The London School of Economics and Political Science

# GOVERNING WITH THE CITIZENS

## Strategic Planning In Four Italian Cities

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## Abstract

In recent years there has been much political and academic interest in new modes of local governance, which are increasingly based on deliberative mechanisms and aim at engaging larger sectors of the population (i.e. governance by networks, territorial pacts, *strategic planning*). Whereas the literature on urban governance has focused on the emergence of novel governance arrangements at city and regional levels and on the formation of a collective actor, deliberative democracy scholars have examined the democratic dimension (i.e. the deliberative forums) and assessed the applicability of their normative models to the real world; the literature on planning helps to understand the implementation gap that plagues many of these new arrangements. All these approaches often study the same empirical phenomena, however, with a few exceptions, debates within these literatures take no account of one another. This comparative case-study of strategic planning in four medium-sized Italian cities (Trento, Prato, Lecce, and Sassari), characterized by different socio-political and economic contexts, intends to contribute to bridging the gap between the above theoretical paradigms. Thus, the impact of *strategic planning* on the local polity is assessed on three levels: the formation of a collective actor, the democratic process, and implementation. Comparative analysis can help to evidence how such an impact is either hindered or enhanced by different forms and resources of leadership and how the latter interact with endogenous (i.e. pre-existing associational density) and exogenous factors (i.e. institutional constraints and opportunities at other jurisdictional levels). Different typologies of leadership will influence each dimension of the dependent variable (i.e. the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, the implementation) to varying degrees. The type of leadership now required within the new multilevel governance system could be defined as facilitative leadership, which arises from the activity of working with, rather than exercising power over, others. This leadership is no longer identified solely with political institutions but often emerges from the coordinated work of a political sponsor and a public service CEO that acts as the champion of the governance process. Institutional constraints might affect outcomes, as

weak administrative capacity and resistance to change from within the bureaucracy will hinder implementation. A facilitative leadership can help to drive cultural change and organisational learning within local institutions, while offering identity incentives to the wider community. While pre-existing associational dynamics do not influence outcomes, since an inclusive leadership can encourage greater participation even where the social fabric would seem weaker, poor policy coordination among jurisdictional tiers will inevitably hamper the positive effects of *strategic planning* at the local level, which might be lost in a plethora of fragmented initiatives.

# Contents

Acknowledgments	8
Abbreviations	11
Introduction	12

#### PART I: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

1	Strategic Planning and The Participatory Turn	21
1.1	The City as a Collective Actor 1.1.1 The new local government 1.1.2 New Governance 1.1.3 A New Role for Cities	22 22 25 28
1.2	Beyond Negotiations: The Participatory Process 1.2.1 Deliberative Democracy in Practice 1.2.2 Deliberation And Empowerment 1.2.3 The Quality Of Local Democracy	31 31 35 37
1.3	Strategic Planning And The Implementation Gap 1.3.1 Strategic Planning in Italy 1.3.2 The pathological Implementation Gap	41 <i>46</i> 49
1.4	Conclusion	52
<b>2</b> 2.1	<b>Rescaling Politics: The Italian Context</b> Institutional Reforms in Italy 2.1.1 The Rise of the Mayors 2.1.2 The Impact of the Mayoral Reform On Local Democracy	<b>55</b> 57 57 61
2.2	Local Governance and Participation In Italy 2.2.1 Urban Planning 2.2.2 Development Policies	66 66 68
2.3	The Importance of Leadership 2.3.1 Towards Facilitative Leadership	72 74
2.4	Methodology 2.4.1 The Dependent Variable 2.4.2 The Independent Variable 2.4.3 The Case Studies 2.4.4 Methods	77 77 80 83 89
2.4	Conclusion: Planning the Future	89

#### PART TWO: THE CASE STUDIES

3 "Trento Città Delle Opportunità"	93
3.1 The Socio-Economic Context	94
<ul> <li>3.2 Strategic Planning: A Governmental Tool</li> <li>3.2.1 The process</li> <li>3.2.2 The Plan</li> <li>3.2.3 The Outcomes</li> </ul>	96 96 100 100
3.3 The Challenge of Collective Action	104
3.4 The Politics of Strategic Planning	106
3.5 The Limits of Inter-Institutional Cooperation	108
3.6 Participation Is A Local Affair	110
3.7 Conclusion	114
4 <i>PratoAgenda</i> : Between Weak Leadership And Strong Neighbourhood Associations	119
4.1 The Socio-Economic Context	120
<ul> <li>4.2 The Strategic Plan: Expectations and Outcomes</li> <li>4.2.1 The Rationale</li> <li>4.2.2 The Process</li> <li>4.2.3 Building A Collective actor: Lights And Shadows</li> </ul>	125 125 127 130
4.3 In Search Of A Leadership 4.3.1 Multilevel Governance, Or Not	133 135
4.4 From SP to the Urban Structural Plan: Critical Democracy vs. Incumbent Democracy	136
4.5 Conclusion	142
5 Lecce: "Un Ponte Verso Lo Sviluppo Economico-Sociale-Culturale"	147
5.1 The Socio-Economic Context	148
5.2 A New Approach to Local Governance	154
5.3 The Strategic Plan: Coordinating Action 5.3.1 The Participatory Process: Promises and Disappointme 5.3.2 The Outcomes: A Plan of Compromise	157 ents 159 163
5.4 Facilitative Leadership	166
5.5 Conclusion	169
6 "Sassari Bella, Buona E Forte"	172
<ul><li>6 "Sassari Bella, Buona E Forte"</li><li>6.1 The Socio-Economic Context</li></ul>	<b>172</b> 173

6.3	The Strategic Plan: Between Innovation and Inexperience 6.3.1 Collective Action And The Democratic Process 6.3.2 The Plan	180 180 184
6.4	The Implementation Gap	187
6.5	Too Many Plans Too Little Coordination	193
6.6	Conclusion	196

## PART THREE: COMPARING AND EXPLAINING RESULTS

7	The Politics of Strategic Planning The case for renewing local democracy	200
7.1	Assessing the Impact	205
	7.1.1 The Formation Of The Collective Actor	205
	7.1.2 The Process: The Democratic Dimension	211
	7.1.2 Understanding (Non) Implementation	216
7.2	Explaining Results	220
	7.2.1 Leadership Resources And SP Outcomes	220
	7.2.2 Re-Inventing The Political Space	229
	7.2.3 The Elusive Multilevel Governance	233
	7.2.3.1 The Pros And Cons Of Proceduralisation	235
7.3	Conclusion	238
	7.3.1 The Quality of Local Democracy	238
	7.3.2 What Future For Strategic Planning?	242
Not	es	246
Appendix 1 Semi-structured Interview		261
Appendix 2 List of Interviewees Appendix 3 List of Main Stakeholders		266
		273
Bibliography		282

#### LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Variables Figure 2.2 Leadership vs. Associational density	82 85
Table 2.1 Case study selection	86
Table 7.1 Impact of Strategic Planning	203
Table 7.2 Leadership Typologies	226
Table 7.2 Associational Context Typologies	230

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The grand ambitions of the beginning had to be scaled down and the empirical research certainly made me a little more cynical (but only a little) about the wonders of local democracy and citizen participation. My ideal of participatory democracy is clearly very different from what the reality of my case studies has presented me with. During my fieldwork, however, I met some exceptional people, whose enthusiasm and commitment to citizen empowerment showed me that there is indeed much disenchantment with our local 'democracy', but also sheer will to pursue positive change, collectively. This thesis is dedicated to them. They offered me their time, support, insider knowledge; they gave me access to documents and continue to bring me up to date on developments. Their work is inspirational and has informed much of my thinking and writing.

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## Abbreviations

AN: Alleanza Nazionale (National Alliance Party) ASM: Prato Ambiente Servizi Mobilità (Environment Services Mobility) CDL: Cristiani Democratici per la Libertà (Christian Democrats for Freedom) CIPE: Comitato Interministeriale per la Programmazione Economica (Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning) CNEL: Consiglio Nazionale dell'Economia e del Lavoro (National Council for the Economy and Labour) DC: Democrazia Cristiana (Christian Democrats) EASW: European Awareness Scenario Working **GOPP:** Goal Oriented Project Planning **OST: Open Space Technology** PCI: Partito Comunita Italiano (Italian Communist Party) **PCM: Project Cycle Management** PD: Partito Democratico (Democratic Party) PDL: Popolo della Libertà (People of Freedom Party) PIA: Piani Integrati d'Area (Integrated Area Plans) PIRP: Programmi Integrati di Riqualificazione delle Periferie (Integrated Programmes for the Redevelopment of Peripheries) PISU: Piani Integrati di Sviluppo Urbano (Integrated Plans for Urban Development) PIT: Piani Integrati Territoriali (Territorial Integrated Plans) PIUSS: Programmi Integrati Urbani di Sviluppo Sostenibile (Integrated Urban Plans of Sustainable Development) PLUS: Piano Locale Unitario dei servizi alla persona (Local Plan of Sardinian Social Services) PRUSST: Programmi di Riqualificazione Urbana e di Sviluppo Sostenibile del Territorio (Programmes of Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Development) SP: Strategic Planning TM: Town Meeting USP: Urban Structural Plan

## Introduction

The geography of administrative and political responsibilities in Europe has rapidly changed over the past two decades. Decentralisation of decision-making authority to the local level and diffusion of power through greater openness of local institutions towards private and social interests are now a major feature of government agenda. Local administrations have had to learn how to exert their new authority and respond to plural and fragmented local needs, while often being confronted with a rationalisation of public resources. Several European countries, including Italy, have reinforced local executives and introduced the direct election of mayors. These reforms were often presented as an antidote to the malaise affecting western democracies, or Skopcol's diminished democracy (2003), with voting turnouts decreasing sharply, particularly at the local level, in a context of widening disengagement from party politics and representative institutions. The adoption of direct mayoral elections had the effect of limiting the influence of political parties (Kersting 2005), while citizens are now increasingly perceived to be direct interlocutors of state institutions, rather than passive recipients of public policies (Fazzi and Scaglia 2001).

The decline in more traditional forms of participation, based on elections and party membership, and the newfound local autonomy, albeit limited by insufficient financial resources, have encouraged the opening of new participatory venues, which are "more direct, *ad hoc* and narrow in scope" (Pilet et al 2005: 619), often on the initiative of the new directlyelected mayors. Within this context, new forms of governance based on participatory mechanisms, such as Strategic Planning, have gained popularity among European cities. These new arrangements promise to address the socio-political and economic challenges facing cities: social conflicts, exacerbated by the market model of deregulation of the 1980s and early 1990s and by new migration flows; the crisis of legitimacy of representative democracy; the new paradigm of sustainable development as a response to the environmental crisis; the spatial rescaling of politics (Brenner 2004), whereby local leaders are expected to play the role of coordinators of large structural projects, often promoted at the national and supranational levels (EU); the crisis of traditional economic models and the comparative advantage of developing countries, which have forced some cities to transform their productive structures. Furthermore, fragmented local societies raise the issue of how to coordinate plural interests and transform cities into collective actors, which is at the very heart of novel experiments of territorial governance.

Encouraged by the EU, which requires the establishment of partnerships in order to access its programmes and funds for cities, the rhetoric of collective decision-making is now well entrenched into the urban governance discourse. Local government increasingly sponsors new mechanisms of decision and policy-making, which employ, albeit with varying degrees of awareness, the language of deliberative democracy.

Within this context Strategic Planning (SP)<sup>1</sup> has come to be perceived as an important instrument to help the city and its surroundings to redefine their role and position within the global context, and to restore broken relations among local actors. The rationale is that non-hierarchical and consensual models of decision-making can better respond to the new challenges than traditional government processes (Camagni 2000).<sup>2</sup> SP is based on voluntary cooperation among public, private and social actors, who seek the collective elaboration of a vision of territorial development. Diverse stakeholders meet in working groups and deliberative forums that should define projects consistent with an overall development strategy (Trigilia 2005), which aims to enhance economic development and competitiveness, but also to improve liveability and strengthen social capacity. The inclusion of social groups becomes a key ingredient, as social capital promises positive outcomes also in terms of economic development.

The emphasis on participation and partnerships responds to the political need to reconcile plural and fragmented interests and to the demands of citizens, who increasingly seek participation outside traditional institutional venues. As local government is often seen as a producer of goods and services (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992), the functionalistic understanding of participatory mechanisms as instruments to manage conflicts and build consensus on top-down policies would seem to prevail. The ideal of the city as a collective actor might lead to imagine an inclusive process opened to new actors, who can challenge traditional relations of power, but a predetermined design often excludes, intentionally or inadvertently, precisely those marginal interests that could bring in new resources as well as new expectations (Gelli 2005; Blaug, 2002).

Although similar programmes based on partnerships for local development are emerging strongly all over Europe, in Italy they have acquired even greater significance, for at least two important reasons. First, Italy's economy is characterised by local production structures based on small and medium-sized enterprises (Crouch et al 2001). This has increased demand for local development strategies and encouraged new informal experiments of governance on the initiative of local administrations, in the North as in the South, in order to respond to the crisis of the Fordist model and to the lack of financial resources available (Trigilia 2005). Second, devolution of responsibilities to regional and municipal authorities has raised expectations of a more active role on the part of the local leadership in addressing economic and development issues, particularly in the context of de-legitimised national parties. In Italy the 1990s reforms introducing direct mayoral elections were not merely a response to declining electoral turnouts and the difficulty of achieving political accountability, but represented a reaction to a deep legitimacy crisis of party politics, precipitated by Tangentopoli (Bribesville) and the party corruption scandals (Borraz and John 2004; see also Dente 1997). I shall discuss later in Chapter 2 the limits of these reforms, nevertheless the direct election of mayors has undoubtedly engendered a different relationship between local administrations and citizens, as Italian local government builds its new legitimacy upon the participation of social interests in policy-making.

Theoretically, this work intends to contribute to bridging the gap between three paradigms which, albeit often analysing the same empirical phenomena, rarely engage with one other's debates: the literatures on urban governance, deliberative democracy, and planning. The literature on urban governance offers a theoretical framework to analyse the emergence of new governance arrangements and the formation of a collective actor within the new economic and political framework, and in a context of multilevel governance. The literature on deliberative democracy examines the democratic process, the deliberative forums that increasingly represent a defining dimension of these mechanisms. Deliberative democracy theorists have defined the normative standards by which participatory mechanisms should be assessed, while deliberative policy studies have examined their applicability to the real world. The fairness and inclusiveness (or lack thereof) of the participatory venues will influence the degree of innovation and effectiveness of the strategies elaborated, as well as the level of cooperation among stakeholders. Finally the literature on planning can help to unveil the causes of the implementation gap that plagues many of these new initiatives. By employing and combining these theoretical frameworks this study can shed light on new participatory arrangements as SP outcomes (the dependent variable) are analysed based on three dimensions: the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, and implementation. As this study acknowledges the weak results of most SPs in terms of project implementation, the focus is on the direct or unintended governance dynamics that these arrangements can unleash and how different types of local leadership use SP and can influence its outcomes. The case study analysis will thus examine the capacity to create a collective actor, the quality of the participatory process, its inclusiveness and fairness, and the operational phase. What type of leadership was behind the process, and how did it develop during the process? Was it able to reinforce inter-level coordination and foster new associational networking?

