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WOULD YOU TRUST AN ITALIAN POLITICIAN?
PRELIMINARY EVIDENCE FROM ITALIAN REGIONAL POLITICS*

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ABSTRACT

This paper evaluates the erosion of electoral accountability of the “Governors” of the Italian Regions in three subsequent political moments: 1) the elections; 2) the inaugural speeches of the Governor; 3) their first important policy decision, the long-term regional budget (DPEFR). We use content analysis (Laver et al., 2003) to assess the position of each Governor on a left to right distribution at the moment of the inaugural speeches and of the DPEFR. We then analyze the correlation between the distributions of 1) the electoral results and the inaugural speeches and 2) the inaugural speeches and the DPEFR, under the hypothesis that greater similarity can be interpreted as greater accountability. The analysis detects some erosion of accountability from the elections to the inaugural speeches, and a more serious one from the inaugural speeches to the DPEFR. A series of ANOVA tests suggests that the Region’s relative economic position/dependency on transfers from the central governments partly explains such loss of accountability.

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1. Goals of the analysis

...You probably wouldn't, would you?

In this paper we try to give some empirical evidence to this widespread *a priori*. Specifically, we examine the electoral results, the programmatic speeches and the long-term budget documents (*Documento di Programmazione Economica e Finanziaria Regionale*, DPEFR) of the Presidents of the Italian Regions (usually and heretofore called "Governors") and verify the degree of consistency among them. The greater this consistency, the greater the accountability of the Governors, and viceversa. We then look at the relative economic conditions of the Regions to verify how they affect such accountability.

Before describing the analysis, three clarifications are in order: the first is about the theoretical underpinnings of our inquiry, the second about the methods and the strategy of the analysis, the third about the data and the selection of the sample.

The theoretical literature on the political accountability (Persson, Roland and Tabellini, 1997; Persson and Tabellini, 2000) shows that, during a legislature, voters rationally allow the government to appropriate a certain amount of "rents from holding office". Although this appropriation reduces their welfare, voters still reelect the government, in order to eliminate its incentives to divert even more. The extent to which this erosion occurs depends on 1) the institutional framework in which the principal-agent relationship between voters and representatives develops, as presidential systems are characterized by more slack than parliamentary ones; 2) the ideological heterogeneity of politicians competing for office, as a high degree of ideological polarization makes efficiency no longer the only criterion to evaluate the performance of elected politicians (Besley, Persson and Sturm, 2006); 3) the time horizon of the elected officials, whereby longer legislatures are characterized by lower electoral accountability. In particular, Persson, Roland and Tabellini (1997) and Lagona and Padovano (2007) show that elected officials enjoy greater discretionary power the further away they are from electoral events. We thus expect that an

erosion of the accountability of the Governors of the Italian Regions grows as one moves away from their election. The necessary hypothesis that elected officials expect to be voted out of office when they do not satisfy the preferences of the majority of the voters is plausible in the context of Italian regional politics. First, alternation of governing coalitions has been an actual possibility in regional elections since the establishment of the Regions in the 1970s, thus well before that similar patterns of replacement took place at the level of national politics. Italian regional politicians have always known that they were not sitting on the same political rent that national politicians enjoyed for such a long time (Putnam, 1993). Second, the 1995 reform of the institutions of Regional Governments introduced a series of provisions that a) greatly increased government stability and b) lowered the cost of voting against the incumbent, by eliminating the risk of having a weak and unstable government. Both effects seem to have further stimulated alternation in government (Veronese, 2007).

In order to verify that this process of progressive erosion of accountability takes place, we compare three important moments of regional politics, which are usually included in a six month time span: 1) the electoral results; 2) the so called inaugural or programmatic speeches of the Governor before the Regional Council (the regional legislature) during the first confidence debate; 3) the first long term budget document signed by the Governor. The first moment can be taken as the expression of voters' preferences; the second constitutes the first verbal reaction of the elected Governor to these preferences; the third is the first important political choice of the standing government. Information about these three moments has been gathered for the two regional legislatures that followed the 1995 institutional reform, the one ensuing the elections that took place between 1998 and 2001, and the one after the elections of 2003-2006 (not all Regions celebrate the elections at the same time)¹. The available observations for the Italian Regions are then distributed

¹ A straightforward application of the "Do they walk like the talk?" type of inquiry would classify the DPEFR in the talk, rather than walk, dimension, because the DPEFR is essentially a programmatic document. In this respect, a better indicator of the walk dimension would be data about the financial and economic performance of the Regional governments. At the moment such data are still unavailable, as most observations refer to regional governments elected

on a left to right political dimension. The method of distribution is based on expert evaluations for the electoral results; for the programmatic speeches and the long-term budget documents we have used the content analysis methodology of Laver et al. (2003). We thus obtain three left to right distributions of the Regions, one for each moment. The extent to which the Regions keep their relative positions in these three moments is interpreted as a sign of electoral accountability of the Governors. The idea is that, in such a case, Governors reflect in their programmatic speeches of the confidence debate the preferences that voters expressed in the elections, and start to program policies, reported by the long-term budget documents, consistent both with the programmatic speeches and with voters' preferences. Conversely, the more Regions change positions in the three moments, the greater the erosion of electoral accountability in the practice of politics.

Two reasons motivate our choice of the Italian Regions as the sample for this analysis. First, content analysis has never been used for Italian regional politics so far. The only application to Italian data that we are aware of is Giannetti et al. (2001), to the policy positions of Italian national parties. Second, we are interested in verifying whether there is any evidence supporting Putnam's (1993) claims that Italian regional politics is more "responsive". i.e., accountable, than the national one, and that the level of accountability is higher in Northern Regions than in Southern ones.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly describes the politics and the institutional context of the Italian Regions. In section 3 we explain the methodology used to evaluate the policy positions of the Governors. Section 4 includes the content analysis of the Governors' programmatic speeches and long-term budget documents. Section 5 exploits this information to assess a) to what extent the accountability of the Governors is eroded in the time span stemming from the elections, the elected Governor's programmatic speech and the publication

between 2005 and 2006. Although a second-best choice, the DPEFRs are still a fairly good indicator of what the Regional governments do, because of their strong commitment value *vis à vis* the Central government. The so called Internal Stability and Growth Pact, established between the Italian Central Government and the sub central ones to enforce fiscal discipline, works much in the same way as the Stability and Growth Pact between the EU Commission and the member countries. The Central Government monitors the policy decisions of the Regional governments on a series of documents, among which the DPEFR is the most important, and correlates the transfers to the Regions on the discrepancies between the DPEFR and the actual results (Brosio et al. 2003). This stimulates the Regional government to publish credible DPEFR and to stick to it as much as possible.

of the long-term budget document, and b) to analyze how this erosion evolves in time and as we move from one area of the country to another. Section 6 verifies to what extent the relative economic conditions of the Regions and their dependency on transfers from the Central Government explain the erosion of accountability. In the final section we reassume the main results of the analysis and point out the avenues for future research.

