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Whatever happened to planning? Italy after EU intervention

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Abstract

As clearly stated by the Conference's proposal, after a decade of *European urban and spatial policies*, it seems the time now for a deeper reflection on their influences in spatial and urban planning practices in the EU countries.

A brief survey on what concerns Italy allows us to observe that EU planning intervention has affected practically all the *levels of territorial government*, through many dimensions of what is first and foremost a material innovation, triggered as if by contamination by the arrival on the scene of the new institutional player. Changes are mainly visible in:

- the shaping of spatial frameworks for planning policies;
- the proliferation of new, different tools for regional and urban planning;
- a progressive re-equilibrium between “central” and “peripheral” regions;
- new institutional and administrative attitudes to negotiation and partnership;
- the cultural way of treating urban problems and conceiving planning;
- new emerging competences and “jobs” for planners.

A reflection on the deepest meaning of those many changes – and, more generally, on the substantial reasons of the (not institutionalised) EU intervention in planning policies – could contribute to better understanding on what, not only in Italy, can be expected from EU planning and what, consequently, can be improved in European development strategies.

* This note summarises and deepens the topics dealt in the monograph, entitled *L'innovazione comunitaria* (Community innovation) and edited by the author for a forthcoming issue of *Urbanistica* journal (Janin Rivolin, 2002).

1. EU planning: a concise framework

This note focuses on the (important) impact of EU urban and spatial policies on Italian planning practices, assuming that the results that emerge from this brief survey can contribute to a common understanding on what European planners can expect from EU planning and, consequently, how they could manage to improve it.

It therefore seems appropriate to outline a preliminary framework of what we intend by «EU planning»¹, not forgetting that responsibilities for planning policies are not recognised and defined by the Treaties, in spite of their important modifications after the mid 1980s. The fact remains that the European Union began a period of study programmes in the 1990s, which in part led to political documents and above all to «structural» territorial and urban actions, the end to which does not appear to be in sight; if anything, there appears to be a future of developments and further analysis. In the range of study programmes and political documents, the approval in 1999 of the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP) demonstrates, more than the fertility of the «policy aims» declared in the document (in reality criticised by many because of its objective superficialness and incoherence)², the value of a new process of recognition, primarily sanctioned by the «informal» constitution of a European Council of Ministers responsible for spatial planning³. The acceptance by national governments of the invitation to «co-operation for European territorial development»⁴ also allowed the Commission (Regional Policy Directorate-General, in particular) to dedicate itself, in the second part of the decade, to urban issues and support for local development actions⁵. The Union's «structural» action was concentrated around these two programme objectives – incentives for *inter-institutional co-operation for spatial development* and the promotion of *exemplary processes of urban regeneration*, put into practice after a laborious and delicate process of guidelines for Community Initiatives. On the one hand, 60 cross-border «co-operation areas» and a dozen transnational «strategic spaces» were established, and, on the other, the Urban Pilot Projects and Urban programmes in 260 European cities represent the essential evidence of the state of things. «Trans-European co-operation intended to encourage harmonious and balanced development of the European territory» and the «economic and social regeneration of cities and of neighbourhoods in crisis in order to promote sustainable urban development» are the goals today set respectively for Interreg and Urban. To this end, financial contributions are made to European states for over five and a half billion euros; more than half of the resources for Community Initiatives from now until 2006⁶.

¹ Many recent studies contribute to a definition of EU planning; among the others: Bengs and Böhme, eds., 1998 and 1999; Christiansen and Kirchner, 2000; Faludi, 1998; Faludi and Waterhout, eds., 2002; Faludi and Zonneveld, 1997; Janin Rivolin, ed., 2000; Kunzmann, 1998; Williams, 1996.

² «In principle it is difficult to criticize these positions, but what would have to happen when those aims are in conflict (i.e. the majority of common interest situations)?» (Palermo, 1999a, p. 154, translated).

³ The informal Council of Ministers responsible for Regional/Spatial Planning is precisely the institution that proposed, in 1993, and approved, in 1999, the ESDP (European Union, 1999).

⁴ *Co-operation for European territorial development* is the sub-title of the well-known report *Europe 2000+* (European Commission, 1994), following the first official Community document on spatial planning: *Europe 2000* (European Commission, 1991).

⁵ Cf. the Communications of the European Commission (1997a and 1998), *Sustainable urban development in the European Union: a framework for action* and *Towards an Urban Agenda in the European Union*; the latter discussed during the European Urban Forum, organised by the Commission in Vienna on 26-27 November 1998.