As this research intends to examine the role of leadership vis-à-vis the local context, Italy represents an ideal case, since it displays deep structural and cultural differences among regions, particularly evident along the North-South divide. The debate sparked by Putnam's work on Italy, which explains variance of performance among regions by their degree of "civic-ness", has inspired much work on local governance, as several scholars challenged Putnam's conclusions and focussed their research on the role of leadership and institutions in changing local culture. Assessing the impact of SP on different socio-political contexts will help to highlight the role of leadership (independent variable) and how different forms and resources of leadership can determine outcomes. Pre-existing associational levels and the relationship with higher tiers of government were identified as two main intervening variables that might facilitate or hinder the influence of local leadership. The focus is on local leadership vis-à-vis civil society, in order to assess whether pre-existing associational dynamics affect the formation of the collective actor and the inclusivity of the participatory processes, and to what extent; vis-à-vis other levels of government with regard to policy design and implementation, as urban governance should be understood in a context of multilevel governance (see Le Galès 1998; 2002).

Italy would seem to have enthusiastically and perhaps uncritically embraced Strategic Planning (SP), with cities often following an imitation path (see Di Maggio and Powell 1983). Over a decade since the first plans were elaborated, this study will contribute to the literature on SP, by offering new empirical evidence on medium-sized cities, while the focus, apart from a few exceptions, has so far been on metropolitan and larger cities. Thus, four medium-sized cities, which have all adopted Strategic Planning (SP) but are characterised by different socio-political and economic environments, were selected so as to cover broad socio-economic differences between the North, Centre, and South of the country: Trento in the North-East, Prato in Tuscany, Lecce in the southern region of Puglia, and Sassari in the island of Sardinia. These four cases all display similarities in terms of size (between 100,000 and 180,000 inhabitants) and broad institutional framework (i.e. directlyelected mayor); they are all provincial capital cities and represent the main political and cultural centre in their area. However, they present maximum variance with regard to the dimensions under study, hence not just in terms of economic development, but also of local leadership/ political orientation (and different degree of strength and cohesiveness of the local party structure), social fabric, and relations with/ autonomy from other tiers of government.3

This thesis develops over seven chapters. Chapter 1 sets out the three dimensions of the dependent variable (the impact of SP) by reviewing the literatures on urban governance, deliberative democracy and planning, and the developments in the study of new governance arrangements within these theoretical approaches. This chapter highlights the benefits of bridging the divide between different paradigms, in order to provide deeper understanding of new modes of governance, their potential, limitations, and implications for local development and local democracy. The final section examines the literature on Strategic Planning (SP) to highlight persistent obstacles to implementation and contradictions inherent to the methodological approach of SP, imprisoned between apparently dichotomous concepts: decentralised decision-making and centralised synthesis, selectivity and inclusivity, strategy and planning.

Chapter 2 offers a background analysis of the Italian political and institutional context, following reforms in the 1990s, to evidence their impact on governance dynamics at the local level and on the quality of local democracy. The second section of this chapter examines the main factors that have plagued Italian urban politics and describes developments in governance instruments, the new institutional discourse on participation and the financial incentives which encourage Italian local government to engage civil society in policy-making. The third section addresses the debate on the influence of leadership and institutions vis-à-vis the local culture and, based on the empirical research, argues that local leadership plays a pivotal role in fostering new social capital around specific actions, often irrespective of preexisting associational dynamics. This section sets out the independent variable (the role of local leadership) by reviewing the literature on leadership and introducing the concept of facilitative leadership, which proves to be more conducive to new governance arrangements than traditional hierarchical leadership. Finally the last section describes the methodology of the empirical research; it introduces the case studies, explains case selection methods, and identifies the dimensions under study.

Chapter 3, 4, 5, and 6 will examine each case: Trento, Prato, Lecce, and Sassari respectively. Each chapter is envisaged as a heuristic analysis of the political and socio-economic context of each city, in order to identify the actors of local development. The focus will be on SP and on the leadership behind it, the rationale underpinning the choice of launching the process, the stakeholders involved, the methodologies employed to facilitate the deliberative process. Empirical findings derived from 175 semi-structured interviews with institutional, private and social stakeholders that took part in the process are triangulated with official documents and websites, and local

newspapers. The empirical research was designed to help understand how participants perceived their involvement in the process, what political space was gained or lost, whether the deliberative process encouraged cooperation among actors, if anything changed in terms of decision and policy-making, and whether interviewees believed such changes were sustainable. The objective is to evidence the impact of SP on the local polity and to highlight how leaders used the process.

Finally Chapter 7 presents a comparative analysis of empirical findings from all four cases, based on the three dimensions of the dependent variable. The role of leadership is analysed and the concept of *facilitative leadership* is identified as the type of leadership most conducive to participatory arrangements. In order to prove solid, the new alliances between institutional, private and social actors need to be sustained by an inclusive leadership with consensus-building capacity (though one should always be aware of the risk of collusive behaviours). Facilitative leadership, rather than from formal political authority over others, arises from the activity of working with others (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; Svara 2008) towards given objectives. It can therefore help to create "identity incentives", intended as resources that will encourage identification with an overall vision of development (Trigilia 2005: 145). Different forms and resources of leadership fostered, or failed to foster, the formation of a collective actor, facilitated or hindered the degree of inclusiveness of the democratic process, and therefore influenced outcomes. Leadership typologies are presented to explain the incentives for leaders to guarantee an inclusive participatory process and to open up to new stakeholders, depending on the local sociopolitical structure and the multilevel governance context. As local development has to be situated within the larger context of inter-state interaction, in the logic of multilevel governance, coordination over strategies and modus operandi between different tiers of government will be pivotal to guarantee concrete results and offset the risk of policy fragmentation.

Chapter 7 also examines how different socio-cultural contexts respond to different forms of leadership. The case studies, and particularly the case of Prato, highlight the limits of participatory venues opened from above and the clash between *invited spaces* (top-down participation) and the *invented*  *spaces* (bottom-up initiatives) of critical democracy (Cornwall 2002; also see Blaug 2002). Some local associations remained critically outside participatory arenas and strongly contested a leadership which they perceived to be non-inclusive and non-legitimate; they thus challenged the top-down participatory arenas by elaborating their own *subaltern counterpublics* (Fraser 1992). The conclusive section offers some normative reflections on the quality of local democracy in Italy and on the future of SP, and it identifies areas for further research.

The positive impact of participatory mechanisms on the local polity cannot be taken for granted and these new arrangements should not be perceived as a panacea and a cure for all the ills of local democracy, but they do trigger an important reflection on the new role of representative institutions. Participation is not simply a method but a political culture. Opening a new participatory arena cannot simply consist of specific methodologies, but it has to entail the will to drive a project of cultural transformation which will have to involve all stakeholders in an active way. Thus, a participatory process cannot be understood as an isolated moment within a system that continues to produce the same non-transparent dynamics (Freschi and Raffini 2010). The following chapters will try to elucidate what part participatory mechanisms can play within local government, how local political elites understand and use these arrangements, and whether the emphasis on Strategic Planning (SP), after the litmus test of practice, is worth sustaining.

# PART I: THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

# Chapter 1

## Strategic Planning And The Participatory Turn

The newfound enthusiasm for participatory mechanisms appears to be driven both by dissatisfaction with traditional models of representation and the growing relevance of regions and cities as loci of innovative modes of governance. Themes of *local participation* are now deeply entrenched in the institutional discourse of urban governance (Melo and Baiocchi 2006). The literatures on urban governance and deliberative democracy often study the same empirical phenomena, however, with few notable exceptions (Melo and Baiocchi 2006; Abers and Keck 2006; Fagotto and Fung 2006), they do not take enough account of one another's debates. The literature on urban governance has focused on the outcomes of different institutional arrangements at city and regional levels (Le Galès 1998; Pierre 2000; 2005), emphasising local attempts to create collective actors to face the challenges of globalisation (Pichierri 2001; Le Galès 2002). These scholars tend to focus on the conditions that facilitate or hinder the emergence of new governance mechanism, but they focus on the outcomes, while neglecting the process and the normative standards by which such governance mechanisms should be judged. By contrast the literature on deliberative democracy has theorised ideals of deliberation and empirically studied governance structures that approximate those normative standards (see among others Fischer 1993; Fishkin 1995; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Ackerman and Fishkin 2002; Neblo 2005). Empirical studies of deliberative democracy often point to its governance potential, without considering its overall impact (Melo and Baiocchi 2006). Decisions need to be taken, but deliberative democracy tends to focus on the conversation that precedes decisions (Chambers 2003).

This study will focus primarily on one governance mechanism, Strategic Planning (SP). There exists a rich literature on SP (Gibelli 1996; Pinson 2002; 2005; 2007; 2009; Pugliese and Spaziante 2003), particularly with reference to organisation and management studies (Bryson and Crosby 1992; Mintzberg 1994; Bryson 2004), which can help to identify the potential and the limits of the application of SP to local government. The review of these three literatures can help to frame three main dimensions of SP, which will form the dependent variable of this empirical work: the formation of the collective actor (the literature on urban governance), the participatory process (the literature on deliberative democracy), and the implementation of collaborative projects (the literature on organisation and management studies).

### The City as a Collective Actor The new local government

In the last thirty years, new economic dynamics have shifted the locus of development strategies from central government and its national-level policies to the regional and local level. The motives behind the new devolutionary trends are mixed. The globalization debate argues that power is devolved to the subnational level as the efficacy of nation states comes under challenge by global economic processes operating at the supranational scale. Thus, the importance of cities as decision-making centres increases (Ohmae 1993).<sup>4</sup> The new economic global order, by creating deeper interrelations between firms and territories, would appear to have emphasised the role of the *place* (Agnew 1987) in elaborating development strategies; but it would also seem to have strengthened subnational autonomy in business decision-making, as corporations need to embed themselves within the locality to cut costs, through subcontracting and strategic alliances (Ohmae 1993).<sup>5</sup>

The institutional context and social dynamism of "local production systems" now determine the degree and nature of local development (Crouch et al 2001). On the one hand globalisation appears to distance the economy from the locality, due to deregulation processes and high mobility of firms. On the other hand there is renewed interest in the local context, beyond the endowment of natural resources and the geographical proximity to markets, what is referred to as the territory's comparative advantage (Trigilia 2005). The focus is now on *competitive advantage* (Scott 1998), or the local collective competition goods that a place can produce. Such collective goods are the product of the capacity to cooperate and elaborate a development strategy that can help the locality to respond to the challenges of globalisation and seize the opportunities the latter can offer. During the Fordist period the economy was essentially separate from the locality. Vertically integrated firms used new technologies to create economies of scale and the only non-economic factors that influenced development were, at the micro level, the firm's organisational capacity – Chandler's (1977) "visible hand" – and, at the macro level, state policies, which served to regulate demand and the marketplace and to promote programmes for under-developed areas (Trigilia 2005). The notion of stability has been gradually substituted by flexibility, and, as market dynamics have become less predictable, local autonomy is increasingly important.<sup>6</sup>

These economic processes also affect centre-periphery relations, since the regulative role of regional and local government becomes more relevant. The literature on centre-periphery relations (see Tarrow 1977; Page and Goldsmith 1987; Page 1991) has shown the diversity of interactions between the state and its local government. However, in the current context, centreperiphery relations have changed and "the question is no longer simply what autonomy is for local authorities within the state, but rather what capacity territories have to become collective actors of European governance" (Le Galès 2002:235).

The EU represents an important factor behind the new role of cities, as "[a] European-wide urban coalition has gradually formed, finding intermediaries among commissioners, member state representatives of the European Commission, and members of the European Parliament promoting the URBAN Program for the renewal of urban neighbourhoods" (Le Galès 2005:251).<sup>7</sup> However, *Europeanisation* should not be understood as a process generating simple patterns of homogenisation or a convergence of local governance structures, within and across member states. Rather it entails a process of mutual adaptation, involving actors and institutions at different levels of government, nationally and supranationally (Hamedinger et al 2008).<sup>8</sup>

As globalisation (and European integration) limits the redistributive capacity of the centre and as the subnational level is devolved more responsibilities, local government faces new challenges in promoting local development. Competition with other areas, both within and across national borders, becomes fierce (Keating 2001). Thus, the capacity to coordinate local interests and elaborate a strategy that can encourage the production of local collective competition goods, while simultaneously defending such a strategy to the outside world in order to extract and attract resources, becomes a key to creating the locality's competitive advantage (Le Galès 1998; 2002).

The European Union has played an important role in driving the rescaling of politics and has contributed to the political validation of a more central role for subnational government, through promoting the principle of subsidiarity. This principle is enshrined in the treaties of the European Community (Article 5 TEC, formerly Art. 3b TEC) since Maastricht.<sup>9</sup> At the state level, this principle encapsulates two main aspects: it regulates the exercise of existing competencies and offers guidelines for their allocation, vertically among different tiers of government and horizontally among local authorities and between the state and civil society. Since the 1980s, cities and regions have been involved in the process of European integration and the EU has developed a number of programmes and networks within different policy areas involving and supporting cities (Hamedinger et al 2008; also see Atkinson 2001; Parkinson 2005).<sup>10</sup> Cities are beneficiaries of several funding programmes, but are also offered new arenas to debate and negotiate with new partners. Networks are developed to foster co-operation between cities, which now increasingly embark on EU-level urban lobbying by establishing offices in Brussels (Hamedinger et al 2008). The notion of the "European turn of cities" developed by many scholars (Goldsmith and Klausen 1997; John 2001; Le Galès 2002) can be understood within this framework.

For their part, national states have been highly receptive to the restructuring and rescaling of politics. If federal and regionalised states, such as Germany, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Italy, and France, have deepened their decentralisation processes through institutional reforms, even centralised states, such as The Netherlands, Finland and Greece, have accepted this evolution (Leonardi and Nanetti 2007).<sup>11</sup> In exchange for higher visibility and political power vis-à-vis the EU, subnational government "becomes a major contributor to the institutionalisation of European local government" (Borraz

and John 2004:113). Local government is increasingly subject to EU regulation and standardization; large policy areas, such as environment, economic development, and social housing, are covered by EU regulative frameworks, effectively limiting the autonomy of local and regional actors. Local government has to learn how to master EU policy-making procedures in order to access funds (i.e. Structural Funds, under the EU cohesion policy,<sup>12</sup> Objective 1 and 2 programmes, URBAN, etc.), and has to adapt to a growing number of norms and standards, such as partnerships with the private and the third sector (Brunsson and Jacobsson 2000).