2. A brief description of the Italian regional politics

The Italian Constitution, promulgated in 1948, foresees the principle of decentralization of the government functions and the establishment of Regional Governments (Article 5 and Title V of the Constitution). Italy has thus been divided in 20 Regions (see appendix B for the list of names and abbreviations). Five of them, the first to be established between 1948 and 1963, enjoy a special statute (*Regioni a Statuto Speciale*, or RSS), because of their multilingual status, borderline position or particularly low level of development. The remaining 15 Regions characterized by an “ordinary statute” (*Regioni a Statuto Ordinario*, or RSO) were established in 1970, 22 years after the Constitutional provision. Many Italian constitutional lawyers and political scientists (Lepschy, 1990; Putnam, 1993; Brosio et al. 2003) argue that the creation of the regional governments in 1970s constituted a response to the stalemate in national politics, where the Communist Party, which represented more than 1/3 of the electorate, could not participate in government activities because of its incompatibility with the Italian set of international alliances. Regional governments could provide Communist politicians with a chance to govern certain areas of the country without interfering with foreign policy; at the same time the experience of administrating regional governments could make Italian politics less extremist, or, according to Putnam (1993), less ideology and more administration oriented.

According to the Constitution, Regional Governments have the major responsibility of health care, plus certain aspects of social services, environment, local transportation, housing, culture and

tourism. The difference between the RSO and RSS rests chiefly in the provision of grants from the Central Government, which is much more generous for the RSS (Brosio, Maggi and Piperno, 2003).

Until the early 1990s the institutional framework and the politics of the RSO largely replicated those of the National Government, being based on proportional representation and on a parliamentary system. This created a lack of accountability and a general dissatisfaction with the quality of regional politics. In 1995 a reform was introduced (law n. 43/95) that effectively made the regional system of government a presidential one. Government stability was guaranteed by a series of provisions, including: 1) a top-up system ensuring that the absolute majority of the legislators is held by the coalition with the relative majority of the votes; 2) a reduction of the duration of the Council (i.e., the Regional Parliament) from five to two years in case of a no confidence motion is approved during the first two years; 3) a direct election of the Governor, starting from 1999 (new art. 122 of the Constitution), who is endowed the power to appoint and dismiss the members of the regional Cabinet, unless the Regional Statute disposes otherwise (new art. 123 of the Constitution). These provisions belong to a larger package of reform of Title V of the Italian Constitution, which disciplines the lower levels of government and has generally increased, among other things, the administrative and legislative competencies of the Regions (Fiorino and Ricciuti, 2007).

This reform considerably affected the ways and mores of Italian regional politics. Alternation in government, already present, significantly increased in the two elections held under the new institutional system. In the last electoral round, 8 regions out of 20 (Abruzzo, Calabria, Friuli, Lazio, Liguria, Piemonte, Puglia and Sardegna) swung from the center-right to the center-left coalition, a remarkable shift given the traditional stability of Italian politics. The direct election of the Governor also prompted the adoption of new practices usually featured in accountable systems of government, like the publishing of electoral programs (although still by a few candidates, 12 out of 80 for the last two rounds of elections); the deliverance, by the Governor, of a programmatic

speech before the Regional Council in coincidence of the first confidence debate that marks the investiture of the Regional Government; the adoption of long term budget documents, as well as other initiatives in the same vein. The present analysis exploits some of these innovations.

3. Methodology

To evaluate the policy position of the Governors of the Regions at the stage of their programmatic speeches and of the approval of the first DPEFRs of the legislature we adopt the *a priori* methodology of Laver et al. (2003). This methodology is based on a comparison of two sets of political texts: one, the so-called “reference texts”, is constituted by texts whose policy positions on well-defined, *a priori* policy dimensions are known to and chosen by the analyst; the second, the so-called “virgin texts”, is composed by texts whose policy positions must instead be found out. Specifically, this methodology uses the relative frequency for each of the different words in each of the reference texts to calculate the probability of reading a particular reference text given that a particular word is found in the virgin text. For a specific *a priori* policy dimension, which the analyst chooses by selecting the reference texts in ways that we shall describe below, this procedure generates a numerical score for each word. The sum of the word scores is the expected policy position of any virgin text in the policy dimension spanned by the reference texts. In the case a virgin text is identical to a reference text, the word score is at the maximum value, because the probability of reading the same text is equal to 1. The less similar the virgin text is to the reference text, the lower will be the score.

In other words, the word scores generated from the reference texts are used to estimate the positions the virgin texts on the policy dimension in which the analyst is interested. Each word in a virgin text provides a small amount of information about which of the reference texts the virgin text most closely resembles. This produces a conditional expectation of the virgin text’s policy position and each scored word in a virgin text adds to this information. This procedure can be thought of as a

type of Bayesian reading of the virgin text with the estimates of the policy position of the any given virgin text being updated each time one reads a word that is also found in one of the reference texts. The more scored words are read, the more confident one becomes with the estimates.

The selection of an appropriate set of reference texts is clearly a crucial aspect of this *a priori* approach. As Laver et al. (2003) point out, "...the hard and fast rule when selecting reference texts is that we must have access to confident estimates of, or assumptions about, their position on the policy dimension under investigation" (p. 314). Additionally, Laver et al. (2003) offer three further guidelines in the selection of reference texts:

- 1) They should use the same lexicon, in the same context, as the virgin text being analyzed; for example, party manifestos should not be considered as appropriate reference texts for analyzing legislative speeches;
- 2) The policy position of the reference texts should span the dimension in which the analyst is interested; ideally, they should occupy extreme positions of the dimension under investigation;
- 3) The set of reference texts should contain as many different words as possible. The more comprehensive this word universe, and thus the less often one finds words in virgin texts that do not appear in any reference text, the better. Reference texts should then be both long documents; documents of unequal length create statistical problems, inasmuch as they reduce the possibility to make confident inferences about the policy positions of virgin texts.

4. Content analysis

Data availability is, at the same time, an innovative aspect of and a constraint for this inquiry. As the first systematic analysis of the speeches of the Governors of the Italian Regions to adopt the content analysis, the gathering of the data set constitutes per se an innovative aspect of the inquiry².

² See Appendix A for the illustration of the data sources.

On the other hand, several circumstances have limited the extension of the data set. First, we could not examine electoral manifestos because only 12 candidates to the Governorship out of 80 published such documents. We thus focused our attention on the programmatic speeches that the elected Governors deliver before the Regional Council upon the investiture of the regional government. We have collected a total of 29 inaugural speeches (out of a maximum possible of 40) delivered at the beginning of the VII and VIII Regional Legislatures, the two that followed the 1995 institutional reform. The remaining 11 speeches were either not delivered, or have not been recorded. All in all, we have scored the speeches for Abruzzo (VIII legislature), Basilicata (VII and VIII), Calabria (VII and VIII), Campania (VIII), Emilia Romagna (VII and VIII), Friuli-Venezia Giulia (VII), Lazio (VII and VIII), Liguria (VII), Lombardia (VIII), Marche (VII and VIII), Molise (VIII), Piemonte (VII and VIII), Puglia (VIII), Sardegna (VIII), Sicilia (VII), Trentino Alto-Adige (VIII), Toscana (VII and VIII), Umbria (VII), Valle d'Aosta (VII and VIII), Veneto (VII and VIII)³.

Information about the DPEFRs is even more limited, because not all Regional Governments publish these documents and we need only those of the Regions for which we have the programmatic speeches too. The total amounts to just 19 DPEFRs, namely, Abruzzo (VIII legislature), Basilicata (VII), Campania (VIII), Emilia Romagna (VII and VIII), Lazio (VII and VIII), Lombardia (VIII), Marche (VIII), Molise (VIII), Piemonte (VIII), Sardegna (VIII), Sicilia (VII), Trentino Alto-Adige (VIII), Toscana (VII and VIII), Umbria (VII), Veneto (VII and VIII). All of the DPEFRs were the first ones published by the elected Regional Government, in order to make the temporal distance between the three moments as tight as possible.