⁶ Interreg III and Urban II are, together with Equal (social policies) and Leader+ (rural development), the Community Initiatives activated for the period 2000-06. Introduced in 1989 and having now reached the third generation, the CI are the specific financial instruments of European structural policy, i.e. aimed at supporting action held to be of particular strategic value from the community point of view. The direct action of the European Union in cities has also been implemented in the past decade through the Urban Pilot Projects, made operational in 1989-93 and 1997-99, with the directing of over 30% of the funds granted by the European Investment Bank and the identification of specific actions in the framework of the sector Framework Programmes (R&D and Environment).

These resources, which before the 1988 reform of structural funds were not even envisaged⁷, are in reality a minority share. The most substantial part of funds – currently a total of about one hundred billion euros – continues to be reserved for national multi-sector programmes which, however, following the reform have begun to be directed towards «eligible areas» (regions and municipalities) selected by the European Union, to tackle «priority objectives» valid for «programme periods» of six/seven years⁸. The trend towards “territorialisation” of programmes and resources might appear almost subliminal in the «mainstream» of structural funds, but as the Italian example of the so called *Nuova Programmazione* (New Programming)⁹ demonstrates, is not without a certain effectiveness in the long term.

2. Europe in Italy: how are planning practices changing?

If for some time now, in Italy as elsewhere in Europe, the experiences recalled above have attracted attention and tended to pervade discussion in the discipline, it must be admitted that more careful reflection on their impact on national traditions of governance of urban and regional change does not yet seem to have been put forward.

We could find the reasons of that apparent lack of interest, partially, in the lack of institutionalisation of EU planning (i.e. the exclusion of responsibilities for planning policies from the Treaties) and of the consequent legal interactions with national planning systems; partially, in the almost “unexpected” character of Community intervention in urban and spatial policies, thus considered a sort of “mysterious phenomenon” (because unknown or not understood) within much of the scientific community; partially, at least in some important cases – the ones of countries with a more solid planning tradition, presumably “creditors” towards the rising EU planning¹⁰ – in the absence of such a relevant “change”, needing a scientific reflection.

Putting aside the temptation to enquire into the “planning systems” (which would have sense if the Union had the right to intervene, as in other fields, through legislation), a more amateur exercise in observation of the changes that have occurred in recent years in governance of urban and regional transformations can reveal – in the case of Italy – the many dimensions of what is first and foremost a material innovation, triggered as if by contamination by the arrival on the scene of the new institutional player.

⁷ The structural funds, which currently constitute 37% of expenditure in the Community budget (constituted by 1.27% of each member state's GNP), are the resources that the European Union reinvests in the territory of its member countries in relation to structural policy decisions. With the reform of 1988, the role of the structural funds was recognised as a primary Community means for economic and social cohesion.

⁸ The objectives identified for the period 2000-06 are: 1) Promotion of the development and structural adaptation of the lagging regions; 2) Encouragement of the economic and social conversion of regions with structural difficulties; 3) Encouragement of the adaptation and modernisation of education, training and employment policies (EC Regulation no. 1260/1999).

⁹ *Nuova Programmazione* is a common term adopted in Italy to indicate (positively) the new deal of economic national planning after 1996 when, under the Prodi government, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi (the current President of the Italian Republic) was nominated Minister of the Treasury, Budget and Economy: a Department for development and cohesion policies was then specially created to plan and manage structural funds, new development tools like the *Patti territoriali* (see beyond in the text and note no. 15) and the overall policies for the development of Southern Italy (cf. Ministero del Tesoro, del bilancio e della programmazione economica, 1998).

¹⁰ We must not forget, among the EU planning studies, an interesting attempt to compare national planning systems and policies in Europe (European Commission, 1997b; see also: Newman and Thornley, 1996; Balchin and Sýkora, 1999). As well as for the structural funds, the identification of «creditor countries» and «debtor countries» shaping EU planning would promise itself to be a further exercise, useful if not fundamental for comprehension.