Notwithstanding these important developments, national responses to globalisation are often different and not all subnational governments respond to European policies by carrying out the same "globalisation agenda" (Harding 1997: 308). The narrative of the new role of subnational government to the detriment of central authority should not be overplayed. As explained below, the idea that the nation state is being supplanted by alternative structures of governance is misguided and perhaps the current experimentation at the local level is just a "search for a fix" falling short of any decisive shift (Harding 1997; also see Peck and Tickell 1994).<sup>13</sup> In fact the current crisis, which has highlighted the democratic deficit at the EU level, might lead to the strengthening of nation states, amid disillusionment with the European project and local government's inability to face the new economic and political challenges.

#### New governance

The new approach to local development often draws on the literature on economic sociology (Swedberg 1993) and on the social construction of the market (Bagnasco and Trigilia 1993) to show that the *place* has become an integral part of economic development. The emphasis is also on institution building, especially at the subnational level, as institutions are expected to build networks and partnerships that will foster development (Wannop 1995). In light of the "new localism" produced by globalisation and European integration, local political leaders strive to attract resources and make their territory competitive in the global economy (Goetz and Clarke 1993). In order to do so they need to coordinate different local interests, state and non-state actors.

Since governmental power is diffused above and below, and policymaking more frequently entails interactions between institutional and civil society actors, several scholars choose to employ the concept of *governance* as a framework to understand what government does and how it carries out its functions (Leonardi et al 2007). Governance may thus be defined as "a flexible pattern of public decision-making based on loose networks of individuals in key public, para-public, and private bodies at various territorial levels" (Borraz and John 2004:112). Le Galès (1998:496) offers a broader definition, whereby "Governance is the capacity to integrate and give form to local interests, organisations and local groups and, on the other hand, the capacity to represent them outside, to develop more or less unified strategies towards the market, the state, other cities and other levels of government."

Governance is still a contested term and a difficult concept to operationalise (Keating 2008), since it can be interpreted more broadly as new forms of social regulation where government is only one of the actors, or, more narrowly, as a specific form of policy-making based on negotiation rather than hierarchy. Some scholars argue that governance is not so different from government. Pierre and Peters (2000:18), for instance, believe that "[g]overnance, strictly defined, is as old as government. What is novel [...] is recent changes in government". Thus, both the theoretical debate and empirical research tend to focus on new forms of governance that are emerging at regional and local level (Hamedinger et al 2008), whereby governance can "provide a framework for understanding changing processes of governing" (Pierre and Stoker 2000:33). These transformations are being addressed in different ways (Pierre and Stoker 2000; John 2001; Keating 2008), but generally *new governance* refers to a new approach to decision and policy-making that brings together bottom-up and top-down pressures, through networks and partnerships with non-institutional actors, which supplement the formal dimensions of politics (Hamedinger et al 2008).

It should be pointed out that there is a normative aspect to governance, which often underpins the neoliberal agenda. In this respect, governance is perceived to be an inevitable empirical process driven by market forces, to which political actors can only react. Here, on the contrary, governance is understood as the context within which government acts, and which political agents shape, as well as being shaped by it (Ascoli and Ranci 2002; Blakeley 2005). As argued by Taylor (2002:44), governance entails "a change in methods of control, not a general loss of control" on the part of state institutions. Governance cannot be reduced to collective action, the same way government cannot be solely explained by the institutional approach; both concepts and approaches can be combined to open the way to conceptual renewal (Le Galès 2002; also see Borraz and Le Galès 2001).

If some such as Rosenau (1997) see a loss of power from the central state to networks of corporations, nongovernmental organisations, as well as lower and higher tiers of governments, others believe that, although the central state no longer holds the monopoly on policy formulation, it still plays a defining role (Borraz and John 2004; Peters and Pierre 2000). Rather than neglecting the role of the state, these processes entail the reorganisation of institutional levels and the way services are delivered, financed and coordinated; in fact "[s]ocial expenditures did not decline radically as heralded and the state did not disappear" (Kazepov 2005:27).

The EU is clearly contributing to reinventing forms of governance, in order to reconcile economic competitiveness with social cohesion, but also to enhance the role of the European system of "multilevel governance" (Hooghe and Marks 2001), through promoting subnational government, which becomes an "active (and broadly pro-European) [actor] on the EU stage" (Hamedinger et al 2008:2674).<sup>14</sup> Multilevel governance refers to the process of restructuring nation-states and reinforcement of other tiers of government (i.e. regional government and the EU), encouraged by new decision-making processes in several policy areas. It also refers to novel coordination modes among formally sovereign yet functionally inter-dependent entities (Piattoni 2005; see also Jachtenfuchs 1995; Hooghe and Marks 2001).<sup>15</sup> However, the term is now applied to the EU more generally (Bache and Flinders 2004; Grande 2000, cited in Hooghe and Marks 2003; Hooghe and Marks 2001).<sup>16</sup> Theorists such as Keating (2008:76) question the validity of the concept of multilevel governance, as territorial politics has always existed and, although it has changed its form over time, "tracking these changes requires common concepts, not a conceptual break from one era to another", as it is difficult to compare past and present without conceptual continuity.

Beyond conceptual arguments, the literature shares a basic postulate: the diffusion of power creates a more flexible form of governing, as decision makers can "adjust the scale of governance to reflect heterogeneity" (Hooghe and Marks 2003:236). As decision-making increasingly lies with partnerships between state and non-state actors, across multiple jurisdictional levels, governance might raise issues of procedural legality, accountability and legitimacy.

#### A New Role For Cities

Following decentralisation trends, urban elites control more public policies, and cities represent the most visible locus of interdependence between social groups, and between economic interests and institutions. Thus, cities and their mayors – particularly where the latter are directly elected – would appear to be the most immediate mediators between cultural, social, and economic forces (Le Galès 2002). Urban policies in European cities have become more fluid and policy-making is opening up to a wide range of actors from different sectors of society and different institutional levels, leading to greater experimentation by local actors (Le Galès 2005).

As urban elites respond to the pressures of capital, strategies might converge and, as cities compete for job creation, issues of housing, exclusion and social conflicts might fade away from the political agenda, while lower taxation becomes the indicator of good management (Le Galès 2002). European cities could transform themselves into entrepreneurial cities, following North American cities, as the discourse of competition and the market, the rhetoric of image and identity, become dominant, economic development is given political priority to attract investments and local government is increasingly based around public-private partnerships. However, as yet, modes of governance in Europe are not solely organised around competition, as they often rely more on local culture and social groups and associations than local business. The locality is mobilised to create a sense of unity (ibid.). "Initiatives to promote urban and territorial identities – like strategic planning or city marketing, for example – should not be seen solely as simple propaganda or territorial 'merchandising' tools or as signs that market logics are replacing state logics in territorial policies. These policies may bring about a 'recombination' of modes of local regulation." (Pinson 2002:4). In this respect, politics remains an important factor in coordinating these processes (Kazepov 2005) and leadership can play a pivotal role as it facilitates the development of collective internal interests and gives direction on the representation of such interests outward. The blurring between the private and the public sector and the interdependence between different tiers of government will either "increase social and political fragmentation or strengthen the city as a site of governance" (Le Galès 2002:264).

Contrary to US cities, European urban government still has strong capacities in terms of initiative and control. Notwithstanding differences among *liberal* (Anglo-Saxon countries, such as the UK), *social-democratic* (North European countries, such as Denmark) or *corporatist/welfare* regimes (continental Europe countries, such as Germany) and *familistic* regimes (typical of Southern European countries),<sup>17</sup> cities can for now rely on a welfare state and its redistribution mechanisms. These can at least mitigate tendencies to segregation and poverty, and can guarantee a relatively stable *institutional milieu* that new forms of governance can build upon (ibid).

If in the US the dependence of cities on firms represents a powerful incentive for public-private coalition-building, the private sector is less important in European cities, as elucidated by the four cases of this study, which are less reliant on business taxes and whose resources rather depend on local taxes and state subsidies (see Le Galès 2002). Thus, urban regime theory is not necessarily the best framework of analysis for Europe as it relies on the asymmetrical relationship between local authorities and private interests and tends to neglect the institutional context (Pierre 2005). The community power studies place emphasis on the local actors outside institutional structures that help determine urban policies, i.e. "informal arrangements by which public bodies and private interests function together in order to be able to make and carry out governing decisions" (Stone

1989:6).<sup>18</sup> Urban governance research in Europe emphasises the importance of an integrated approach, whereby the structural context, the political culture, and the institutional framework represent fundamental variables for any analysis.<sup>19</sup>

Cities' own dynamism is thus a pivotal factor behind new governance and there is a great deal of experimentation underway in terms of collaborative strategy making, as in the case of multi-municipal partnerships (or the Italian *Territorial Pacts*) and new forms of Strategic Spatial Planning (Healey 2001).<sup>20</sup> These new urban projects have become an important form of mobilisation of local societies in European cities (Bryson and Crosby 1992; Newman and Thornley 1996; Healey et al 1997), as they aim to strengthen horizontal interactions within the city, without neglecting concerns of efficiency and management of the territory (Le Galès 2002). Within this context, "strategic planning for places and territories becomes an exercise in collective risk-taking and mobilising forces to help invent the future", through "identifying possible trajectories and patterns in emergent tendencies and imagining ways to enhance and counteract them in order to provide a different inheritance for our successors" (Healey 2001: 153).

In order to analyse new governance arrangements, Le Galès (2002) differentiates between modes of governance adopted by European cities along four main dimensions: 1) the structure of local society and political institutions (the degree of strength of the local government, links to other levels of government, economic situation and market pressures, presence of organised interests, and influence of the associative sector); 2) the institutionalisation of collective action (type of institutional arrangement, what actors are involved in the process);<sup>21</sup> 3) the political orientation of the local government; 4) and finally the outcomes (the capacity to extract resources from the EU, the state, the region, the market, and whether in cooperation or in competition with other cities; the type of policies carried out - or not - and their coherence; the winners and the losers in terms of redistribution of wealth and power).<sup>22</sup> Le Galès argues that relatively integrated modes of governance are found in medium-sized regional capital cities between 200.000 and 2 millions inhabitants. This framework proves more difficult to apply to large and metropolitan cities, which are too

complex and fragmented. This study will use this framework to guide the analysis of the four case studies, which are medium-sized cities between 100,000 and 180,000 inhabitants. However, it is important to acknowledge that such a small size often implies the lack of local resources, both financial and in terms of expertise, and hence greater reliance on higher levels of government.

This new *horizontal* approach to governing territories claims to be about opening up new political space to foster a (deliberative) dialogue with the community that will help pursue collective strategies of development, while also building social capital, which here becomes an integral part of the place's competitive advantage. Pichierri (1997) identifies five elements that define a *collective actor*: collective decision-making; common interests, thus integration mechanisms, strong local identity; through the а institutionalisation of collective action; internal and external representation of the collective actor, perhaps through a visible directly-elected mayor capable of animating the local polity; a capacity for innovation. European cities, however, should not be viewed as a priori collective actors. Integration of interests becomes a response to new challenges, as collective constructions can serve to legitimise a certain political order. The search for cohesion and consensus might therefore exclude certain interests, who do not seem pertinent or cannot offer resources perceived to be of merit (Le Galès 2002; Pinson 2005).

### **Beyond Negotiations: The Participatory Process** *Deliberative democracy in practice*

The discourse on citizen participation is emerging strongly in Europe, as an antidote to political disengagement and a tool to increase democratic legitimacy and administrative efficiency. In an institutional context of double devolution, local authorities are recognised as having a greater role in policymaking and are expected to diffuse power below and directly involve citizens in local governance. Citizen participation is encouraged by the EU, which in the Treaty of Lisbon introduces citizens' initiatives and recognises the importance of consultation and dialogue with associations and civil society. As examined above, the EU's cohesion policy is founded on a system of multilevel governance increasingly open to civil society involvement, through partnership-based processes (Hooghe and Marks 2001).

Whether called "unitary democracy" (Mansbridge 1980), "strong democracy" (Barber 1984), "civic discovery" (Reich 1988), "discursive democracy" (Dryzek 2000) or "deliberative democracy" (Gutmann and Thompson 1996), engaging citizens in local decision-making is increasingly referred to by practitioners as the preferred cure for "the ills of democracy" (Weeks 2000), as it is expected to increase local government's responsiveness and transparency. A number of deliberative policy studies have attempted to empirically test the applicability of deliberative democracy to the real world (see among other Ackerman 1991; Benhabib 1996; Kirlin 1996; Cohen 1997; Dryzek 2000; Fischer 1993; Fishkin 1995; Gutmann and Thompson 1996; Thompson 1999; Weeks 2000; Valadez 2001; Warren, 2002; Young 1996). In fact, the effort to relate the need for greater public participation to ideas of deliberation is quite striking and seems to justify Dryzek's assertion that "[t]he final decade of the second millennium saw the theory of democracy take a strong deliberative turn. Increasingly, democratic legitimacy came to be seen in terms of the ability or opportunity to participate in effective deliberation on the part of those subject to collective decisions" (2000:1).

Participation and deliberation are expected to foster civic-ness and social cooperation, following the Habermasian communicative reasoning. For Habermas, the very structure of language entails cooperation. The power of good debate will represent the main dynamic of deliberation, as through conversation and discussion people will rationally move towards reasonable (and consensual) agreement (Habermas 1996). In Elster's (1991) view, the discursive and reflexive construction of the political discourse can derive from *bargaining* but also from *arguing*. A deliberative agreement will not be based on *bargaining*, by which people's reasons remain unchanged and a compromise is sought, but rather on *arguing*, which aims at reaching a convergence of all interests on the same solutions, based on valid reasons that are capable of convincing all sides.

In representative democracy, voting simply expresses one's own self interest. By contrast within a deliberative process different opinions are discussed and the fairest and most persuasive will win; participants will form or transform their opinions as a result of an often conflict ridden contestation. Since choices and preferences are not given, but are expected to develop and change as they are confronted with stronger arguments, deliberative democracy distances itself from rational choice theory and its applications to political systems, and instead enhances the cognitive dimension of politics, as agreement is based on personal development and mutual learning (Gelli 2005).

However, several conditions need to be met for deliberation to be effective, and criteria such as the inclusiveness of the process, the mutual exchange of arguments and the existence of clear rules are pivotal (see Bohman and Rehg 1997). Representatives of different interests should thus be invited, and all stakeholders should be equally informed and empowered, so that they can effectively represent their group's interests. Deliberative theorists envisage deliberative forums that, when inclusive, will have the potential to augment democratic legitimacy through accountability and participation; to foster cooperation, through encouraging a public-spirited perspective on policy issues; to promote mutual respect among participants; and to enhance the quality of decisions (and opinions) through an informed and substantive debate (Chambers 2003).