Concerning the left-to-right political dimension of the inaugural speeches and of the DPEFR, we use a combination of the electoral results and the other guidelines suggested by Laver et al. (2003) as our *a priori* criterion in the selection of the reference texts. This allows avoiding a double use of the electoral results in the selection of the reference texts and in the accountability analysis, where

³ For one legislature of Sardegna and Emilia Romagna we have actually used the electoral program and not the programmatic speech, because instead the programmatic speech was in fact a repetition of the electoral program.

they proxy the voters' preferences. In particular, the consideration of a) the availability of the texts of both the speeches and the DPEFRs and b) of the length requirement of the documents lead us to select the programmatic speeches of the Governors of Basilicata (VIII legislature) and of Sicilia (VII legislature) as the reference texts for the center-left (*Ulivo*) and center-right (*Polo*) coalition, respectively⁴. They are given the values of -1 and $+1$, respectively. The same criterion is applied to the selection of the reference texts for the DPEFRs. In this case, the DPEFRs of Piemonte (VIII legislature, center-left) and Sicily (VII, center-right) are the reference texts, with an assigned score of -1 and $+1$.

Table 1 reports the percentage of votes of the winning coalitions of the regional elections for the legislatures under consideration, using the standard left-to-right dimension. Table 2 illustrates the results of the content analysis for the left-to-right dimension of the programmatic speeches; finally, Table 3 contains the information about the content analysis of the DPEFRs.

⁴ For example, if one had considered only the electoral results in the choice of the reference texts, the speeches selected would have been those of Lombardy VIII on the rightist end because of the high number of votes received by the Northern League in that Region; and of Puglia VIII on the leftist end because the elected Governor, Nicky Vendola, is a member of the Party of Communist Refoundation. These two speeches were, however, of very unequal length (2808 words versus 14373), which makes them quite unsuitable candidates to benchmarking the "leftist" and the "rightist" discourse.

Table 1. Results of regional elections

Region	2000		2005	
	Centre-left	Centre-right	Centre-left	Centre-right
Abruzzo		49.26	57.8	
Basilicata	63.0		67.0	
Calabria		49.8	59.0	
Campania	54.18		61.6	
Emilia Romagna	54.1		62.7	
Friuli Venezia Giulia.		52.0*	53.17***	
Liguria		50.1	52.64	
Lombardia		62.37		53.4
Lazio		51.5	50.7	
Marche	49.1		57.7	
Molise		58.0		54.0*****
Piemonte		51.8	50.9	
Puglia		54.0	49.7	
Sardegna		43**	50.2*****	
Sicilia		59.1*****		53.08
Toscana	48.7		56.7	
Umbria	55.7		63.01	
Veneto		55.0		55.0

Electoral results for Valle d'Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige are not reported because the elected local parties do not follow the usual left-right spectrum of Italian politics.

NOTES

* Elections held in 1998.

** Elections held in 1999.

*** Elections held in 2003.

**** Elections held in 2001.

***** Elections held in 2004.

***** Elections held in 2006.

Table 2. Word scoring of the programmatic speeches, political dimension

Reference texts: BAS VIII (-1) and SIC VII (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw Standard Error	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed Standard Error	Transformed 95% Confidence Intervals		Total Words Scored	% of Total Words Scored
1	ABR VIII	0,06	0,01	1.076	3,61	0,30	3,00	4,22	5.918	84,3
2	BAS VII	-0,05	0,00	2.446	-2,39	0,20	-2,80	-1,98	13.273	88,9
3	CAL VII	0,00	0,01	743	0,05	0,51	-0,98	1,07	1.945	85,5
4	CAL VIII	-0,01	0,01	965	-0,28	0,43	-1,13	0,58	2.992	86,6
5	CAM VIII	0,01	0,01	604	0,61	0,50	-0,40	1,62	1.934	90,6
6	ERO VII	-0,01	0,01	1.192	-0,22	0,31	-0,85	0,40	4.844	88,9
7	ERO VIII	-0,02	0,01	1.422	-0,90	0,28	-1,46	-0,35	6.173	90,5
8	FVG VII	-0,01	0,00	1.467	-0,59	0,26	-1,12	-0,07	6.645	86,1
9	LAZ VII	0,04	0,01	1.424	2,27	0,30	1,66	2,87	5.866	84,5
10	LAZ VIII	0,04	0,01	710	2,15	0,51	1,13	3,17	2.058	88,2
11	LIG VII	0,00	0,00	1.997	0,40	0,22	-0,04	0,84	11.372	87,9
12	LOM VIII	0,01	0,01	834	0,59	0,43	-0,27	1,46	2.808	90,1
13	MAR VII	0,02	0,01	1.040	1,01	0,33	0,35	1,67	4.347	87,7
14	MAR VIII	-0,04	0,01	1.336	-2,05	0,27	-2,59	-1,50	5.964	88,1
15	MOL VIII	-0,03	0,00	2.068	-1,28	0,24	-1,75	-0,80	9.234	86,9
16	PIE VII	0,03	0,01	1.250	1,54	0,34	0,86	2,21	4.848	85,9
17	PIE VIII	-0,02	0,01	854	-0,76	0,41	-1,57	0,06	2.779	88,2
18	PUG VIII	-0,03	0,00	2.474	-1,69	0,19	-2,07	-1,31	14.373	87,8
19	SAR VIII	-0,02	0,00	3.275	-0,94	0,13	-1,19	-0,69	31.179	87,9
20	TAA VIII	-0,01	0,01	1.259	-0,29	0,32	-0,92	0,35	5.133	86,9
21	TOS VII	0,00	0,01	994	0,12	0,38	-0,64	0,87	3.690	86,5
22	TOS VIII	-0,01	0,01	888	-0,31	0,40	-1,10	0,49	3.400	89,3
23	UMB VII	0,01	0,01	1.460	0,91	0,29	0,34	1,49	6.287	89,1
24	VDA VII	-0,04	0,01	882	-1,90	0,41	-2,71	-1,08	2.876	90,7
25	VDA VIII	-0,03	0,01	578	-1,27	0,55	-2,38	-0,16	1.549	88,1
26	VEN VII	0,00	0,01	950	0,31	0,43	-0,54	1,17	2.942	89
27	VEN VIII	0,02	0,01	1.062	1,21	0,38	0,45	1,98	3.626	85,6