2.1. New strategic contexts, new roles and tools for planning

Whatever is laid down by legislation, Italy has not managed in sixty years to identify national territorial frameworks¹¹, yet has for some time now seen the re-blossoming in the words and images of decision-makers and actors of original and broader strategic contexts of reference and self-recognition, tending to be open to taking a glance over the border. It is certainly true that, within the ESDP progress, Italy (among other countries) has subordinated its own national vision to a European image made mainly by others¹². Nevertheless, new perspectives and opportunities (and also risks, of course) – whether imposed or accepted – are quickly emerging from the new “geographies” traced by the EU planning: not only the ESDP, but also the TEN (Trans-European Networks) and, more recently and consistently, the transnational strategic areas of Interreg IIC and IIIB. Within that Community Initiative, Italy is currently involved, with many possible consequences for its future spatial strategies, in four transnational areas (fig. 1): *Alpine Space* (the entire Alpine Arc, from the French Côte d’Azur to Austria and Slovenia), *Archimed* (the southern part of the Mediterranean Sea, between Southern Italy, Greece and Northern Africa), *Cadises* (the regions linked to the Eastern Europe, from the Baltic Sea to the Ionian Sea) and *Western Mediterranean* (the area of the so called Latin-Mediterranean Arc, from Sicily to the Portuguese Algarve).

Furthermore, the central government administration appears to have been motivated to seek out new roles for itself and to test out forms of intervention whose methods and styles are clearly inspired by Community practices. The *aporia* that can be attributed to the *Nuova programmazione*¹³, initiated by the Department for development and cohesion policies of the Treasury under Minister Ciampi (thanks also to the concrete support of the Economy and Labour National Council), do not wipe out the value, if nothing else symbolic, of the declared attempt to finally bring out the demand for investment for the country’s major decisions “from the territory”¹⁴: *Patti territoriali* (Territorial pacts) and *Contratti d’area* (Area contracts) are the most successful tools created in the past decade in assigning to the territory a strategic role within economic development policies; these further constituted a model for more recent “experiments”, such as the *Patti di pianificazione* (Planning pacts) and *Patti agricoli* (Agricultural pacts)¹⁵.

¹¹ The first national Planning Act no. 1150/1942 states: «In order to orient or to coordinate urban planning activity in given parts of the national territory, the Ministry of Public Works has the faculty, on the recommendation of the Higher Council of the Public Works, draw up territorial co-ordination plans» (art. 5, cod. 1, translated). The Ministry of Public Works never exploited its «faculty», and the only clear attempt to link economic programming to a territorial framework was attempted at the end of 1960s: the so called *Progetto 80* (cf. Ministero del Bilancio e della programmazione economica, 1969 and 1971) remained in any case mainly an academic experience, soon forgotten and without any apparent consequence for actual policies.

¹² This is exactly the current cost for not having had in the past the technical capacity or, more probably, the political will, to define strong national spatial frameworks; in contrast, this has been done by the French government through the Datar, by the German through the Bfml and even by the “small” Dutch government through the Nppa (cf. Dematteis, 2002).

¹³ Briefly, «the *Nuova programmazione* cannot consist only in a revision of methods and procedures, but should aim to offer more significant conditions of construction and legitimacy of policies at different levels» (Palermo, 1999b, p. 141, translated).

¹⁴ «To create unitary programming, resource-based, and territory-focused. Unitary and integrated programming, which assumes the territory as a reference for development policies, must constitute the basis of the common work for the definition of methods and procedures...» (Ministero del tesoro, del bilancio e della programmazione economica, 1998, p. 10, translated, italic in the original text). See also note no. 9.

¹⁵ *Patti territoriali* and *contratti d’area*, both created under the Budgetary Act no. 662/1996, are tools for co-ordinated programming of development actions within employment policies (cf. Salone, 1999). *Patti di pianificazione* and *Patti agricoli*, adopted by specific decrees in 2000, represent respectively attempts to link employment and planning policies and to implement similar actions within agricultural policies.

In the same way, the speculative traps¹⁶ that are fatally hidden amongst the numerous positive results of the “complex programmes” of urban regeneration which prospered in the last decade do not detract from the General Directorate for territorial co-ordination’s (Ministry of Public Works) merit of having grasped the possibility of a territorial planning design shared (and implemented) by the local authorities¹⁷: *Programmi integrati d’intervento* (Integrated intervention programmes), *Programmi di riqualificazione urbana* (Urban regeneration programmes), *Programmi di recupero urbano* (Urban recovery programmes), *Contratti di quartiere* (Quarter contracts) and «PRUSST» form, in this case, the «family» of new tools¹⁸.