In order to describe empirical experiences of deliberative democracy, Fung and Wright (2001; 2003) elaborated the Empowered Deliberative Democracy Model (EDD) based on three main principles: practical orientation, bottom-up participation and deliberative solution generation. Practical orientation means that governance structures are developed to address concrete concerns; bottom-up participation refers to direct participation of citizens and associations, which will increase accountability and offer a more diverse knowledge and experience to solve novel problems.<sup>23</sup> Finally in deliberative solution generation, participants listen to each other's positions before making a group decision. Under the EDD, Fung and Wright (2001:25-29) highlight three institutional objectives: effectiveness, equity and sustained participation. The first and most important institutional objective is to advance public ends through effective problem solving and successful implementation; if the performance does not adequately meet expectations, the participatory project will quickly loose attractiveness. On the contrary good performance will receive widespread popular and perhaps elite support – the so-called *demonstration effect*. A second important objective will be equitable outcomes, as the main goal of participatory democracy should be to deliver effective public action to the most disadvantaged people, who normally have the least tools to seek responsive policies from the state. Broad and sustained participation is the third main factor to determine the success of citizen voice initiatives and their sustainability. A political campaign supported by a vibrant civil society and clear and effective outcomes in the short term would thus seem paramount to encourage and sustain participation. However, notwithstanding the importance of the role of associations and their strength within the locality (Fung 2003, Maloney et al 2000), there is still much debate about the most conducive levels of associational density in order to empower weaker sectors. In fact, highly organised actors could simply further corporatist interests.<sup>24</sup>

Overall, although deliberation can engender a learning process as it helps to develop individual and collective democratic understanding and fosters critical and reflexive skills to analyse and solve political and policy issues, it cannot be an end in itself. In fact, many theorists of deliberative democracy insist that democratic legitimacy is not simply about procedures, but also demands a substantive element (see Estlund 1997). In order to be effective, these initiatives need to offer the real prospect of exercising state power. By focusing on pragmatic, problem-centred concerns that citizens have a deep interest in, they can reduce expert-based barriers, while enabling citizens to develop their technical competence and master the information necessary to make sensible and informed decisions (Fung and Wright, 2001; 2003).<sup>25</sup> In order to achieve these results, local government will need to enjoy clear authority over the policies discussed in deliberative forums and have access to enough resources, both financial and administrative, in order to implement participatory decisions. The case studies provide good examples of how excessive financial and policy ambition, or insufficient clarity on which tier of government holds decision-making authority for specific policy areas, can jeopardise both the process and the credibility of local government.

#### **Deliberation and Empowerment**

Several critics of deliberative democracy observe that the central weakness of communicative reasoning is that it fails to take account of Foucauldian relations of power. Successful experiences of participation in urban regeneration are often seen as transcending conflict and power relations (Harris and de Renzio 1997, Woolcock 1998, cited in Cento Bull and Jones 2004). However, scholars emphasise that conflict between interest groups is inevitable and participants clearly display different "power resources" (Lowndes and Wilson 2001:639). In fact, one of the main concerns of deliberative democracy critics is that it can reproduce the hierarchies of society at large, class hierarchies as well as hierarchies of experts' political competence against non-experts (Bourdieu 1991). For Bourdieu (see also Young 1996), the language itself becomes a medium of power, and language competence is clearly not equally distributed to all, which could constitute another factor of exclusion of the poor and less educated. Stronger and better organised interest groups or segments of the population that are traditionally well-resourced, such as the middle-classes, will have a tendency to capitalise on the new political space, as they enjoy greater human and financial resources. In fact, extending governance might weaken democracy insofar as the interests of those who have the time and the inclination to participate will be prioritised (Perrons and Skyers 2003).

Thus, in recent years, just when it is reaching its zenith in the institutional discourse, participation has come under harsh criticism from many observers (see among others Cooke and Kothari 2001; Mohan and Stokke 2000; Taylor 2000; Foley and Edwards 1997). Some view participatory mechanisms as tools in games of power that reproduce inequality and even have the potential "capacity for tyranny" (Cooke and Kothari 2001). Certainly the gap between the normative models and the empirical realities is hard to ignore.

Institutionalists argue that better institutional design can offset the bias towards more privileged participants; for instance pro-poor institutional arrangements could be built into participatory structures (Heller and Chaudhury 2003). The didactic component seems to be a salient ingredient of equitable deliberative participation: when the institutional design includes

a number of meetings devoted to learning procedures and rules, participants tend to acquire sufficient technical knowledge within a relatively short time (Baiocchi 2001). However, no amount of facilitation will succeed in budging certain differences between participants, who will bring with them their own ideas, knowledge, background, and connections (Cornwall and Coelho 2007). If the objective is to empower the marginalised sectors of society, the newfound enthusiasm for participatory mechanisms cannot become a substitute for transformative redistributive strategies (Perrons and Skyers 2003). Social movement theorists (Tarrow 1994; Della Porta and Diani 2004; Della Porta 2006) have argued that only social mobilisation can push for redistribution of power and resources.

In this respect, Cornwall (2002) distinguishes between *invited* and *invented* spaces of participation, whereby the former are more institutional participatory arenas opened from above, hence infused with power relations, whereas the latter are bottom-up initiatives, such as grassroots civic organising - or what Fraser (1992) terms "subaltern counterpublics."<sup>26</sup> Blaug (2002: 107), in an article that reviews recent experiences of participatory governance, differentiates between "incumbent" and "critical" democracy:

Incumbent democracy is primarily motivated to preserve and improve existing institutions by maximizing and managing orderly participation. Critical democracy seeks, instead, to resist such management and empower excluded voices in such a way as to directly challenge existing institutions. Incumbent democrats assume that effectiveness is only achieved through institutions, and that participation requires institutionalisation in order to be compatible with the central representative structures of the democratic state. Critical democracy upholds a rather different assumption: that effectiveness can arise out of a collective adherence to common concerns. Here, the institutionalisation of participation is seen as an attempt to tame radical energy.

Thus Blaug believes that when incumbent democracy (i.e. elected officials) opens up new political space for public participation, as it sets the rules and the agenda, it ends up controlling the process and the participants. He concludes that such "democratic engineering" results in what Habermas (1987) calls "colonisation", or cooptation of the participants, as incumbent democracy takes precedence over critical democracy. The clash between incumbent and critical democracy defines many participatory experiences - as the case study will elucidate clearly - when the new space is not perceived to and inclusive and substantive decision-making arena.

However, the new invited space can also open possibilities, or windows of opportunity (Kingdon 1984), "enabling citizens to transgress positions as passive recipients and assert their rights" (Cornwall and Coelho 2007).<sup>27</sup> The merit of the much celebrated experience of Participatory Budgeting (PB) in Porto Alegre (Abers 1998; Avritzer 2000; Allegretti 2003; Baiocchi 2001; Gret and Sintomer 2005; Heller 2001), which successfully interprets the Freirian idea of "conscientization" and empowerment, lies in its outstanding outcomes in terms of wealth and power redistribution. The resource issue is thus central. Even when local participation allows some voices to be heard, unless participants have a degree of say on the way resources are effectively allocated – which, as noted above, implies some level of financial and decision-making autonomy at the local level, as well as institutional capacity – empowerment will remain a token word and participatory mechanisms of governance will do little to redress social disadvantage (Perrons and Skyers 2003).

### The Quality Of Local Democracy

As subnational government is devolved new competencies and responsibilities, there is now wide support for what has been defined "local democracy", which is increasingly seen as a possible way of reinforcing democratic institutions and increasing efficiency of local governance systems. From local government's perspective, the concepts of local democracy and local *autonomy* are often interchangeable, as it has long been putting pressure on central government for devolution of power and resources (Gelli 2005). Pratchett (2004:358) conceptualises the concept of local autonomy as "*freedom from* higher powers" and "*freedom to* effect particular outcomes; *the reflection of local identity*".

The European Charter of Local Self-Government incorporates several of the "pluralist" arguments that support the idea that local democracy institutions should foster the diffusion of power below to society and promote diversity against standardising national policies, while building local self-government capacity (Gelli 2005). The Charter in fact reiterates that public policy-making should, whenever possible, be devolved to public authorities that are closest to citizens (art.43), following the principle of subsidiarity.

In EU rhetoric, the concept of subsidiarity serves to reinforce local democracy as a strategy to partly offset the democratic deficit and develop participatory mechanisms that are more coherent with the principle of territorial, economic, and social cohesion. The relationship between representative and direct democracy has different implications at the local level, as local elections are not strictly limited to one's vote. The local electorate will not simply vote for the mayor, but also for a programme of policies which will directly affect citizens, and the different phases of the electoral campaign will at least partly respond to the themes of the local political agenda and the public debate, since local voters are perceived to be more aware and competent when it comes to voting on local issues (Gelli 2005).<sup>28</sup>

As governance entails the commitment of elected officials to work with formal and informal networks and partnerships (Rhodes 1996, 2000), scholars and practitioners disagree about whether the growth of these partnerships represents "a threat or an opportunity" for democracy (McLaverty 2009: 4). Although on the one hand it has been argued that traditional government systems are plagued by excessive bureaucracy and lead to waste of resources, on the other hand "governance by networks" (Marin and Mayntz 1991) raises issues of representativeness and legitimacy, as it does not guarantee accountability. In fact, as responsibility is diffuse, sanctioning becomes more difficult. This has the potential to create a democratic deficit, to the point that Cooke and Kothari (2001) describe the new governance system as an expression of "private governance".<sup>29</sup> Other scholars recognise that at the local level mechanisms that strengthen local political leadership (i.e. the direct election of mayors) could help to reconcile vertical accountability to citizens with governance mechanisms (Haus and Heinelt 2004). The directly-elected mayor will also be in a privileged position guarantee the translation of informal decisions into tangible to administrative acts.

The issue of democracy as depending on representation is a complex one. The conflictual relationship between representative and participatory democracy mainly derives from the fact that while liberal democracy is legitimated by universal adult suffrage and regular elections, one might ask where the new participatory mechanisms would gain their legitimacy from.<sup>30</sup> Scholars like Beetham (1993; 2005) believe that inclusive and accountable institutions can provide an important space for interactions between citizens and their elected representatives, and nurture critical democracy. Thus, participatory mechanisms can enhance the representative system (Beetham 2005). Advocates of participation often refer to the degree of inclusivity to guarantee the legitimacy of the process (Bobbio 2005), whereby all the participants should have equal opportunities to express their opinion. However, several scholars argue that the problem with deliberative mechanisms is that participants are not representative of wider constituencies (O'Neill 2002; Cammelli 2005; Regonini 2005). O'Neill (2002:494) thus envisages a "weaker role for such institutions within the democratic process, say to the formulation of options and possible recommendations, allowing for other forms of accountability to be retained in the decision-making process". This approach, which is generally endorsed by local political elites in the four cases of this research, would deeply undermine the role of the participatory arrangements in local governance. Beyond the discourse on empowerment, which can only be sustained through substantive saying on decision-making, the *deliberative public policy* approach (Majone 1989; Hajer and Wagenaar 2003; Torgerson 2003) points to the potential of policy democratisation as an alternative to the technocratic understanding of *policy-making*, as a way for the public to express their concerns, exchange arguments with other participants, learn and develop ideas, and influence policy-making in a more argumentative way than by just voting every four or five years. The degree of decision-making afforded to participatory mechanisms is thus one of the most important variables when examining these initiatives, and one might argue that "if there is no clear, systematic way by which decisions reached can feed into ultimate policy decisions, [...] it is difficult to regard participation as effective" (McLaverty 2009:9).31

The participatory approach thus becomes a vital ingredient to the formation of a collective actor; but, as local government is increasingly seen as a producer of goods and services, participation is often understood by local political elites as a way of manufacturing consent, as resistance against certain projects can be overcome more easily. Purely consultative exercises often translate into tokenistic efforts and have no tangible influence, and yet, according to deliberative democracy's detractors, the existence of participatory mechanisms with decision-making powers would infringe on the democratic rights of those who do not participate, since participants are not representative of wider constituencies. The dilemma of the relationship between deliberative and representative democracy would seem impossible to resolve. However, against the representativeness deficit criticism, one might argue that the rationale behind participatory mechanisms should be to invite representatives of all affected interests (stakeholders) so as to reach fairer decisions that take account of all points of view on a given issue (Bobbio 2004).

Local government is in a privileged position to enhance the human resources that the local active citizenship can mobilise and to involve social actors in producing local collective competition goods. The issue is how to institutionalise forms of democratic mobilisation. There follows a tendency to think of deliberative arenas in terms of efficiency and management of conflicts, fostering a politics of consensus. Osborne and Gaebler (1992), who first introduced the notion of local government as a *catalyser*, in that it creates an environment conducive to citizen participation, are perhaps the most notable interpreters of the thesis of local democracy to increase efficiency vs. the idea of fostering citizenship.

The neo-Marxist view sees the state function in regulating class and social relations, thus participation *from above* would reflect the effort to create social regulation, as government replaces expensive ways of controlling risk and treating inequalities with less expensive means (which however do not effectively address the problem) through disciplining once autonomous associations, buying them off with subsidies (Jessop 2002; Peck and Tickell 2002). The combination of actors and resources involved in the participatory process is often the product of a predetermined design that inhibits the emergence of marginal actors and new resources, rather than being a genuine collective process of innovation and transformation. As associations interact with government, either through the bureaucracy or political parties, they conform to and internalise rules, as they respond to bureaucratic requirements and/ or the political funding system. This leads to increasing professionalisation of these associations, while their legitimacy and representation capacity might be weakened (Nicholls 2006). Thus a key challenge for leadership "is how to encourage new forms of democratic mobilisation without ritualising them and constraining efforts to deepen local democracy" (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

Along the policy outcomes of these mechanisms, it is therefore important to evaluate the actual process, to assess the degree of inclusivity, which interests are involved and how, which interests are excluded or choose to exclude themselves and why. In this respect, the reference to the normative models conceptualised by the literature on deliberative democracy can offer an important framework of analysis of these phenomena.

# **Strategic Planning And The Implementation Gap**

Strategic Planning (SP) is not a new concept, particularly in view of the fact that there exist three generations of plans that have interpreted the idea of planning in very different ways. The first iteration dates back to the 1960s and 1970s, when some cities in the US, and later in the UK and France, introduced the systemic approach of long term planning for the public sector. This approach viewed the city or the region as a system consisting of closely linked sub-systems, to which quantitative models would be applied that were expected to provide reliable predictions upon which public decisions could be elaborated. The UK's Structure plans or the French SDAU (Schéma Directeur d'Aménagement et d'Urbanisme) are examples of this first generation of plans, as their function was to establish objectives and directives for the development of the territory and its infrastructure (Curti and Gibelli 1999). The second generation emerged in a context of deregulation during the 1980s, particularly in the US, and later in the UK, Holland, and France, and was characterised by the attempt to apply the market logic to the public sector (Gibelli 1996).

Vinci (2011) notes that during the past 20 years the literature has analysed the development and increasing popularity of a strategic approach which is the result of a twofold trend: the tendency of urban planning to internalise the principle of Strategic Planning in light of the changed economic context and of institutional governance (Healey et al 1997; Albrechts et al 2003); and the re-interpretation of the 1980s corporate SP, by emphasising the collective and relational aspects that can mitigate the competitiveness dimension (Gibelli 1996; Bagnasco and Le Galès 2000; Perulli 2004). This third generation of plans represents a reaction to the systemic approach of the first wave, which was focused on a top-down vision that had to be inflexibly implemented. The new Strategic Plans are also radically different from the second generation. There the focus was mainly on performance and implementation, while there was limited interest on issues of coherence between the planned objectives and what was actually achieved; the concept of vision was more or less neglected and cooperation and alliances among actors were short-term and perceived in a utilitarian way.