Table 3. Word scoring of the DPEFRs, political dimension

Reference texts: PIE VIII (-1) and SIC VII (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw SE	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed Standard Errors	Transformed 95% Confidence Interval		Total Words Scored	% of Total Words scored
1	ABR VIII	-0,05	0,00	5289,00	-0,16	0,03	-0,21	-0,11	72963,00	92,70
2	BAS VII	-0,10	0,01	1498,00	-0,98	0,08	-1,15	-0,81	5678,00	85,20
3	CAM VIII	-0,03	0,00	3016,00	0,13	0,05	0,03	0,23	21139,00	92,40
4	ERO VII	-0,06	0,00	4956,00	-0,40	0,03	-0,45	-0,34	57231,00	88,90
5	ERO VIII	-0,10	0,00	3681,00	-0,94	0,04	-1,02	-0,87	28704,00	92,00
6	LAZ VII	-0,03	0,00	5116,00	0,15	0,02	0,10	0,19	74701,00	86,80
7	LAZ VIII	0,27	0,00	4429,00	4,86	0,03	4,79	4,92	70181,00	90,30
8	LOM VIII	-0,13	0,00	3829,00	-1,46	0,03	-1,51	-1,40	49171,00	88,60
9	MAR VIII	-0,04	0,00	5500,00	0,03	0,02	-0,02	0,08	79970,00	90,00
10	MOL VIII	0,00	0,00	3580,00	0,55	0,04	0,46	0,63	27164,00	90,20
11	SAR VIII	-0,01	0,00	5389,00	0,39	0,03	0,34	0,44	76958,00	90,50
12	SIC VIII	-0,08	0,01	1118,00	-0,63	0,11	-0,84	-0,42	3875,00	89,60
13	TOS VII	-0,11	0,00	2852,00	-1,25	0,04	-1,33	-1,16	20405,00	91,90
14	TOS VIII	-0,12	0,00	3298,00	-1,27	0,04	-1,35	-1,19	24591,00	94,02
15	UMB VII	-0,01	0,00	5073,00	0,38	0,03	0,33	0,43	70031,00	89,60
16	VEN VII	-0,05	0,00	6389,00	-0,25	0,02	-0,28	-0,21	157386,00	89,50
17	VEN VIII	-0,03	0,00	6637,00	0,18	0,02	0,15	0,22	177195,00	88,70

5. Evaluation of political accountability

The application of the methodology of Laver et al. (2003) to the programmatic speeches of the Governors of the Italian Regions seems to give satisfactory results. The comparison between Table 1 and the column of the transformed scores in Table 2 shows that twenty-three “virgin” speeches out of twenty-seven are consistent with the electoral results. The methodology of content analysis of the speeches captures the right to left swing of Calabria and Piemonte, as well as the movements further to the left of the electorate of Toscana, Marche and Emilia Romagna. Lazio, instead, underwent a swing from a centre-right to a centre-left coalition that is not reflected in the transformed scores. The scores are also consistent with the electoral results of Basilicata VII, Friuli VII, Liguria VII, Lombardia VIII, Puglia VIII, Sardegna VIII, Veneto VII and VIII. Also for Val d’Aosta VII and VIII and for Trentino VIII, the two Regions where the local parties are not immediately identifiable with the national ones, the transformed scores are in line with the political orientation of the local parties. However, in the cases of Abruzzo VIII, Campania VIII, Molise VIII and Umbria VII the electoral results do not find correspondence in the evaluation of the speeches. Yet, it must be kept in mind that these four cases may reflect a genuine movement of the Governor away from the political orientation of his (or her, in the case of Umbria) electorate.

Finally, also the transformed scores assigned to the DPEFR expose a departure from the electoral results. Of the seventeen DPEFRs scored, nine do not coincide with the political orientation expressed by voters: Abruzzo VIII, Lazio VIII, Lombardia VIII, Marche VIII, Molise VIII, Sardegna VIII, Sicilia VII, Umbria VII, and Veneto VIII. It seems that, once the financial needs must be confronted, the ideological positions of the Governors lose relevance or, at least, diminish in intensity.

In order to provide a quantitative assessment of the loss of accountability of the Governors as the political act moves from the electoral results to the establishment of the government and to the programming of policies, we resort to a Spearman correlation index of the rankings

of the Regions in the three moments considered. The number of observations does not allow enough degrees of freedom to perform regression analysis.

The ranking of the Regions according to the electoral results was obtained by assigning negative values to the percentage of votes obtained by centre-left coalitions, so to obtain a left-to-right scaling of the Regions comparable to those of the transformed scores of the speeches and of the DPEFRs. The value for the Spearman rho correlating the rankings of the electoral results and of the transformed scores of the programmatic speeches is 0.352 (26 observations, p value = 0.076), which is statistically significant but not very high. This can be taken as evidence of a loss of electoral accountability from the moment of the electoral results to that of the programmatic speeches. The value of the Spearman index between the speeches and the DPEFRs is 0.326 (19 observations, p value = 0.173), lower than the rho for the ranks of the electoral results and the speeches and not statistically significant. This implies that the left-to-right distributions of the Regions at the moment of the inaugural speeches and of the DPEFRs are not correlated. Thus, the comparison of the values of these indexes shows that some loss of political accountability of the Governors takes place moving from the stage of the electoral results to that of the programmatic speeches, but an even larger erosion appears in the passage between the speeches and the DPEFRs.