2.2. Central/peripheral regions re-equilibrium and “forced training” to agreement

Despite the significant developments of the Interreg Community Initiative, the strategic horizons of regional administrations in the context of inter-territorial competition seem frankly less emancipated and well-defined, even though a progressive re-equilibrium between “central” and “peripheral” regions in terms of initiative and organisational capacity can be seen. Typical border regions – such as Friuli - Venezia Giulia, Trentino - Alto Adige, Valle d’Aosta (the Alpine regions) – which are historically linked to cross-border macro-regions, but were artificially separated by political border and reduced to a peripheral position within the national space, seem to have found a “new centrality” in the construction of European space, thanks also to the lengthy life of the *cross-border strand* of Interreg (fig. 2). This Community Initiative’s intentions, when launched for the first time in 1990, were in fact to develop cross-border co-operation and help areas on the Union’s (internal and external) frontiers overcome the specific problems arising from their relative isolation within the national economies and the Union as a whole.

More interesting is the fact that the same remarks also seem to be true for other Italian “peripheral” regions – the Southern regions (Basilicata, Calabria, Puglia) and the islands (Sardegna and Sicilia), generally not involved by the cross-border strand of Interreg but linked to (not simply set apart from) cross-border countries inside and outside the European Union by sea corridors of about a hundred miles. The merits of EU planning are probably visible, in this latter case, through the use of structural funds under Objective 1 (fig. 3) and its consequent national interpretation within the already mentioned *Nuova programmazione*¹⁹.

¹⁶ Concerns expressed effectively, for example, by Dino Borri (2000) and Antonio Tosi (2000) seem to be well motivated and worthy of close attention.

¹⁷ «Integrated local actions have been promoted in several fields in the last ten years. Indeed, a strong impetus towards innovating urban and regional policies has been witnessed during the last decade, both at the local and strategic levels. Innovation has resulted from different attempts in different fields [...]: some European Union initiatives [...]; successive and progressively more sophisticated versions of the national urban renewal programme [...]; the agreements devised by the *Patti territoriali* in the framework of the national “negotiated” programming fostering local development, later assumed by the EU, as well as Pacts for employment; and finally the “strategic vision” aimed to amalgamate locally the actions envisaged by the Community Support Framework» (Cremaschi, 2002, translated).

¹⁸ The *Programma integrato d’intervento* was introduced (Act no. 179/1992, art. 16) to overcome the urban complexity of action policies for public housing and has subsequently been adopted, in many regional legislations, as an ordinary implementation plan. The *Programma di riqualificazione urbana* (M.D. 21.12.1994), the *Programma di recupero urbano* (M.D. 31.12.1995) and the *Contratto di quartiere* (M.D. 20.05.1998) can be considered subsequent new versions of the former. Finally, the «PRUSST» (M.D. 8.10.1998) stands for *Programma di riqualificazione urbana e di sviluppo sostenibile del territorio* (Programme for urban regeneration and for sustainable development of the territory) and currently represents the highest stage of evolution of the «complex programmes» of urban regeneration in Italy.

¹⁹ However, that changing process has started already since the beginning of the ‘90s, as Grote (1996) stated that «the institutional disparities between the Italian regions and the most successful regions in Europe might still be substantial, but EU cohesion policy has offered opportunities and given direction to further institutional and administrative reforms in Italy» (p. 287). See also: Bagnasco and Oberti, 1998.

Furthermore, in spite of the major difficulties in implementing the *transnational strand* of Interreg²⁰, the need to elaborate joint co-operation programmes between extra-national administrations, starting by drawing up rules valid in different and not always compatible legal contexts, seems to have triggered, in any case, practices of “forced training” of state and regional bureaucracies in inter-institutional negotiation. This has somehow provided a major opportunity to put into practice and experiment the principles of inter-institutional partnership introduced in Italy during the same decade, through new procedural tools such as the *Accordo di programma* (Programme agreement), the *Conferenza dei servizi* (Conference of services) or the *Accordo quadro* (Framework agreement)²¹. To implement new forms and models of strategic, co-operative and bargaining actions to stimulate local, non-local, public and private actors in development and integrated territorial regeneration projects can perhaps reveal itself as the most profitable way to “institutionally capitalize” the spontaneous diversity and variety of the thousand «local systems» of which Italy is historically composed²².

2.3. Planning practices as local development strategies and new “jobs” for planners

At the local level, starting with the urban areas affected by the new regeneration programmes and through the fertile dissemination of best practices and the desire to stand out (in turn favoured by widespread confidence in the “EU brand” – in a country which had taxed itself in order to embrace the euro...) ²³, seems in many ways more willing to embrace and metabolise the innovation in progress, so much so that one can foresee the possibility of «new paradigms for actions of territorial governance»²⁴.