This third generation of SP (also known as *collaborative strategic planning*, see Healey et al 1997) has developed since the mid-1990s and all the Italian experiences are included in this latest wave. The new plans thus represent a third approach, sitting somewhere between the normative, holistic and highly hierarchical approach of the first generation and the excessively flexible, performance-based, utilitarian, and opportunistic approach of the second generation. SP now aims at creating synergies among actors around a consensual vision of the future that rests on the resources (not just financial) of those involved (Spaziante 2003). The global socio-economic context, as examined above, has also changed and it is increasingly based on territorial cooperation and competition, whereby cities, as discussed above, become by necessity loci of economic and political innovation (Keating 2000; Le Galès 2002; Kazepov 2005).

SP has been defined by Camagni (2003:83) as "a collective vision of the future of a given territory, through processes based on participation, discussion and listening; as a pact among administrators, local actors, citizens and different partners to create such a vision through elaborating a strategy and a subsequent series of projects, variously interconnected, justified, evaluated and shared; finally as the coordination of these actors' responsibilities in implementing the projects."<sup>32</sup> In this respect SP has become a tool to plan the physical as well as the economic development of the place and build its identity, in the logic of inter-tier project cooperation and integration. It generally starts on the initiative of local government, which has a pivotal role to play in creating identity incentives that can foster collective action. The identification of the distinctive features of a place represents a process of collective learning that can raise the stakeholders' awareness of their ecosystem (Vinci 2010).

Magnaghi (1990; 2000) and the *scuola territorialista* (that emphasises the role of the locality) have offered a great contribution within this framework of analysis, by which the rebirth of a place is determined by a strong self-recognition process on the part of the community and through building a virtuous relationship between the community and its environment. By reinforcing pre-existing social networks and supporting new ones, a good SP purportedly encourages collective behaviours that can help generate a more integrated, hence more competitive, local system, while providing incentives for new entrepreneurship (Gastaldi 2003). However, as within multilateral decision-making stronger interests tend to prevail, there exists the risk that these strategies become yet another instrument to put forward the same top-down policies and ensure legitimacy for those interests that might have otherwise encountered the community's hostility (ibid.).

SP develops through several stages during which the actors involved meet in deliberative forums and thematic workshops: an initial stage, when all the interested institutional, private and social actors elaborate a collective strategy for local development; a second phase of analysis, during which a diagnostic document is produced to highlight the potential and the limits of the locality, and the issues that the participants identify as priorities; a planning phase, when projects are defined, consistently with the overall development model; the approval of the final plan (officially presented to the community and subscribed by all participants); the implementation phase; and finally monitoring and evaluation of project implementation (Segatori 2007).

Mintzberg (1994) identifies three main interrelated rationales behind SP: *thinking about the future*, whereby the emphasis is on the constructions of visions; *integrating decision-making*, to create a network or a coalition of actors for urban and regional policies, as a *governance tool* to increase effectiveness; and *improving coordination mechanisms*, whereby the SP encourages convergence between sectoral policies. Cities may choose to adopt SP to maximise the impact of a great event and engender long term benefits, as in the case of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona (Maragall 2004; Güell 2006); but a Strategic Plan is often a reaction to a crisis, as in Turin, where the city had to emancipate itself from its image as a *Fiat-centric*, industrial city and reinvent itself in a post-Fordist perspective (Pinson 2002; 2005; 2007; Dente e Melloni 2005).

As an increasing number of medium-sized cities in Italy are adopting SP, the rationale behind this decision is often diverse: the need to revitalise and modernise the concept of local development, by generating new opportunities through mobilising different actors, as in Trento; the challenge of responding to the crisis of a place's local development model and the need to reconvert it, as in the case of Prato; finally the necessity to coordinate the investment of funds, from the private sector, from national or regional government, or from the EU, as in Lecce and Sassari. The focus is more on process than outcomes, and some authors (Pinson 2002:9) argue that "the nature of the strategies produced hardly matters", while the process of elaborating them can foster the inter-acquaintance of different interests, contributing to the consolidation of the collective *city-actor* (ibid.).

For these collaborative processes to work, stakeholders will need to recognize their mutual interdependence, listen to each other's views, and develop open, constructive, and trusting relationships. This requires letting go of initial perceptions and assumptions, changing habitual modes of communications, and accommodating each other's interests in finding a consensual agreement (Innes and Booher 2003; McGuire 2006; Weber and Khademian 2008). Interdependence of stakeholders is however hard to engender, as more powerful actors are often able to control the process or have the option of other, non-collaborative channels (Ansell and Gash 2007; Innes and Booher 2003). Those actors that could really impact the local reality often refuse to take on substantive responsibilities and their involvement becomes just a formal exercise. In fact, perhaps one reason why these processes often remain just "good intentions" is that pacts are signed

without clarifying what responsibilities each participant is taking on, in concrete terms (Gastaldi 2003).

Although each city should develop a different plan that responds to the local context, there are several recurrent themes, such as the environment, security, infrastructure, internationalisation of economic relations, new models of local welfare, and new ways of managing services and mobility in the face of privatisation tendencies (Gastaldi 2003). The general model of the plan will be influenced by the institutions behind it; frequently the local administration will take the initiative and manage the implementation process, although in some cases ad hoc agencies are created to act as coordinators (i.e. Torino Internazionale in Turin or Firenze 2010 in Florence). Formal and informal networks among municipalities encourage policy transfer (Wolman and Page 2002), and new inter-municipal networks and partnerships among cities are certainly helping to disseminate information about SP. As argued by Bryson (2004) SP is more successful wherever the administrative and political leadership is capable to define the plan based on the place's political and social peculiarities, against the allure of blueprints and transferable models. The paradox of SP, according to Bryson, is that it is particularly necessary where it is unlikely to work, since it requires a rich social fabric, whose relational and cognitive potential SP can further enhance.

SP will also have a different political function, depending on when it is launched in the political cycle (Gastaldi 2003): at the end of the first term or during the second term, the plan will represent an assessment of the mayor's mandate and it can become a sort of final balance on what has been achieved and what can still be achieved. Conversely plans that mark a change in government and originate from a new political phase will help to open new government prospects, like in Sassari or Trento (see Gastaldi 2003). An innovative leadership that can coordinate and sustain cohesive networks appears to be the key ingredient to ensure that the process does not quickly implode under the pressure of opportunistic interests on all sides.

Although SP is *extra legem*, the absence of binding power can encourage the informality of the relationship among the participants and allow them to exchange views, without formal constraints. Yet the decisions that originate from these processes are still important, as their value derives from the consensus of the stakeholders. In this respect these instruments can be considered as an example of *soft law* (Bobbio 2004). Informal decisions still have to be translated into formal actions and, as noted above, directlyelected mayors can often represent this interface. Mayors (and public service CEOs) understand the procedural as well as the administrative aspects and can act as guarantors of collective decisions against interferences from political representatives during the operational phase, by reassuring those councillors or party representatives that might feel bypassed during the process (ibid).

One of the main challenges is that SP clashes against an institutional framework whereby the competencies and resources of regional governments have been reinforced, yet local political representation at the regional level has not been adjusted. Furthermore, as regional policies are still sector-based, the demand for integrated planning entailed by SP might struggle to meet an equivalent structure at the regional level. This could result in local integrated planning having to converge on regional sector-based planning (Santandrea 1997). As the case studies will elucidate, these collaborative processes cannot be taken in isolation, but need to be located "in their continual interactions with wider processes" and at different tiers of government (Healey et al 2003: 85).

#### Strategic Planning in Italy

SP was first implemented in Italy by Turin in 1998, as the city was trying to reconvert its industrial development model within a post-Fordist environment (Dente and Melloni 2005). The process was launched in view of the forthcoming 2006 Winter Olympic games, which represented an opportunity to diversify the local development path and move beyond the one company town model (i.e. Manchester and Glasgow) characterising cities that developed around one main industry (FIAT's automotive industry in Turin's case). The association *Torino Internazionale* was established to coordinate the operational phase. This continues to exist and today includes 125 members and some of the most important players in the local polity: the local authority, the University, the Chamber of Commerce, and all the main trade and industry associations (http://www.torinointernazionale.org/IT/HomePage). Here the political elites, by highlighting the territory's competitive advantages, were able to promote "a shared view of the territory as social capital: the bonds created and the consensus built enable the strengthening of cooperative ties" (Pinson 2002:13). However, Torino Internazionale is an "elitist mobilisation"; it introduced pluralism into the representation of these elites, whereby politics has fostered a process of pluralisation by supporting mechanisms that encourage "the interacquaintance and inter-recognition between these different interests" (ibid.). However, as other weaker interests are excluded, the cost of building a coalition, a collective actor, might be democratic "opacity" and "a growing compartmentalisation of urban society" (ibid.).

Soon Turin's example was followed by Florence, La Spezia, Pesaro, Trento, Venice, and Verona, which in 2004 founded the Network of Strategic Cities (Rete delle città strategiche) to exchange experiences and models of good practice. On its website (www.recs.it), the Network states among its objectives: to disseminate information about the approach of SP as a local and European mode of governance; to promote benchmarking activities; to reinforce the role of cities at the national and international levels; to research support tools for the implementation of SP; to create an International Observatory of Cities; to expand the number of competent institutional actors. In 2012 the network included 37 cities and numerous smaller towns (34 communes in Sardinia alone implemented SP). Perhaps an element of emulation can be detected in the latest wave of Strategic Plans, which started in 2005, as less experienced cities reinterpret and adapt to their own context successful SPs, such as Turin's. It was partly the effect of a copycat syndrome, as in a *mimetic process* of isomorphism (Di Maggio and Powell 1983), whereby when an innovation is poorly understood and goals are ambiguous, organisations cope with the uncertain environment by modelling themselves on other organisations.

Modeling, as we use the term, is a response to uncertainty. The modelled organisation may be unaware of the modelling or may have no desire to be copied; it merely serves as a convenient source of practices that the borrowing organisation may use. (Di Maggio and Powell 1983: 151)

This new niche might soon become saturated; within the next few years we will see how many of these cities will move on to their second or third plan, and in which cities SP will become an integral instrument of governance or just a redundant process.

SP has traditionally been initiated by local government on a voluntary basis and it has not been formalised as a governance instrument. However, since 2005 it has undergone "proceduralisation," as attested to by a few handbooks published by Formez (Gioioso 2006)33 and the Government's Department of Public Function (Dipartimento della Funzione pubblica della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri) (Tanese et al 2006). Since 2005 CIPE (Comitato interministeriale per la programmazione economica/ Interministerial Committee for Economic Planning) has been actively promoting SP in Mezzogiorno, through an important initiative of the Ministry of Infrastructure in 2005, in conjunction with the beginning of the new European programme period of structural funds (2007-13). The European Commission in fact insisted on the idea that the projects submitted should be part of a strategic vision elaborated through partnerships and participatory processes. Regional governments welcomed the initiative and offered regional funds to co-finance local SP processes (Camagni 2010), as the chapters on Lecce and Sassari will elucidate. This top-down approach to SP raises a dilemma. On the one hand, disbursing regional financial incentives to start the process and linking project implementation to EU structural funds clearly alters the voluntary nature of SP and might encourage opportunistic behaviours of stakeholders interested in capturing funds for their own projects. On the other hand, by using SP to decide on how to invest structural funds, which represent the biggest chunk of central transfers to the South, an administration might signal that SP is an important decisionmaking arena, and this might foster greater and more committed participation. A national strategy of financial transfers to sustain SP could however engender the same perverse effects as in the case of other development policies already experimented in the South, such as fragmented initiatives and waste of public resources. A rather more fruitful approach might entail the provision of technical expertise and know-how, as well as greater coordination between national and municipal policies, following the

French *Contrats de Ville* (Perulli 2007; 2010).<sup>34</sup> The comparative chapter will analyse these different dynamics and also highlight the potential and the limits of two voluntary experiences, in Trento and Prato, vs. two compulsory or highly incentivised ones, in Lecce and Sassari.

### The Pathological Implementation Gap

The literature offers a dire record of the outcomes of governance arrangements, particularly in Italy (Dente 1997; 1999; 2007; Cerosimo and Wolleb 2006; Balducci and Fedeli 2011; Pasqui 2011), since these mechanisms struggle to produce tangible results. The reasons often lie in several limits in terms of central and local action. At the central/ regional level, unclear norms and regulations often generate confusion and frustration at the local level, while limited inter-institutional and coordination capacity often condemn these initiatives to a plethora of fragmented projects (Piselli 2005; Cerosimo and Wolleb 2006). In terms of local action, politicians' short attention span often sacrifice genuinely collective goods for their own political interests, as the gap between electoral politics and substantive politics (Le Galès 1998) inevitably hinders these initiatives. There is often great emphasis on local resources, but, particularly in the case of smaller cities, limited local competence, financial and human resources can constrain the elaboration of effective and truly innovative strategies, while a lack of awareness over actual local competencies can frustrate over ambitious expectations, as final decisions are the responsibility of another jurisdictional level. There is perhaps some degree of naivety among administrations. The SP often represented a claim of greater independence and "responsibilisation" of local government vis-à-vis the Province and/or the Region, but this seeming lack of awareness about actual competencies, while at the same time failing to ensure integrated decision-making across institutional tiers, contributed to the "pathological implementation gap" (Deidda 2010:113).

At all levels the logic of political consensus forces actors to sacrifice selectivity (and strategy) for political bargaining and to opt for suboptimal solutions that enjoy greater support (Cerosimo and Wolleb 2006). Thus, there exists a conflict between selectivity and inclusivity which can limit the ability to focus on few strategic aspects, as if failing to cover all policy areas within the SP means that they disappear entirely from the policy agenda. Given the pluralistic political and social context, it is perhaps unsurprising that plans often turn out to be all-encompassing. The risk, though, is that "If Planning is Everything, Maybe it's Nothing" (Wildawsky 1973). The tradeoffs are between selectivity and consensus, and the political pressure for the latter is clearly stronger. Selectivity could then become too high a political risk to take (Albrecht 2006).

The implementation gap is also a consequence of contradictions inherent to collaborative initiatives, as observed by scholars of organisation theory, who have long studied these instruments applied to private and public contexts (Mintzberg 1994; Bryson 2004). SP claims to be democratic, based on decentralised initiative and centralised synthesis. But centralised synthesis can undermine decentralised initiative, so there is an extreme centralising bias that conflicts with the idea of participation, as intended by the literature on deliberative democracy. As participation is precluded the determination of final results, it discourages the commitment that SP claims and needs to foster.