Figure 1. Accountability, Legislature VII

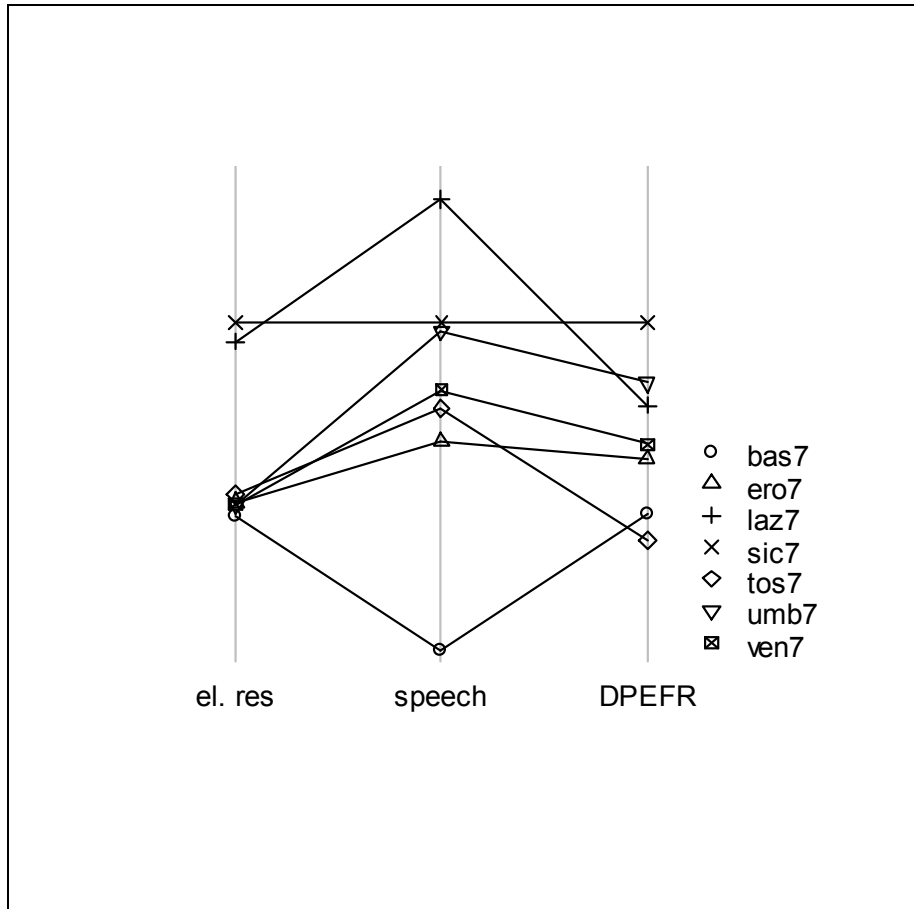


Figure 2. Accountability, Legislature VIII

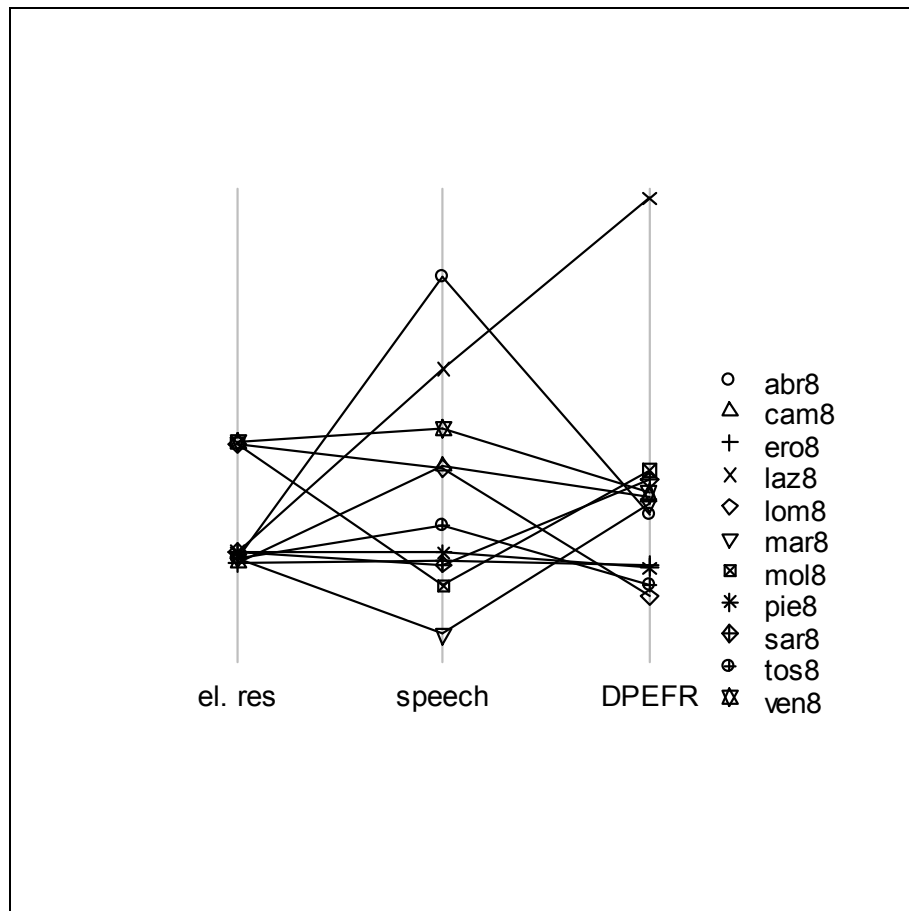


Figure 1 and 2 illustrate the evolution of the positions taken by the Regions in the moment of the electoral results (vertical axis to the left), of the programmatic speech (vertical axis in the middle) and of the DPEFRs (vertical axis to the right). Following Laver and Garry (2000) we normalize the left-to-right political dimension of the electoral results to a scale correlated to that of the reference texts for the programmatic speeches. By that, the most left-wing Region is assigned a score equal to -1, the most right wing Region a score of +1, while the scores for all other Regions are normalized in a linear fashion. These values are reported on the vertical axis on the left. The values reported on the other two axes are, instead, the same

transformed scores of Tables 2 and 3. Furthermore, we report information only for the Regions for which we have information for all the three moments (balanced samples). Finally, to gauge some evidence of how the process evolves through time, we have separated the values for the VII legislature (reported in Figure 1, seven Regions) from those of the VIII legislature (reported in Figure 2, eleven Regions). Straight lines indicate perfect consistency between the scores that a Region obtains in each moment, which is evidence of electoral accountability. Angles, instead, denote changes of position, thus lower consistency between the three moments, which is evidence of lower electoral accountability.

The Figures provide three interesting results. Firstly, contrary to what Putnam (1993) declares to find in his analysis of Italian regional politics in the 1970s and the 1980s, there is no evidence of a North-South pattern in the degree of accountability. Figure 1 shows that Sicily VII is almost a perfectly straight line, whilst the sharpest changes of scores are those of Basilicata VII and Lazio VII. But even Veneto VII and Emilia Romagna VII, the two most Northern Regions featured in Figure 1, are characterized by noticeable angles. Figure 2, about the VIII legislature, reveals remarkable changes of position of Lazio, Abruzzo and Lombardia; on the contrary, Piemonte (in the North) and Sardegna (in the South) describe almost straight lines, i.e., no change of scores.

The distribution of these changes does not seem to be systematically influenced by the partisanship of the Governor. In the VII Legislature the centre-right coalition held 67% of the analysed Regions, but was responsible for only 25% of the major changes of position illustrated in Figure 1, and could therefore be interpreted as being more accountable than the centre-left coalition. In the VIII Legislature the positions are reversed: the centre-right coalition held only 22% of the analysed Regions, but was responsible for 33% of the major changes illustrated in Figure 2, a sign of lower relative accountability.

Thirdly, a comparison between the Figures immediately exposes that the VIII legislature is characterized by much more remarkable changes of position than the VII. There is thus

evidence that accountability is further eroded as we move away from the time of the institutional reforms of 1995. We acknowledge that just two legislatures cannot be taken as conclusive evidence, but the pattern recorded is certainly worrying as far as electoral accountability, one of the main goals of the 1995 reforms, is concerned. It is to be noted that the reform of the Title V of the Italian Constitution was enacted in 2001, namely, between the two legislatures under scrutiny. This reform increased the competencies (art. 117) and financial autonomy (art. 119) of the Regions, but so far only the spending side of the reform has found application. The resulting common pool is possibly an explanation of the lower accountability detected in Legislature VIII relative to Legislature VII. In other words, the practice, if not the principles, of the Constitutional Reform of 2001 has gone against the institutional reform of 1995.

6. Erosion of accountability and financial constraints

The Italian Regions are heavily dependent on transfers from the Central government to finance their spending decisions and policy programs. Between 1997 and 2005, i.e., in the time period of the two legislatures that we have analyzed, the ratio of own resources to the total revenues averaged around 0.45 for the whole 20 Italian Regions, with a standard deviation of 0.17 (Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico, 2007). As these transfers are by and large negatively correlated with regional income levels, the dependency on transfers mirrors the economic conditions in which Regional governments operate. This dependency therefore captures probably the most important constraint on the Governors' ability to keep their electoral promises (and a usual excuse for failing to do so), namely, the availability of financial resources transferred from the Center. We then verify whether the erosion of electoral accountability discussed in the previous section depends on these economic constraints or on political determinants. To this end, we evaluate the inaugural speeches of the Governors and the DPEFRs along an economic dimension, based on the dependence of each

Region on the Central Government. We then perform a series of ANOVA tests to gauge whether the discrepancies between 1) the electoral results and the inaugural speeches and 2) the inaugural speeches and the DPEFRs are best explained by ideological differences or by the dependency on grants.