In other words, EU planning intervention can be attributed with a fair amount of the «changes» that have begun to be seen in «planner’s jobs in Italy»²⁵. These are linked, in essence, to the rise of planning practices as *strategies for local development* instead, as was traditionally true, always and only as an “administrative duty” or as “designer projects”²⁶.

²⁰ This is what I generally found when analysing the Interreg transnational programmes (Janin Rivolin, 1999) and particularly based on the significant case of the *Alpine Space* programme (Janin Rivolin, 2001).

²¹ The *Accordo di programma* (Act n. 142/1990, art. 8) and the *Conferenza dei servizi* (Act n. 241/1990, art. 14) are negotiation procedures to co-ordinate actions taken by institutional administrations or agencies. The *Accordo quadro* (Act no. 662/1996, art. 203) is currently the most advanced contractual model for public/private partnership programmes. For an analytical comment on recent transformations in Italian political-administrative processes, see: Bobbio, 1996. For a wider comprehension on their possible institutional added value on Italian «civic traditions», see: Putnam, 1993.

²² Local systems can be considered the Italian answer to spatial competitiveness, started with the shaping of what in the 1970s and 1980s would have been identified as «local production systems», «industrial districts» etc. (Bagnasco, 1977 and 1988; Becattini, ed., 1989; Goodman *et al.*, eds., 1989). This model, seen in Europe and worldwide as a precursor of the post-Fordist development phase, is presently spreading to many types of activities, generating technological, agro-industrial, tourist, cultural, and rural local systems.

²³ Italians rather willingly paid an added «tax for Euro» in 1996, under the Prodi government, in order to allow Italy to meet the so called «Maastricht parameters».

²⁴ This consideration stems, for example, from the recent results of research on the Urban Programme in Italy, carried out by the Polytechnic of Milan and other institutions for the Ministry of Infrastructures (Ministero delle Infrastrutture dei trasporti, 2001).

²⁵ «How planner’s jobs are changing in Italy» was the title of a report presented by the *Società Italiana degli Urbanisti* (Italian Society of Planners) at the Turin National Conference on 5th December 1997. This document expressed the results of a survey based on 23 «interviews with professionals and others responsible for institutional and research bodies for urban and regional planning» and on 10 «*fiches* concerning new institutional forms of planning and policies requiring new professional competencies or determining new conditions in the planning profession». The whole report and further comments have been edited by: Balducci, ed., 1998. Cf. also: Laino, 1999 and 2002.

²⁶ A town planning tradition took shape in Italy rather recently: Zucconi (1989), for example, represents its origins as the result of a «dispute» among different disciplines on the technical “right” to plan the cities, won around the 1930s by the architects. It is perhaps not misleading to describe the subsequent evolution of town planning in Italy as a repeated oscillation of planners attention between the administrative duty of land use regulation (cf. Campos Venuti, 1967) and

On the one hand, we have to consider the impact brought about by the EU's key principles (subsidiarity, integration, partnership, sustainability, improvement of urban governance) on the technical and administrative culture of local authorities. This apparently led to overcoming a sectoral and hierarchical orientation, that has traditionally characterised public policies in Italy, through new forms of co-operation, collaborative and negotiated activities between the various sectors and levels of public administration. Important practical implications have gushed, in particular, from the involvement and participation of voluntary committees, associations and citizens in the development of action programmes, allowing fuller use of available "resources" for urban policies and a strengthening of the legitimacy and effectiveness of the actions taken²⁷.

On the other hand, we observe the effects induced by some specific "practices" that EU planning has generated. For example, the emphasis on specific problems affecting portions of the city or territory (run-down neighbourhoods, deprived urban areas, places of excellence etc.) has intensified a process that, in certain respects, was already under way, of deconstruction of solid concepts like "urban system" or "city planning"; also generating, of course, a problematic rapport with the comprehensive, globalising and a-temporal character of ordinary planning tools. Furthermore, the promotion of thematic networks and programmes has facilitated an increase in the individual and collective actors involved in urban policies, with a strengthening of their capabilities of self-organisation into aggregations that are mutable according to specific themes or situations. Their contributions have led to learning processes, better understanding and the capability of defining problems and proposals which have also been developed in more ample contexts than local ones. In this perspective, finally, urban planners have become involved in the design and implementation of innovative "plans", not only in the sense of a new interpretation of the urban planner's traditional work (fig. 4).