Are the new strategic plans any different in reinterpreting the relationship between knowledge and action, as proposed by Friedmann (1993)?<sup>35</sup> Are the new planning practices helpful in fostering the capacity to be selective? Mintzberg (1994) highlights the conflict between the very idea of innovative strategy and the inflexibility of plans and planning, which tend to preserve categories rather than rearranging them and become generic and holistic, rather than creative and strategic. The four case studies add to the literature on SP (Albrecht 2006) and are a further testament to the fact that cities have not been able to move beyond traditional planning models, and SP tends to become a tool to systematise long-standing project ideas. The administrators' inability to understand the plan as a continuous process, which requires the ongoing collaboration with the other actors involved, clearly constrained strategic capacity and further jeopardised implementation. The plan is perceived to be the mere list of projects; this tricks politicians into thinking that this first decision-making phase will by itself safeguard the operational stage. However, decision-making happens at

the time of implementation, as the influence of stronger interests and institutional and administrative constraints, as examined in the next chapter, become apparent.

Wildavsky and Majone (1979) describe the implementation process as a process of "evolution" that constantly undergoes reformulation and redefinition. As administrators often try to control all the elements of the elaboration phase, they inevitably lose sight of three main elements that could later help to sustain the operational phase: 1) the stakeholders' initial definition of the problem; 2) the arena where the process develops; and 3) the initial actions of the promoters of the policy. The initial design can thus act as a *disposition* defining the nature of the problem, the arena and the initial actions. However as SP is an evolutionary process, these *dispositions* can take many directions (Balducci and Fedeli 2011). Along this line, Albrecht and Van de Broeck (2004) propose a "four track approach": 1) the elaboration of a long-term vision, but 2) allowing for immediate actions and 3) involving the relevant stakeholders, but 4) also trying to reach out to public opinion. Both frameworks suggest then that the focus should be on implementation as a continuous process, rather than as an enucleated dimension that follows diagnosis and planning as if in a logical sequence (Balducci and Fedeli 2011).

As administration struggle to move beyond traditional planning, new waves of plans and governance mechanisms deliver similarly poor outputs, often creating a planning and participation fatigue, as several new plans at different level of government are introduced. As expectations are frustrated, the new arrangements can generate disillusionment and disaffection, and new social capital is often dispersed. Concrete outputs are pivotal to guarantee the legitimacy of the process, so as to guarantee Fung and Wright's *demonstration effect*, which will encourage further participation.

Any analyses of SP and other governance instruments should focus primarily on the formation of the collective actor and the democratic process, as sharing the project is more important than its content. In continuously changing contexts, *deductive cogitation* of strategies will inevitably clash against inescapable institutional and administrative constraints; by contrast a collective process can facilitate the incremental emergence of innovative strategies (Pinson, 2002:11). Here politics can play a pivotal function, by mediating between two dimensions, avoiding on the one hand wish lists that cannot be translated into concrete projects, and on the other hand the risk of constraining the room of manoeuvre, as the process is hijacked by opportunistic interests or depends excessively on procedural and technical considerations (Pinson 2005).

## Conclusion

This chapter has reviewed three main literatures - urban governance, deliberative democracy, and the literature on planning, with particular reference to SP - in order to frame the three dimension of the dependent variable under study, the impact of SP: the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, and the implementation phase. Urban governance scholars have focused on the rescaling of politics and the new role of the city within the state, but also within the broader context of European governance. They have studied new modes of governance, based around arrangements that increasingly move beyond negotiations between political and economic elites and tend to invite associations and the wider community to take part in policy-making. The rationale underpinning the new governance arrangements is to enhance that social capital which is now perceived to be a key to augmenting the *place*'s qualities and transform it into a *collective* actor, in order to increasing its competitive advantage.

Conversely deliberative policy studies, as they examine the applicability of deliberative democracy and its normative standards to the real world, have focused on issues of inclusivity, groups' resources and all the variables that might affect the fairness of the debate and prevent the empowerment of the weakest groups. The focus here is on the democratic process. An inclusive process is more likely to produce policies that are innovative (as new actors are invited to the table and bring with them new sets of skills and expectations) and enjoy greater legitimacy; if these are effectively implemented, the *demonstration effect* (Fung and Wright 2001) will help sustain participation in the future. A non-inclusive process will generally translate into a tokenistic exercise and will just serve to consolidate

the privileged position of certain groups, while legitimating the same topdown policies, with no real gain in terms of social capital and/ or innovative strategies. Thus, it is pivotal to understand the relationship between special interests, which will enjoy greater influence, and particular interests, which are more diffused but enjoy fewer resources (Crosta 2003). This study will show how often *counterpublics* or *invented* spaces, often developing antagonistically as a reaction against the new *invited* spaces that might be perceived as non inclusive, can be more effective, albeit disordered, at giving voice to participants and gaining political and media attention, at least in the short term. Bottom-up mobilisation, which generally emerges in response to a pressing issue, is naturally easier to foster and to sustain than participation in arenas opened from above.

One of the major challenges raised by SP, and other governance processes, is the tension between participatory and representative democracy and how to integrate one into the other. The response to the "crisis of representation", as examined in the next chapter, was to strengthen executive decision-making, often through introducing direct mayoral elections as in Italy, while local government and local governance have come to be understood as means to increase efficiency, rather than democracy.

Finally the literature on planning reminds us about the obstacles to implementation, as administrative and political constraints hinder the concrete outputs of collaborative planning, sometimes jeopardising gains in terms of social capital produced through the initial process. An inclusive leadership can play a key role in mediating between opportunistic behaviour and collective goods, between excessively ambitious projects and smaller/ non strategic measures, but the inherent contradictions of SP, torn between inclusivity of actors and selectivity of strategies, remain unresolved and demand some degree of conceptual rethinking. The case studies will offer different typologies of leadership, to help to elucidate how different forms and resources of leadership can explain different outcomes in terms of the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, and implementation (or lack thereof).

It is certainly difficult to evaluate the degree of success of these initiatives, as they cannot be simply measured by the number of projects implemented. This study is, thus, more interested in understanding the dynamics unleashed by new governance mechanisms, in the form of greater cooperation between actors and the local administration, but also within the public sectors, and how such dynamics are hindered or enhanced by local leadership vis-à-vis pre-existing associational dynamics and institutional and political opportunities and constraints at other tiers of government.

# **Chapter 2**

# **Rescaling Politics** *The Italian Context*

The institutional reforms introduced in Italy in the early 1990s have encouraged the emergence of new modes of governance for local development, which are now supported by a growing body of national and regional laws. A brief overview of the Italian local context and of the impact of these political reforms on local democracy will help to explain the enthusiasm towards participatory governance of the last decade. The 1993 Act, which introduced the direct election of mayors, interpreted the deep sense of distrust towards the gigantic party machines of the First Republic, which had collapsed under the investigation into party corruption called Mani Pulite (Clean Hands). The reforms represented an attempt to dramatically alter the balance of power between national political parties and their candidates, and between central and local government. The new mayors gained authority and visibility, but they had to confront the challenge of coordinating plural interests of increasingly fragmented societies, which political parties struggled to interpret and represent. Mechanisms of participatory governance, such as Strategic Planning (SP), were thus perceived by administrators as a way of creating collective identity incentives and pre-empting conflicts.

The mayoral reform strengthened the relationship between the new "head of the local state" (Newell 2007:171) and the local polity; however, the impact on local democracy has not been entirely positive. As the local council has been deprived of many of its previous powers, political mechanisms of checks and balances have been weakened and local administration mostly happens through executive acts. This increases the need of legitimation of the mayor's mandate in between elections, and governance arrangements can become useful instruments in this respect. In fact the new entrepreneurial mayor, through coordinated work with public service CEOs, is generally the sponsor of these initiatives, as he enjoys a privileged position for translating SP's informal decisions into political acts. On the contrary, the body that has traditionally interpreted representative democracy, the council, is increasingly bypassed.

This chapter will examine the mayoral reform and explore the dynamics highlighted above, in light of the literature on leadership. An analysis of the impact of the reform can help to explain the emergence and increasing popularity of SP in Italy, with a focus on the way varying forms and resources of leadership, vis-à-vis the council and the local civil society, can determine its outcomes. Great attention is devoted to the issue of weakened mechanisms of political checks and balances, which the reforms have engendered by altering the balance of power between the cabinet (and the directly-elected mayor in particular) and the council. Empirical findings from the four case studies show how these dynamics deeply affect the quality of local democracy (and its efficiency, as demonstrated by the increasing number of municipalities waking up to unexpected holes in the budget).

The second section of this chapter will analyse the emergence of participatory arrangements in Italy following the political reforms, and it will offer an overview of the regulatory framework supporting these new modes of governance. Notwithstanding the emphasis of the local governance discourse on these new mechanisms, so far the results have been mixed. The goals of governance arrangements are admittedly ambitious: to increase efficiency, to engender greater transparency and accountability, to develop the sense of the city as a collective actor and strengthen inter-tier cooperation. Such aspirations often clash against weak administrative capacity and limited political awareness.

Several scholars emphasise the role of leadership in driving collaborative initiatives, against the argument that a strong social fabric is a pre-requisite for participation to work rather than its outcome. This section will address this ongoing debate and argue that the understanding of social capital as linked to action, à la Coleman (1988), is more constructive. As demonstrated by the empirical research, leadership plays a key role in strengthening or weakening social capital, irrespective of pre-existing associational dynamics, by choosing to, or refraining from, legitimise the "action" (in this case the instrument of SP) around which a collective actor can develop, based on political interests and contexts. The last section will introduce the four case studies and present the research design and methodology, evidencing the merits of a comparative approach. The preceding sections will have helped to frame the independent variable, leadership, as it is strengthened or weakened by the way it interrelates with two intervening variables, the local associational context and other levels of government.

## Institutional Reforms in Italy The Rise Of The Mayors

The status quo ante of Italian local administrations, prior to the 1990s reforms introducing direct mayoral elections, was characterised by precarious coalitions and governmental inertia. The centrality of the municipal council vis-à-vis the executive, combined with a proportional voting system, often meant that the local administration would become another arena for party machinations and distributive agreements among political factions. National parties had full control over post-electoral majorities and coalitions, hence over the election of the mayor and the executive (giunta), encouraging political irresponsibility and limited accountability, as local officials had to respond to their party coalition rather than the electorate (Di Virgilio 2005). In a context of *partitocracy*, or the omnipresence of political parties in social and economic institutions, paradoxically, and particularly at the local level, parties never had the capacity to exert strong political control (Pinson 2007). This was due to a very fragmented party system which would open the way to coalition-making games to practice the so-called *lottizzazione*, or sharing out assessori (local ministers) positions. This would result in further weakening of mayors and, as different political tendencies would influence local administration, in "the blurring of political strategies, when there were any" (ibid:120).

At the national level, the 142/1990 Act was emblematic of Parliament and central government's paralysis, as political actors were incapable of promoting any substantial reforms. Although this bill introduced important changes in terms of local autonomy, by reducing the council's powers and proposing a clearer distinction between political and administrative functions, it fell short of changing electoral rules or the substantial form of local government, because the delicate party balance of power would not have allowed it (ibid.).<sup>36</sup> The Italian *partitocracy*, weakened by growing support for the separatist party Northern League (*Lega Nord*), eventually collapsed under *Tangentopoli* and the *Mani Pulite* (Clean hands) investigation on party corruption. Several local administrations were dissolved, as many local administrators were prosecuted, while a parliament of indicted politicians could hardly oppose the growing pressure exerted by a popular referendum movement backing the direct election of mayors. Law 81, introducing direct mayoral elections, was finally passed in March 1993, to avoid a referendum that would have otherwise taken place the following month (ibid.).

The 1993 Act set a limit of two consecutive mandates<sup>37</sup> and introduced several other innovations, such as the majority system for the election of the council and the power for mayors to appoint and revoke the assessori.<sup>38</sup> The giunta and the council are now clearly separate, as the assessori do not need to be chosen from within the council.<sup>39</sup> In order to increase the stability of local government, the new balance of power favours the executive, as the mayor now represents the local administration before the citizens, and the council has been deprived of many of its powers (see Catanzaro et al 2002). Council meetings are no longer chaired by the mayor, as this role requires impartiality and can impact on the mayor's position as the head of the community, given the partisan bases through which he/ she has acquired and holds office (Newell 2007). Instead, the council members elect their president. The council retains an important power, the no confidence vote in the mayor, but, in order to offset the risk of political retaliation, such a vote determines the dissolution of the entire administration and results in new elections (ibid.).

Soon after *Tangentopoli*, directly-elected mayors were expected to offer a counterweight to a de-legitimised parliament and de-structured national parties (Di Virgilio 2005), as the new reform opened "an innovative cycle in the recruitment process of the municipal leaders" (Bettin and Magnier 1995:91). The 1993 Act and the 1994 bill on the majoritarian rule for national elections<sup>40</sup> interpreted the deep sense of distrust towards the gigantic party machines of the First Republic and represented an attempt to dramatically alter the balance of power between national political parties and their candidates, and between central and local government. The rationale behind the reforms was thus to change policies through changing politics, by freeing mayors and their local executives from party pressures, while fostering a more efficient bureaucracy, independent from political influence (Trigilia 2002).<sup>41</sup>

In the first round of elections after the reform, mayors without political experience displayed great success, in contrast with previous trends towards a long career within strict party structures. Mayors now sought to be the expression of all that was innovative in the new electoral system. Even when they were in fact old politicians, since they had managed to free themselves from the tight limitations of the previous institutional system, they were able to portray themselves as novel (Trigilia 2002). In fact, the most successful mayors were perhaps those who were able to combine political abilities with personal charisma and resources, as administrative competence and communication skills became pivotal qualities.<sup>42</sup> Within the previous political system, on the contrary, control over party organisations and vertical ties to influential politicians, who could offer access to higher institutional levels, represented the most valuable resources for a mayor (ibid.).

Several mayors and *assessori*, especially in the case of technical experts with limited previous political experience, have undervalued the importance of relations with local interests, whereas, prior to the reform, local leaders would influence policies by relying on clientelistic networks operating through party channels (see Chubb 1982). On the one hand, the reforms have increased the salience of mayors in mobilising resources for their territory. On the other hand they have triggered a shift towards that "administrative activism" by which Tarrow (1977) describes the French mayor, as he is involved in "an informal structure that follows the formal nexus between the mayor and [higher level] state officials and opens up to him a number of pathways within the administrative system for the satisfaction of his community needs" (Tarrow 1977:136). After the reform these managerial and consensus-building skills were required by new Italian mayors (Newell 2007).<sup>43</sup>

Galvanised by the high level of accountability built into the new electoral system, which gave them visibility and popularity, the new mayors soon formed a "mayors' party", across traditional ideological and territorial divides,44 which proved instrumental in building public pressure for devolution of power and resources that Rome was reluctant to grant (Pasotti 2007). Administrative federalism (Vandelli 2004) came in 1997 with Laws 59 and 127, sponsored by the Minister of Civil Service and Regional Affairs, Franco Bassanini. Services were transferred closer to citizens, based on the principle of subsidiarity, breaking the pattern of central appointments (Pasotti 2007). Mayors no longer had to swear loyalty to the prefetti, the local representatives of central government; city managers were introduced for municipalities above 15,000 inhabitants, while municipal secretaries were now appointed by mayors, who could also hire managers on a contract basis (ibid.). As in other western European countries, these laws followed new ideals of public management (Baccetti 2008), whereby the common narrative held that institutional changes could give local leaders a more clear-cut role in setting strategies and a vision of local development (Rao 1993; Stoker 1999; Larsen 2002; Berg and Rao 2005).