For the analysis of the content of the inaugural speeches we use, as reference texts, the speeches of the most and least dependent Region that, again, are long enough and comparable in length. Based on these criteria we select Marche VIII for low dependency (assigned score – 1) and Molise VIII legislature for high dependency (assigned score +1). Table 4 reports the results. Two are the most interesting for our purposes. First, the transformed scores are entirely consistent with the ranking of the Regions from the most to the least dependent on grants. All speeches of Governors of high dependent Regions show a positive transformed score, i.e., they are more similar to the speech of Molise VIII. Conversely, all the negative scores refer to Regions that are in the bottom half of the ranking for dependency on grants and are therefore more similar to the speech of Marche VII. Second, along this dimension we do not observe any switch from a positive to a negative sign (or vice versa), even in cases of Regions that underwent a swing in the electoral results. This is consistent with the high resilience of the economic conditions of the Italian Regions. Similar remarks can be made for the results of the analysis of the DPEFRs (Table 5), with the only difference that the reference text for the least dependent Region is Marche VIII; no DPEFR was published in that Region for the VIIth legislature.

These results are used to inform our ANOVA tests, whose results are reported in Tables 6-7 for the inaugural speeches and Tables 8-9 for the DPEFRs.

Table 4. Word scoring of the programmatic speeches, economic dimension
Reference texts: MAR VII (-1) and MOL VIII (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw Standard Error	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed Standard Error	Transformed 95% Confidence Intervals		Total Words Scored	% of Total Words Scored
1	ABR VIII	-0,05	0,01	812	-3,12	0,20	-3,53	-2,72	5.497	78,3
2	BAS VII	0,11	0,00	1.658	1,57	0,14	1,30	1,85	11.913	79,8
3	BAS VIII	0,12	0,00	1.897	2,03	0,11	1,80	2,25	18.244	80,7
4	CAL VII	0,09	0,01	594	0,94	0,36	0,22	1,66	1.770	77,8
5	CAL VIII	0,08	0,01	767	0,81	0,29	0,23	1,40	2.745	79,4
6	CAM VIII	0,06	0,01	491	0,28	0,37	-0,46	1,01	1.759	82,4
7	ERO VII	0,00	0,01	965	-1,67	0,22	-2,11	-1,22	4.572	83,9
8	ERO VIII	0,05	0,01	1.086	-0,14	0,20	-0,54	0,27	5.672	83,1
9	FVG VII	0,09	0,01	1.157	0,94	0,19	0,56	1,32	6.235	80,8
10	LAZ VII	0,04	0,01	1.085	-0,39	0,21	-0,81	0,03	5.377	77,5
11	LAZ VIII	0,04	0,01	589	-0,49	0,35	-1,19	0,21	1.906	81,7
12	LIG VII	0,05	0,01	1.487	-0,07	0,15	-0,38	0,24	10.528	81,4
13	LOM VIII	0,04	0,01	683	-0,41	0,29	-0,99	0,18	2.611	83,8
14	MAR VIII	0,06	0,01	1.089	0,19	0,20	-0,21	0,58	5.697	84,2
15	PIE VII	0,04	0,01	963	-0,39	0,23	-0,86	0,07	4.465	79,1
16	PIE VIII	0,03	0,01	720	-0,61	0,30	-1,21	-0,02	2.622	83,2
17	PUG VIII	0,11	0,00	1.678	1,61	0,13	1,35	1,87	12.952	79,1
18	SAR VIII	0,10	0,00	2.173	1,51	0,09	1,33	1,69	28.494	80,3
19	SIC VII	0,06	0,01	991	0,08	0,24	-0,39	0,56	4.267	79,2
20	TAA VIII	0,06	0,01	971	0,17	0,23	-0,28	0,63	4.641	78,6
21	TOS VII	0,01	0,01	833	-1,42	0,27	-1,95	-0,88	3.480	81,6
22	TOS VIII	-0,04	0,01	718	-2,78	0,27	-3,32	-2,24	3.182	83,5
23	UMB VII	0,05	0,01	1.134	-0,14	0,20	-0,54	0,26	5.832	82,6
24	VDA VII	0,18	0,01	718	3,72	0,29	3,13	4,31	2.634	83,0
25	VDA VIII	0,06	0,01	489	0,32	0,40	-0,48	1,12	1.440	81,9
26	VEN VII	0,05	0,01	764	-0,23	0,29	-0,82	0,36	2.711	82,0
27	VEN VIII	0,03	0,01	822	-0,80	0,27	-1,34	-0,27	3.311	78,1

Table 5. Word scoring of the DPEFRs, economic dimension
 Reference texts: MAR VIII (-1) and MOL VIII (+1)

N.	Virgin Text	Raw Score	Raw SE	Unique Scored Words	Transformed Score	Transformed SE	Transformed 95% Confidence Interval		Total Words Scored	% Tot Sc'd
1	ABR VIII	-0,06	0,00	5,54	0,16	0,14	-0,12	0,43	73,67	93,60
2	BAS VII	-0,07	0,01	1,60	-0,72	0,49	-1,70	0,26	6,28	86,80
3	CAM VIII	-0,04	0,00	3,15	1,53	0,26	1,02	2,05	21,40	93,50
4	ERO VII	-0,07	0,00	5,37	-0,82	0,15	-1,12	-0,51	62,55	91,20
5	ERO VIII	-0,06	0,00	3,83	-0,13	0,21	-0,55	0,28	29,98	93,00
6	LAZ VII	-0,05	0,00	5,65	0,71	0,13	0,44	0,98	80,66	89,60
7	LAZ VIII	-0,02	0,00	4,70	3,63	0,14	3,36	3,90	71,53	92,00
8	LOM VIII	-0,08	0,00	4,03	-2,31	0,16	-2,64	-1,98	49,95	89,60
9	PIE VIII	-0,08	0,00	4,69	-1,84	0,18	-2,20	-1,47	43,13	92,70
10	SAR VIII	-0,06	0,00	5,68	0,03	0,14	-0,25	0,30	77,74	91,40
11	SIC VII	-0,05	0,00	4,47	1,45	0,19	1,07	1,83	41,01	91,00
12	TAA VIII	-0,05	0,01	1,14	0,71	0,62	-0,54	1,95	3,92	90,60
13	TOS VII	-0,07	0,00	3,38	-0,71	0,23	-1,17	-0,25	24,76	94,80
14	TOS VIII	-0,07	0,00	3,38	-0,71	0,23	-1,17	-0,25	24,76	94,80
15	UMB VII	-0,06	0,00	5,46	0,17	0,14	-0,10	0,45	75,02	92,40
16	VEN VII	-0,07	0,00	6,84	-0,90	0,10	-1,09	-0,71	158,98	90,40
17	VEN VIII	-0,07	0,00	7,25	-1,29	0,09	-1,47	-1,11	179,60	89,90

Table 6. Transformed scores of Table 2, inaugural speeches

<i>Ideological dimension</i>				<i>Economic dimension</i>			
<i>Center-right Region =1</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N.</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Transfer dependent Region =1</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N.</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
0,00	-0.164	14	1.62529	0,00	0.6264	14	1.2817
1,00	0.36	10	1.11035	1,00	-0.6815	13	1.26342
Total	0.1404	24	1.41825	Total	-0.0033	27	1.41479