Consequently, we can currently observe in Italy a relative shift of technical focus from city plans (and their designers) to urban policies (and to the cities). New institutional actors, social practices and operators are thus now crowding the stage of Italian planning: the risks of confusion and distortion appear, as things stand, more limited than the solutions experimented, the models of action invented or the occasions triggered for genuine product and process innovations in the methods and styles of urban and territorial governance.

4. Searching for the sense of the change

If we do not consider it sufficient to merely record or celebrate the "change" that undoubtedly stems from recent planning practices in Italy, good reasons exist to view EU planning as a *catalyst*, if nothing else, of the multiple and varied phenomena observed. If this is true, some interest should be aroused by the anything but clear and yet substantial nexus between the recent and growing commitment of Community institutions in planning and urban policies and the most profound reasons for the ongoing process of European unification.

The (never institutionalised) activism of the European Union in planning and urban matters begins, in fact, following the decision on the *completion of the single market* and at the same time as the one on *economic and monetary union*²⁸. The deepest aspirations of the Community to become a

the search for new design poetics for town projects (cf. Secchi, 1989). For a critical comment on the more recent «urban plan transformations» in Italy, see: Mazza, 1997.

²⁷ «This is a major problem for a public system, such as Italy's, which encounters serious difficulties in moving from a logic based on the management of rules and regulations, towards the promotion of projects and programmes; and from the role as provider of sectoral services, towards a role as enabler of combined forms of action» (Padovani, 2002, translated).

²⁸ The European heads of state and governments made this commitment with the signing, respectively, of the Single European Act (1986) and the Treaty on the Union of Maastricht (1992). Never before (except for the progressive Community enlargements) had the opportunity arisen to modify the Treaties of Rome that founded the European

Union justify the requirement of a substantial intervention in planning policies; which is legitimated, on the formal level, through the simple yet fundamental principle of «economic and social cohesion»²⁹. In the name of this principle – assumed as a firm balance for more prosperous development, as without borders, but for this very reason, its distributive effects are even more uncertain – the territory becomes, as appears obvious, a condition for the implementation (and verification) of an “equally profitable” and, therefore, universally acceptable union for the European Communities. Briefly, in the absence of inner cohesion the European Union cannot exist, in the same way as cohesion cannot without equal territorial opportunities³⁰.

This acknowledgement, once acquired, leads to the question whether, at least in Italy, the sudden “big bang” of guidelines, «*docup*» (single programming documents), CIP (Community initiative programmes), study programmes, action plans, co-operation areas, *comité de pilotage* and pilot projects of various kinds is nothing else than the “instrumental face” (also more seductive, therefore, to technicians and professionals) of a common will, politically assumed but mostly still unexpressed, of answering the Community *need for economic and social cohesion*. Even though what is asserted may have only a forward-looking and symbolic value (we are moving, after all, in the conceptual domain of the «community» processes...)³¹, it leads to the suspicion that a project for planning – a hard-won aspiration in Italy – has really begun to take shape, once the responsibility of being part of Europe was perceived by the political community.

For those who are interested in understanding and improving EU planning, the time for a supra-national comparison on its local effects appears not only mature but also necessary.

Community (1957). These have so far been modified twice, with the Treaties of Amsterdam (1997) and Nice (2001), both aimed at increasing the supranational powers of the European Union.

²⁹ Title XVII of the unified Treaties covers the ways in which the Community pursues the principle of economic and social cohesion, defined for the first time at Maastricht in terms of «harmonious development» in order to «reduce the gap between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions».

³⁰ See the two official Reports on economic and social cohesion of the European Commission (1997c and 2001). Cf. also: Hooghe, ed., 1996.

³¹ In the preface to his recent work, Bagnasco (1999) recalls (quoting Busino from the *Einaudi Encyclopaedia*) the «fundamental place» that the «community» occupies as «an instrument for the creation of a social image» and as «a means to foster the birth of new values, new social relations», not having, instead, «any value» as a scientific concept (*ibid.*, pp. 13-14, translated). As far as the European Community is concerned, how else could we define the design of the Europe of the «Founding Fathers», embraced in the post-war period by only six national states, if not forward-looking and symbolic? And how could we define the attempt by the Prodi Commission and the fifteen Community heads of government to find a now shared approach to institutional reforms and political decisions aimed at enlarging the European Union up to around thirty countries?

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