During the late 1990s several other reforms reinforced devolutionary trends and enhanced regional autonomy: the 1999 Act, by altering art. 121 and 126 of the Italian Constitution, institutionalised the direct election of regional presidents, consistently with the 1995 reform of the regional electoral system that aimed at augmenting stability, through introducing voting thresholds and a majority premium.<sup>45</sup> The 1999 Act was intended to be transitory, eventually replaced by the Regions' own statutes to regulate their form of government and electoral law.<sup>46</sup> These reforms made it necessary to alter the Constitution, which now appeared inconsistent with the new institutional order. Thus in 2001, following a referendum, changes were introduced to the second part of Title V of the Italian Constitution, which regulates the division of powers and responsibilities among all tiers of government. The Constitution now recognises the same degree of authority to each level, yet different competencies based on the principle of vertical subsidiarity. Art. 118 of Title V redefines the concept of local autonomy, as administrative functions are automatically devolved to municipalities, unless

clearly stated otherwise. This article also introduces the principle of horizontal subsidiarity, whereby national and local government are encouraged to promote autonomous citizen initiatives and popular participation, with regard to policies of greatest interest to the population.

Furthermore, under Title V independent interregional and international relations of Italian local authorities are encouraged, in order to offset the democratic deficit created by new supranational centres of decision and policy-making; art. 119 was also amended to introduce greater financial autonomy for local authorities. On top of conferring greater autonomy to ordinary statute regions,<sup>47</sup> Title V, under art. 116, constitutionally recognises the possibility of differentiated competencies among regions, depending on their capacity (and their financial resources).<sup>48</sup>

There are several limits to these reforms in terms of their implementation, the most striking being that, to date, a Senate of the Regions has not been established. This would guarantee a representation of Regions within Parliament, where legislative decisions that affect the organisation of local government are taken. A code to regulate autonomies, as per art. 118, has not been elaborated yet, although a bill on fiscal federalism, strongly supported by Lega Nord, was passed by Parliament in 2009.<sup>49</sup> Generally there still exists much confusion with regard to the relation between central government and local authorities in terms of competencies, as demonstrated by state initiatives such as the bill on urban planning (*Piano Casa 2008*), which raised a constitutional conflict, as the State expected to legislate on a policy area that is the responsibility of regional administrations.

### The Impact of the Mayoral Reform On Local Democracy

Overall the mayoral reform is perceived by several scholars as successful (see among others Dente 1997; Baldini 2002; Caciagli 2005; Newell 2007). Although it failed in its most noble intent of reversing the negative trend of declining voting turnouts and increasing the legitimacy of local administrations, the reform has augmented local government's stability and transformed the mayor into the "head of the local state" with substantial powers (Newell 2007:171). Baldini (2002) shows that between 1972 and 1989 less than 1 percent of 904 *giunte* (local cabinets) in 95 provincial capitals would last for a whole five-year term, while most would dissolve within one year. By contrast, between 1993 and 2001, only in ten cases the municipal *giunta* failed to survive due to political conflicts (Newell 2007). In terms of technical resources and know-how, the new reforms, by allowing mayors to select members of the executive often based on their technical skills and professional experience, have at least increased local capacity to mobilise more competent bureaucracies (Dente 1997).

With regard to financial resources, by introducing new revenue-raising capacities for local authorities, the balance of power has improved for municipalities, but they still depend on regional and central transfers (Dente 1997).<sup>50</sup> The new tax levying powers are clearly constrained by people's unwillingness to bear further taxation, while the stability pact, which local authorities have to abide by, inhibits local spending capacity. Overall there is still a deep discrepancy between the new responsibilities devolved to local authorities and their financial resources.51 Thus, new mayors often experience a dilemma, which is built into the reform itself, and is well encapsulated by Trigilia's "decisional illusion" (l'illusione decisionista) (2005): although they enjoy greater visibility and personalisation, they have limited or no access to the required resources to match their new responsibilities, manage complex partnerships, and meet citizens' high expectations (Borraz and John 2004). The reform has generated the illusion that to separate the bureaucracy from politics would be enough to engender greater efficiency and that a visible local leader would ensure prompt decision-making (Trigilia 2005).

Initially, the sharp political crisis following *Mani Pulite*, which literally swept away the mass parties that governed the country during the First Republic, dramatically enhanced the effects of the reforms and translated into even greater autonomy for local political actors.<sup>52</sup> Parties gradually started to restructure themselves and regained an important space within the new local political arena, exerting greater influence on the composition of local executives (Trigilia 2002; Di Virgilio 2005; Calise 2006; Pasotti 2007), only to face a new legitimacy crisis more recently, following corruption scandals and their inability to manage the economic crisis. At the latest local elections in 2012 and national elections in 2013, civic lists and grassroots movements capitalised on party weakness.

Personal resources become a necessary, yet not sufficient, condition for mayors to capitalise on the political space, while the local party structure will also play a pivotal role. The parties behind a mayor might be more or less cohesive and display different degrees of strength and capacity in pressurising the local leader; hence different combinations of more or less charismatic mayors and more or less cohesive party systems might help explain the variance among municipalities in terms of leadership strength (Catanzaro et al. 2002; Trigilia 2005).<sup>53</sup>

The reforms have certainly altered the balance of power within local democracy. In practice, there has been a presidentialisation of local government, as power tends to concentrate in the hands of mayors and their giunta. Within a system that gives predominance to the executive, councillors inevitably suffer from a legitimacy crisis. As electoral mechanisms guarantee more solid support for the administration, the opposition tends to be relegated to a toothless role and the only effective instrument that the opposition can use to exert some degree of control, albeit minimal, over the cabinet is the budget (Catanzaro et al 2002). The continuing re-organisation process of political parties, which still experience great difficulties in developing a stable two-bloc system, translates into deep fragmentation of Italian councils (Baccetti 1999; Baldini and Legnante 2000; Minaldi and Riolo 2005). Empirical findings from the four case studies confirm that today's main political parties are evanescent structures little-rooted in the territory and offering few opportunities for democratic debate, as they appear incapable of channelling public participation.<sup>54</sup> Within a political culture increasingly dominated by personalisation, parties no longer offer spaces of deliberation for council members to study and discuss policies and measures, while councillors' party allegiance is increasingly loose. Belotti and Maraffi (1994) suggest that parties only intervene on policy issues that directly concern them as organisations, such as recruiting candidates and selecting their elites. Other scholars, however, argue that parties continue to control the distribution of roles within municipal companies and agencies (Baccetti 1999 and 2008) and influence urban policies. Based on the four case studies,

party influence would seem to be external (through party secretariats) and the presence of parties within the council is only felt at the moment of voting.

Councillors lack political expertise, which is a consequence of reinforcing the role of the "party in the institutions" model to the detriment of the "party in the society" (Minaldi and Riolo 2005:152). Insufficient political know-how appears to have exacerbated the effects of a reduction of competencies. There are few council initiatives and administration is carried out through executive acts (*atti di giunta*) or administrative decisions (*determine dirigenziali*), which councillors seem unable to oversee effectively.<sup>55</sup> Nearly 20 years since the reforms took effect in Italy, councillors still seem to sit uneasily with their new functions of steering and scrutiny, which they do not seem to understand fully, and which they are not always able to exert, because of limited political expertise and administrative competence.<sup>56</sup> The governmental stability ensured by the reform thus comes at a considerable price, as the council loses its incisiveness.<sup>57</sup>

The cabinet thinks it is omnipotent, because of the competencies the law gives it. So the cabinet is happy to do without the council. We, as councillors, had the feeling that for the mayor the council was no more than some useless ornament, something to tolerate because you can't do otherwise. And more or less all mayors have this attitude. They never say, "Here's the council group, we should go and ask them what they think of this particular act". Not at all! Instead the reasoning goes like this, "We prepare the act and then we show it to them and let's hope they're OK with it. If not, we'll make them." [PR46 - Former President of the Council]

The vote of no-confidence often becomes a weapon of "mutually assured destruction" (Copus 2006:145) which can safeguard the system against frivolous and politically motivated no confidence motions in the mayor, but leaves little room for contributions from the council.

Many in the majority, even when they don't agree with the executive's choices, lament they're not consulted or involved enough. So several councillors support the executive that decides on its own – the councillor is only here to raise his hand. [...] Here's the famous blackmailing effect of the reform. If the mayor asks his majority to vote for a particular measure, some councillors will agree, others won't. But those who don't agree will still have to say yes. [...] [SS13 - Councillor, opposition]

The devolution of competencies to the local level and the phenomenon of full time executive leaders are pushing towards the professionalisation of politics (Berg and Rao 2005). This increases the gap between a professionalised executive and a council of laymen politicians and further decreases the council's clout. Clearly, professionalisation and political accountability are interrelated. If professional politicians are granted greater autonomy, they will have to be held accountable during terms and not just at election times.

When the administrative level (CEOs and "technical" *assessori*) is strengthened the role of elected representatives in implementing policies will be diminished and this will affect their responsiveness to the electorate (Berg and Rao 2005). The rationale behind the Bassanini's reforms was to separate politics from the bureaucracy, but greater autonomy of public service directors further reduces the scrutiny and planning capacity of the council.<sup>58</sup> Thus, what has effectively, if not procedurally, become a local presidential system is missing a strong framework of checks and balances.

Directors were given great powers [by the reform]. They are not *assessori;* in the public service they are protected by trade unions rights, thus their autonomy is strong. Many public service CEOs perceive themselves as the ones in charge, since they see politicians as something short-stay. [LE39 - Councillor, majority]

Councillors seem to lack the capacity to exert control functions over the executive, two out of three auditors are appointed by the council (hence by the majority) and the Court of Auditors (*Corte dei* Conti) only acts ex-post.

This is why our communes' balance sheets are a disaster, because there is no system of checks and balances. The auditors, strangely, are appointed by the majority. So even the auditors [...] respond to the executive. [LE29 – Councillor, opposition]

As administration rests in the hands of public service directors and the mayor (and his cabinet), there is a strong case for the reinforcement of effective checks and balances mechanisms. The amateurism of the council does not appear to sit comfortably with a goal oriented and scrutiny role, which requires greater political sophistication and administrative competence. Councillors' powers of scrutiny should be enhanced, while their lack of competence should be compensated for through compulsory courses on administration and policy-making. Laymen politicians, who still represent a great resource for local democracy, cannot be expected to be experts on all administrative issues, but their role could perhaps be enhanced by strengthening commissions and their influence.

The problem of weak political checks and balances is not one to underestimate. It ensues from a reform that concentrates power in the hands of the mayor and public service CEOs to the detriment of the representative body par excellence - the council – and should be of paramount importance to local government scholars and policy-makers, since it affects the quality of local democracy as well as the efficiency of local administration. Such a democratic deficit cannot be overcome through simply relying on governance mechanisms, which often serve to reinforce the mayor's legitimacy in between elections. SP, rather than being perceived as an instrument to legitimise the executive (bypassing the local council) and to further the mayor's own political project could contribute to enhancing the role of councillors as scrutinisers. The new functions of the council of steering and scrutiny should be exercised precisely over the long term development projects and strategic measures that SP seeks to elaborate. Ad hoc commissions of councillors, representative of both majority and opposition, could thus work together with civil society experts and citizens within the new participatory arenas. This would also help to safeguard the collective nature of SP against political divides.

The next section will examine how political reforms have encouraged the emergence of new governance mechanisms and will review the legal framework that supports these arrangements.

# Local governance and Participation in Italy Urban Planning

Italian local governance is constrained by several historical factors. A rigid legal framework and administrative fragmentation make the local system vulnerable to clientelism and corruption, because "the issuing of construction licenses and the enforcement of building codes and zoning regulations are the exclusive domain of local administrations" (Chubb 1982:128). Discretion in assigning public tenders has contributed to fuelling corruption (Della Porta 2006:242). The local bureaucracy has historically hindered local policy implementation, because of low levels of specialisation and administrative capacity. In the past political affiliation guaranteed certain privileges to bureaucrats, and in fact in the 1980s a large percentage of local government officers was a party member (Della Porta 2006:238).

Since the 1980s, following the process of deindustrialization, cities have looked at the real estate market as the engine of new economic activity, favouring the influence of property developers on urban planning (Khakee & Barbanente, 2003; Governa and Saccomani, 2004; Healey, 2007).<sup>59</sup> Local administrations were thus vulnerable to business interests (Pacione, 1987; Balducci, 2003; Cognetti & Cottino, 2003; Healey, 2007), and in this context political parties would control access to resources and mediate among various interests (Crosta 1990:276). Both political institutions and the bureaucracy showed low levels of planning capacity and policy elaboration was often delegated to experts, often from academia (Dente 1990).

As a reaction to weak planning regulations, a community of "reformists" (planners, academic, and practitioners) emerged to reinforce regulatory planning, to constrain the activities of private actors (Pinson 2007). However, as each territorial level had its own regulatory plan, regulatory documents and plans started piling up, to the point that the management of the planning system became unmanageable. The elaboration of plans became an excessively long process and local authorities, confronted with pressing housing issues, were often forced to grant derogations and in the absence of a clear regulatory framework, urban development became an anarchical affair (ibid.).

The 1990s reforms discussed in the previous section attempted to change the rules of the institutional game, but the only tangible effects were on political dynamics, as the mayor gained powers and visibility vis-à-vis the council and political parties. On policies, notwithstanding the strengthening of the new instruments that local authorities enjoy, the difference with the past is less apparent (Baccetti 1999). However, the European urban programmes, with their emphasis on the regeneration of poor neighbourhoods, have had an important impact, as they provide new methodological tools in terms of direct interventions and governance processes (Pinson 2007).

Concepts of negotiation, integration, and participation have become popular ideas in urban policy and regeneration (Balducci and Fareri 1998; Gualini 2001). Since 1992 the Ministry of Public Works (incorporated into the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport since 2001) issued several national urban renewal programmes, such as the 1998 *Programmi di riqualificazione urbana e sviluppo sostenibile del territorio* (Urban Renewal and Sustainable Development of Territories Programmes) and in 2003 the *Contratti di Quartiere II* (Neighborhood Contracts II) (Governa and Saccomani 2004). The rationale underpinning these new policies is to promote social cohesion, urban regeneration, and economic development through an integrated approach of public, private, and civic stakeholders. Policy guidance and financial support from the European Union were pivotal in fostering these new initiatives (Gualini 2001; Barbanente and Tedesco 2002), as the objectives and the terminology of European URBAN programmes have been incorporated into Italian urban policy, in rhetoric if not in practice.

