sees not the only, but certainly one of the explanatory factors of the many problems that continue to affect Italian society and its institutions: so much so, Pombeni concludes, that we now end up having to retrieve the famous slogan “this is only the beginning, the battle continues!” in order to proceed in our attempt to guide and govern — with the tools of reason and rationality — the transitional phase, the passage of humanity towards a new and yet to be defined “historic era”. If 1968 managed to give expression to some of the symptoms of this passage, raising important questions and problems, Pombeni claims that — in its search for alternative worlds — it slackened off and surrendered to “a naive belief in the utopia”.

While this judgement is certainly shareable, it fails to take into account two

<sup>38</sup> M. Galfré, *La scuola*, p. 122.

aspects: first, although it is true that 1968 sought to emphasise the existence of an alleged maieutic power of utopia, the latter was conceived as a concrete utopia, to put it in Ernst Bloch's words. That is, as a part of reality. Second, in spite of the fact that the 1968 movement was highly successful in occupying space in the public arena and gaining wide appeal in the long term, the ideas and visions it represented clashed, day by day, not only with resistances and contrasting values, but also, and especially, with all the complex elements related to that momentous transition that Pombeni rightly pinpointed. Thus, the reach of 1968 progressively diminished, leaving traces of its passage only in its capacity to continuously raise questions, debates, and historical and political reflections on the contradiction between principle and reality (constitutions and power relations), on the basis of which the movement had developed. In doing so, it revealed an extraordinary demystifying force.

### **What next?**

Fifty years on, it is clear that 1968 continues to evoke a certain historiographical interest. It is worth mentioning how, at least in Italy, the debate is being kept alive mostly by former leaders, even if we must acknowledge that they have increasingly sought to adopt a critical distance or to fall back upon innovative methodological approaches. In sum, many questions are still raised by those who have been marked, in varying degrees, by the formative experience of 1968. Yet, we must also attribute a considerable exploratory interest to the youngest generations, fascinated as they are by the impetuous and apparently unparalleled force of that movement. Frequent questions raised by young people regard the possibility that 1968 could be "repeated", that is, if a politically conscious youth might once again become a historical protagonist and "capture speech",<sup>39</sup> and consequently decide its direction, conquering a space of its own in the public scene. The answer to this question is simple: after all, we know very well that history does not repeat itself. However, studying 1968 can undoubtedly be useful to identify some of the ways in which collective action originated and developed in different political and social contexts. Additionally, it can help understand the weaknesses and limits of social movements when they are unable to equip themselves with adequate tools of representation, through which to reach out to the authorities.

With regard to the spatial perimeter of 1968, some have tried to expand the viewpoint, convinced that they could find traces of the movement across the globe. Departing from a conception of 1968 that is not necessarily Eurocentric, while remaining conscious of the salient peculiarities that it acquired in the

<sup>39</sup> Michel De Certeau (1968). *La prise de parole et autres écrits politiques*, Paris, Seuil.

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West, I feel that the tendency to stress the movement's global dimension reflects a fascinating challenge but also a forced act, with a scarce heuristic value. It might be more useful to adopt a comparative perspective, capable of highlighting possible, functional equivalences between the movements of the various areas in the divided Europe of the time, and perhaps also certain movements in postcolonial contexts (in particular post-1962 Algeria and a number of Latin American countries). An essential aspect of 1968 was the emphasis the movement placed on the issue of democracy, the search for more authentic and substantial forms of participation in public life, in associative life, in processes of shaping a political will, regardless of whether one wishes to decline democracy in terms of a participant or socialist form of democracy. Given the current, historical phase in which the spread of anti-politics is threatening people's affection for democracy *tout court*, it seems that this aspect could be picked up again and given value, so as to reread 1968 from a perspective that is, yes, European, but not because of this Eurocentric.

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