Table 7. ANOVA output, inaugural speeches

<i>Ideological dimension</i>						<i>Economic dimension</i>							
		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F statistics</i>	<i>p value</i>			<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F statistics</i>	<i>p value</i>
Right-left transformed scores of Table 2 × Right=1 if Region center-right coalition is in power	Between groups (combined)	0.827	1	0.827	0.4	0.533	Right-left transformed scores of Table 2 × Transfer dependent=1 if Region has a positive transformed score in Table 4	Between groups (combined)	11.532	1	11.532	7.117	0.013
	Within groups	45.436	22	2.065				Within groups	40.511	25	1.62		
	Total	46.423	23					Total	52.043	26			

Table 8. Transformed scores of Table 3, DPEFRs

<i>Ideological dimension</i>				<i>Economic dimension</i>			
<i>Center-right Region =1</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N.</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Transfer dependent Region =1</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>N.</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
0,00	-0.0175	12	1.65516341	0,00	-0.384167	12	0.68314059
1,00	-0.065714	7	0.80810183	1,00	0.562857	7	2.03981792
Total	-0.035263	19	1.37565487	Total	-0.035263	19	1.37565487

Table 9. ANOVA output, DPEFRs

<i>Ideological dimension</i>						<i>Economic dimension</i>							
		<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F statistics</i>	<i>p value</i>			<i>Sum of Squares</i>	<i>Degrees of freedom</i>	<i>Mean Square</i>	<i>F statistics</i>	<i>p value</i>
Right-left transformed scores of Table 2 × Right=1 if center-right coalition is in power	Between groups (combined)	3.9284	7	0.5612	0.2	0.9773	Right-left transformed scores of Table 2 × Transfer dependent=1 if Region has a positive transformed score in Table 4	Between groups (combined)	2.9182	7	0.4169	0.15	0.991
	Within groups	30.1352	11	2.7396				Within groups	31.1455	11	2.8314		
	Total	34.0637	18					Total	34.0064	18			

Table 6 reports the descriptive statistics of the transformed scores of Table 2 and 4, reporting the content analysis of the inaugural speeches along, respectively, the ideological and the economic dimension. In the left hand columns, Regions are assigned a value of 0 if governed by a center-left coalition, and 1 otherwise; in the right hand columns a value of 0 is assigned to Regions characterized by a low dependency on grants (i.e., with a negative transformed score in Table 4) and a value of 1 to Regions highly dependent on grants (i.e., with a positive transformed score in Table 4).

Table 7 is the ANOVA output performed on these ideological and economic distributions. There appears to be no significant difference between the speeches of center-left Governors and those of center-right Governors: the F statistics of 0.4 in the left hand side of Table 6 is not statistically significant (p-value of 0.53). There is, however, a significant difference between the speeches of Governors of transfer-dependent Regions and those of Governors of less dependent regions: the F statistics of 7,117 in the right hand side of the table is significant at 1% level. This implies that Regions that are relatively more dependent on transfers from the Central government tend to have a more “leftist” discourse and vice versa⁵. In other words, the economic and financial conditions of the Region do affect the programmatic speech of the Governor and thus explain, to an extent that the ANOVA methodology cannot estimate, the erosion of accountability from the moment of the electoral results to that of the inaugural speeches. To further confirm this result, Figure 3 plots the transformed scores of the Regions for the ideological dimension (horizontal axis) and the economic dimension (vertical axis). It reveals a negative correlation between the two, which reinforces our interpretation that the economic dimension acts as a constraint to the political dimension.

Table 8 and 9 repeats the same test for the DPEFRs. The main outcome of the ANOVA is that there are no significant systematic differences between the DPEFRs, neither along the ideological, nor along the economic dimension. The F statistics are never statistically

⁵ Incidentally, this result corroborates the impression one gets upon reading the inaugural speeches, namely, that they are hard to distinguish, in terms of language and issues raised, along ideological lines.

significant (the p-values are equal to 0.9 for both dimensions). This can be interpreted as evidence of erosion of accountability, since apparently some idiosyncratic dimension, other than the ideological and economic ones, can distinguish the differences between the DPEFRs. The results of the ANOVA for the DPEFRs thus corroborate the findings of the Spearman indexes discussed in Section 5.

7. Conclusion

In this paper we have tried to provide some empirical evidence on the degree of consistency between the distributions, along a left-to-right political dimension, of the electoral results, of the programmatic speeches of the Governors and of the DPEFRs of the Italian Regions for the two legislatures that followed the 1995 institutional reform. We argue that the greater the degree of consistency among these distributions, the higher is the Governor's electoral accountability, because changes in the political orientation of the Governor show up as a change in the score (and possibly of the relative position) obtained in one of these three moments. We have based our interpretation of the left-to-right distribution of the electoral results on the evaluation of the ideologies of the Italian regional parties. The methodology for content analysis developed by Laver et al. (2003) is instead used to estimate the left-to-right distribution of the programmatic speeches and of the ensuing DPEFRs of the Governors of the Regions.

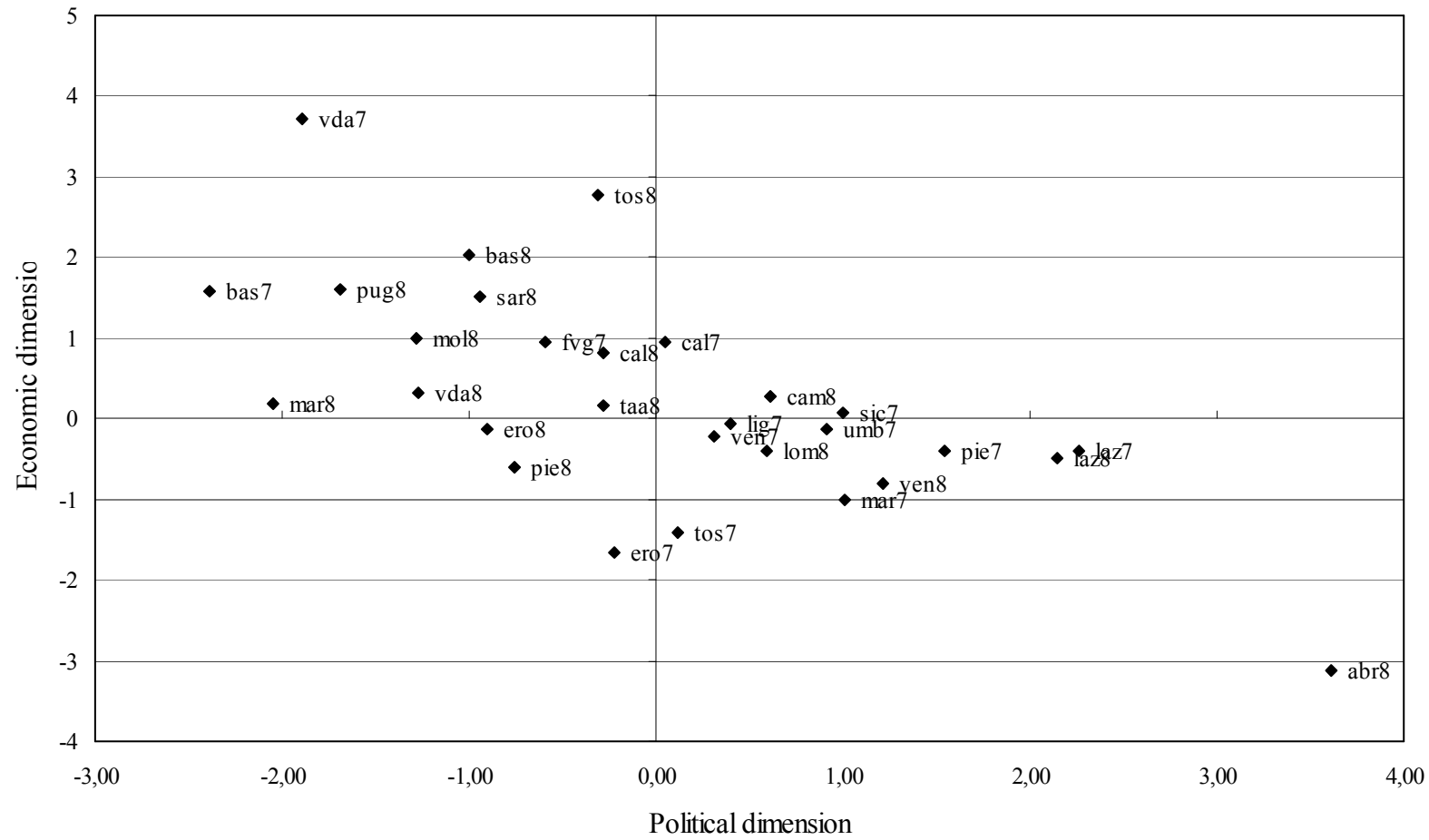
The comparison of the distributions of the Regions in these three moments, performed by means of a series of Spearman rank correlation indexes, provides evidence of some erosion of electoral accountability in the passage from the electoral results to the programmatic speeches, namely, right after the Governor is elected. Yet, an even greater erosion occurs moving from the speeches to the stage of the DPEFRs, when political decisions begin to take shape: the distribution of the speeches and of the DPEFRs are not correlated in any statistically significant manner. Furthermore, the erosion of accountability seems to become

more serious as time goes by and appears to be a fairly general phenomenon, not circumscribed to certain areas of the country or specific to certain political coalitions.

A series of ANOVA tests performed on the distribution of the Regions in the moment of the elections and of the inaugural speeches shows that, when these are evaluated according to the dependency of the Region on transfers from the Central Government and on their economic conditions, more dependent Regions tend to be governed by Governors who deliver more “leftist” discourses. In other words, the economic and financial conditions of the Region may explain the erosion of accountability from the moment of the electoral results to that of the inaugural speeches. But the same test performed on the DPEFRs shows that neither the ideological, nor the economic dimension is able to identify systematic differences between these documents, which may be due to some other idiosyncratic factor. This confirms the conclusion that the greatest degree of erosion takes place at the stage of the long-term budget documents.

Data limitations prevented us to perform more systematic analyses of this erosion of accountability, as well as to extend our inquiry to the pre-electoral stage (the candidates’ manifestos) and the first actual decisions, as evidenced by the levels of spending in regional programs. These are the most obvious research avenues to pursue in the future.

Figure 3. Political and Economic Dimensions



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APPENDIX A: DATA SOURCES

Dataset Regioni Italiane 1970-2002 CRENOS, available from www.crenos.it.

VII Legislature:

- Regione Basilicata. Consiglio regionale. Seduta del 13 giugno 2000. Relazione programmatica del presidente della Giunta Regionale Bubbico.
- Regione Basilicata. Giunta Regionale. DAPEF 2003-05 Nota di aggiornamento del 29 gennaio 2003.
- Regione Emilia-Romagna. Atti Consiliari. Terza Seduta. Resoconto Integrato. 22 giugno 2000. Comunicazione del Presidente della Giunta in merito al Documento di Programmazione della Giunta.
- Regione Lazio. Consiglio regionale. Prima seduta pubblica. Resoconto stenografico. 6 giugno 2000. Comunicazione del Presidente della Giunta Storace.
- Regione Lazio. Assessorato al bilancio, programmazione economico-finanziaria e partecipazione. DPEFR 2004-2006.
- Regione Liguria. Atti del Consiglio. Resoconti Integrali. Seduta n.2 del 24 maggio 2000. Comunicazioni del Presidente Biasotti della Giunta regionale concernenti il programma della giunta (o.d.g. n.6).
- Regione Sicilia. Seduta n.9 del 25 settembre 2001. Comunicazione del Presidente della Regione Cuffaro sul Programma di Governo.
- Regione Umbria. Consiglio Regionale. I Sessione Straordinaria. 19 giugno 2000. Resoconto stenografico. Dichiarazioni programmatiche del Presidente della Giunta Regionale Lorenzetti, pp.7-25.
- Regione Autonoma della Valle d'Aosta. Séance du 30 Juin 1998. Object n.11/XI. Allocution du nouveau Président Dino Viérin du Gouvernement et programme de la nouvelle majorité.
- Regione Autonoma della Sardegna. Renato Soru, "Un programma per cambiare la Sardegna".
- Regione Autonoma della Sardegna. Centro Regionale di Programmazione Economica e Finanziaria. DPEF 2005-2007. Approvato dalla giunta regionale il 4 novembre 2004.
- Regione Toscana. Consiglio Regionale. DPEF 2005. Scelte Strategiche e finalità programmatiche di fine legislatura. Bollettino Ufficiale della Regione Toscana n.28 del 4 agosto 2004.

VIII Legislature:

- Regione Abruzzo. Seduta n.1. del 16 maggio 2005. Resoconto integrale n.15/2005. Programma del Presidente della Giunta.
- Regione Basilicata. Relazione programmatica del presidente della giunta regionale Vito de Filippo.
- Regione Calabria. Programma del presidente della giunta Regionale della Calabria Agazio Loiero "Un progetto per crescere insieme." Allegato alla deliberazione n.4 del 17 maggio 2005. 17 maggio 2005.
- Regione Emilia Romagna. Intervento programmatico del presidente Vasco Errani pronunciato all'Assemblea legislative. Seduta del 7 giugno 2005.
- Regione Lazio. Atti consiliari. Resoconto della discussione. Seduta n.1 del 18 maggio 2005. Dichiarazione del Presidente della Giunta Marrazzo.
- Regione Lazio. Assessorato al bilancio, programmazione economico-finanziaria e partecipazione. DPEFR 2006-2008. Documento approvato dalla Giunta 11 ottobre 2005.
- Regione Lombardia. DPEFR 2006-08. Bollettino Ufficiale del 10 novembre 2005.
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APPENDIX B: LIST, ABBREVIATIONS AND TYPE OF STATUTE OF THE ITALIAN REGIONS

N.	AREA	NAME	ABBREVIATION	STATUTE
1	North	Val d'Aosta	VDA	Special
2	North	Piemonte	PIE	Ordinary
3	North	Lombardia	LOM	Ordinary
4	North	Trentino-Alto Adige	TAA	Special
5	North	Veneto	VEN	Ordinary
6	North	Liguria	LIG	Ordinary
7	North	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	FVG	Special
8	Center	Emilia Romagna	ERO	Ordinary
9	Center	Toscana	TOS	Ordinary
10	Center	Marche	MAR	Ordinary
11	Center	Umbria	UMB	Ordinary
12	Center	Lazio	LAZ	Ordinary
13	Center	Abruzzo	ABR	Ordinary
14	South	Campania	CAM	Ordinary
15	South	Molise	MOL	Ordinary
16	South	Puglia	PUG	Ordinary
17	South	Basilicata	BAS	Ordinary
18	South	Calabria	CAL	Ordinary
19	South	Sicilia	SIC	Special
20	South	Sardegna	SAR	Special