### **Development Policies**

As discussed in Chapter I, the new devolutionary trends need to be understood in the context of a significantly changed global economic order. In the post-Fordist economy, the relationship between the economy and the territory is redefined: firms no longer function autonomously from the local environment and the role of the *place* in elaborating development strategies is emphasised. New models of production are more oriented towards flexibility and quality, especially within more developed countries, which have to respond to costs-based competition from developing economies (Trigilia 2005). The focus is now on local *competitive advantage*, or the local collective competition goods a place can produce. In this respect, local government has a pivotal role to play in coordinating different interests and offer identity incentives.

The EU is responding to this new context by fostering policies that aim to enhance the quality of the economic and social environment, through programmes that improve infrastructure and services and foster cooperation between private, public and social actors, and among different institutional levels. Such policies are not solely dependent on public institutions, neither do they represent an attempt to deregulate in favour of private interests. By contrast, these forms of social and economic regulations are based on agreements between public and private actors and are now encouraged at the EU level through two main mechanisms, a regulated system and a voluntary one (Trigilia 2005). The policies for regional development promoted through structural funds or urban regeneration programmes under URBAN represent an important example of regulated strategies that, by introducing the concept of partnership, are now influencing national development policies.<sup>60</sup> Conversely, the successful experience of some local partnerships for development, which formed on a voluntary basis, have encouraged the EU to promote "European territorial pacts" (ibid.).

The case of Italy is particularly interesting, as perhaps the most obvious characteristic of the Italian economy is the sharp disparity between weak areas (generally in the South of the country) and strong areas.<sup>61</sup> It is worth emphasising that Italy has always been characterised by a *culture* of reforms, which had already driven a process, albeit limited, of political and administrative decentralisation to the regional level during the 1970s.<sup>62</sup> Although reforms have often failed to alter the patterns of Italian politics, the principle of regional reform has always enjoyed great support by public opinion, in light of growing dissatisfaction with central government performance and national political parties (Bull and Newell 2005; see also Putnam 1993; Tarrow 1977).

National development policies promoted during the 1970s and the 1980s clearly neglected the issue of local development, as they were generally based on targeted incentives for certain sectors and more specifically for certain firms. Until the early 1990s, policies of territorial rebalancing still prescribed substantial public investment, though they were unable to promote "autonomous" local development (Trigilia 1992). If in the Centre-North the absence of national policies of local development triggered a wide variety of voluntary experiments, which contributed to the emergence of successful industrial districts, in the South two main development models took place as a response: the first one from the bottom-up, based on informal economy and local traditions; the second one top-down, based around large firms – either local or exogenous – which would drive local businesses' competitiveness (Burroni 2005).

During the 1990s, with the end of the politics of "extraordinary" measures for *Mezzogiorno* and a new political role for local government

following the reforms, a different approach emerged, or what has been defined as Negotiated Planning (*Programmazione negoziata*), which includes instruments such as Territorial Pacts (*Patti territoriali*) or Area Contracts (*Contratti d'area*).<sup>63</sup> Although forms of partnership between private and public actors, such as Programme Agreements (*Accordi di programma*), have existed in Italy since the 1970s (Salis et al 2006), initially they often entailed the public sector pouring resources into the private sector.

Since the 1990s these arrangements have rapidly evolved; several laws have attempted to formalise partnerships and regulate inclusive decisionmaking processes, as legislators gradually realised that complex issues could only be managed by involving all stakeholders.<sup>64</sup> In terms of social policies, for instance, law 328/2000 on *Piani di Zona* (area plans) aims to reform social service management. The new law establishes a framework of vertical subsidiarity to balance the responsibilities of various political-administrative levels (national, regional, and municipal) and integrates social services with health, education, training, and employment policies. This new model identifies the third sector associations as actors entitled to co-participate in the design and the production of social services, but it also asserts the need to involve citizens/ stakeholders in the decision-making process, not just as direct beneficiaries, but also as local community members (Bifulco and Centemeri 2008).

Territorial pacts have played an important role in local development, particularly in the South, and, although they started out as voluntary initiatives, they were soon proceduralised by CNEL (*Consiglio nazionale per l'economia e il lavoro*/ National Council for labour and the economy). Since 1995, they have been regulated by CIPE under a 1996 law that defines negotiated planning as "the agreed regulation between public actors or between the relevant public actors and their private counterparts, to implement different policies with regard to the same development projects." (Pichierri 2001:244).<sup>65</sup>

Strategic planning (SP) emerges within this context between the late 1990s and the early 2000s (see Chapter 1). The rationale behind all these governance arrangements is to encourage cooperation among local private and public actors through financial incentives, in order to implement integrated projects for local development. Thus, instead of offering financial incentives to the private sector, the rationale underpinning these initiatives is to remove the obstacles that affect local production through enhancing *material* economies (i.e. infrastructures and services) and *immaterial* economies, such as social capacity (Trigilia 2005; see also Le Galès 1998, 2001; Pichierri 2001; Santandrea 1997). As these experiences cannot be simply measured by the number of projects implemented or new employment opportunities created (Magnatti et al 2005), Trigilia (2005) suggests a more constructive approach: examining their impact in terms of the degree of integration among private initiatives; the improvement of public infrastructure and services that can enhance the local environment for business and citizens; the reinforcement of the public administration's leadership and of local relational capacities and cooperation between institutional and private actors.

These governance instruments, however, have come under harsh criticisms from many sides, because the decision-making process tends to be very slow and because they can encourage collusive practices among certain actors, who can form coalitions to access public financial resources, while eluding the requirement of integrating individual initiatives within a solid development project for the locality (Trigilia 2005). Ideas of collaborative governance often clash against a conservative civil service, which displays a clear discrepancy between formal procedures and actual practice. Fragmentation and compartmentalisation often result in poor cooperation between sectors, and attempts at reform have often failed, as unclear drafting, contradictions and overlapping facilitate the institutionalisation of deviant behaviour (Cassese 1999). This clearly impacts on the implementation of projects. However, the case studies show that public services are at least partly absorbing the new rationale of participation and collaborative governance. Although cross-sector integration and cooperation are not always easy to engender, some departments - and generally Social Policies and Education are at the forefront in this respect (TR2, SS14) - have opened stable channels with local associations and the third sector. Trento, Lecce, and Sassari have all set up offices whose function is to ensure

coordination among sectors and monitor calls for bids at regional, national, and European levels.

Though legislators would generally believe that a clear separation between the bureaucracy and politics will ensure greater efficiency and less corruption, where the local political and private actors involved in these partnerships also play an active role in the management trust and are involved in project implementation, governance mechanisms show greater effectiveness (Piselli 2005; Trigilia 2005), perhaps because of higher accountability levels. All the case studies show that high levels of trust and cooperation between the mayor and the public service CEO in charge of SP increase the legitimacy, the inclusivity and the effectiveness of the process.

### The Importance of Leadership

It is often believed that participatory mechanisms will benefit the most those places that need them the least. In fact, much of the literature on participatory democracy identifies pre-existing high levels of associationism as one pre-condition for collaborative mechanisms to work and be sustainable (Putnam 1993; Fung and Wright 2001; 2003; Heller 2001). The debate on whether local culture determines effective institutions and good governance, or whether leadership can drive innovations (thus contributing to changing the local culture and fostering social capital) has underpinned several studies explaining variance in Italian local government and governance over the past few decades.

Putnam's 20-year comparative study of Italian regions (1993) assesses differences in terms of economic productivity and development between the North and the South of Italy and explains the northern regions' good government performance by their higher degree of "civic-ness" compared to the South, for which the presence of associations represented the main indicator. His work sparked a heated debate, as several authors have questioned whether all associations and forms of social capital favour democracy (Foley and Edwards 1997; Levi 1996) or why volunteer associations appear to be the main locus of social capital, while the role of employment, family or education is not considered (Cohen 1999; Newton 1999). The main objection against Putnam's work is that its focus is too citizenry-oriented, while other important actors, such as government (Levi 1996) or political agency, and centre-periphery relations (Tarrow 1977; 1996) are entirely neglected.<sup>66</sup>

An understanding of social capital in terms of its dynamic evolution, following Coleman's interpretation (1988), can represent a more effective tool to analyse the different outcomes of collaborative processes, which can encourage trust and cooperation (Piselli 2005). According to Coleman's conceptualisation social capital depends on action. Rather than pre-dating action, it emerges from it, often developing as its by-product as relations between people change in order to facilitate a specific action. On the contrary Putnam (1993) and Fukuyama (1995) force the concept and turn it into a feature of the whole social system, which facilitates democracy and economic development, whereby social capital is tautologically cause and effect of a (Piselli 2005). Several study provide evidence that phenomenon communities characterised by particularistic ties show high levels of social capital which has produced tangible benefits congruent with the actors' objectives and the context where they acted (Arrighi and Piselli 1987; Piselli 2005), engendering processes of horizontal cooperation (Mutti 1994; Piattoni 1999).

Putnam (1993) relies on a culturalist, path-dependent explanatory framework to account for variance among Italian regions in terms of levels of associationism and social capacity. By contrast scholars have often found that the outcomes of governance arrangements, such as territorial pacts, are not significantly influenced by the degree of local development or the level of preexisting social capital (Arrighi and Piselli 1987; Magnatti et al 2005; Piselli 2005; Cerosimo and Wolleb 2006). In some instances, where civil society was particularly weak and fragmented the presence of a strong institutional leadership was able to encourage cooperation among local actors, promoting new social capital and enhancing local development.

A leadership eager to build support might foster alliances with excluded or weaker social actors against political opponents (see Chapter 4 on the case of the new centre-right majority in Prato and its relationship with neighbourhood organisations of leftwing voters excluded by the previous centre-left administration in). An innovative and autonomous leadership (Evans' *embedded autonomy*, 1996) with a clear development project might be interested in building social capacity and furthering redistributive strategies, to augment the locality's competitive advantage and its own support base. Conversely, a weak leadership might be more vulnerable to party pressures or clientelistic ties with strong interests.<sup>67</sup>

Within new participatory and collaborative arrangements, leadership has to have the capacity to coordinate and organise different interests, and to foster mutual trust within coherent and committed partnerships. It has to be capable of motivating and aggregating interests, as well as guaranteeing continuity between the initial phase and the operational phase (Piselli 2005), by ensuring all actors are clear about their responsibilities. Thus, politics matter but it is no longer about the interventionist institutional actor which imposes top-down policies in a rigid fashion, rather leadership emerges through flexible practices which facilitate public discussion over policies and produce democratisation (Pinson 2002, 2005; Piselli 2005).

### Towards Facilitative Leadership

Leadership is generally thought of as "a formal leader who either influences or transforms members of a group or organization – the followers - in order to achieve specified goals" (Huxham and Vangen, 2000: 1160). Some scholars offer a realpolitik portrait of leaders as individuals with charisma and authority who have to resort to "humbuggery and manipulation", in order to gain and maintain power, by fostering the devotion of the masses and legitimacy and preeminence within their entourage, which will generally include potential opponents (Bailey 1988; 2001). Others will stress the value-shaping role of leadership. Selznick (1957) distinguishes leadership from office-holding or high prestige decisionmaking, and introduces the concept of the institutional leader who works to meet social needs and "is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values" (ibid:28).68 Creative leadership can infuse meaning and purpose into organisations, which will embody new and enduring values through socially integrating myths. "For creative leadership, it is not the communication of a myth that counts; rather, creativity depends on having the will and the insight to see the necessity of the myth, to discover a

successful formulation, and above all to create the organizational conditions that will sustain the ideals expressed" (ibid:151). Dente (1999) believes that politicians play a pivotal role in the policies that entails innovation in terms of values and goals.

The myth and values, however, often represent simplifications and purified images conveyed to the people, while the leader and his entourage will keep the real world in mind. Thus, duplicity inevitably characterises the behaviour of effective leaders (Bayley 1988). Far from being virtuous, if they want to remain in office, leaders will circumvent the normative code regulating competition for power, through strategic rules and pragmatic evasions, as they "make and unmake competing definitions of truth" (Bayley 2001:208).<sup>69</sup> Overall, beyond the sometimes petty political interests that inevitably go with leadership, the general assumption is that, while systems and structures can substitute for leadership when change is not required, before a crisis or when fundamental change is necessary, there is no substitute for leadership (Bryson and Crosby 1992; Bayley 2001).

Governance mechanisms such as Strategic Planning purportedly aim to engender change and require a leadership with a vision. However, while traditionally in the literature on leadership followers are believed to be incapable of resolving problems and fully rely on leaders (Susskind and Crushank 2006), here they become key actors. This approach to local government may bring about a 'recombination' of modes of local regulation, which leaves more room for self-organizational dynamics (Pinson 2005). Nevertheless, particularly in contexts "where incentives to participate are weak, power and resources are asymmetrically distributed, and prior antagonisms are high, leadership becomes all the more important" (Ansell and Gash, 2007: 555). In fact, within participatory processes particular individuals who act as catalysts often emerge (Abers 2003).

As these arenas are infused "with value differences, conflicts, and mutual interdependence", leadership now requires "something other than traditional leaders with formal political authority which they exercise over others" (Bussu and Bartels 2013). Political institutions, far from being nullified, are expected to play a different role in stimulating "multilateral exchanges, which will produce norms of behaviour and reciprocity" (Pinson 2002:14). Leadership thus becomes *facilitative*, which ensues not from formal political authority *over* others, but from working *with* others to achieve results through an inclusive process (Susskind and Crushank, 2006; Svara, 2008).<sup>70</sup>

There exists a rich literature on the facilitative leadership of "collaborative public managers" (Kickert and Koppenjan, 1997), "consensus builders" (Susskind, 1999), "deliberative practitioners" (Forester, 1999), "boundary spanners" (Williams, 2002), "everyday fixers" (Hendriks and Tops, 2005), and "exemplary practitioners" (Van Hulst et al., 2011).71 Facilitative leadership here is understood as "skilful, situated performance" (Bussu and Bartels 2013). For instance, "facilitative leaders can only become 'champions' of a project if they have a 'sponsor' who gives political backing to their often unconventional practices" (ibid.). Furthermore, when talking about facilitative leadership the focus is not simply on facilitative leaders as one or two key individuals that govern the process, but "on leadership as accruing from the activities of many" (ibid.), as different stakeholders can take the lead on specific issues.72 Effective leadership is often a "collective enterprise" involving several people with different roles at different times (Bryson 2004). As they understand the context and the people involved, they can sponsor, champion, and facilitate the process, use dialogue and discussion, make and implement decisions, settle disputes and residual conflicts (ibid.).

The challenges facilitative leadership faces are manifestations of intricate and intractable problems bound up with socio-economic inequalities, multi-level governance arrangements, political power struggles, and deep-seated differences. This requires the ability to work through pre-held assumptions, strong emotions, and the engrained perceptions held by stakeholders [...] These challenges, and the need for the democratic capacity to jointly resolve them, are unlikely to stop when a project or partnership ends. Instead, facilitative leadership should enable an ongoing process of deepening local democracy." (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

The conflict between short-term political interests and long-term collective goods is one great challenge for those involved in participatory mechanisms. There is great pressure, often of a political nature, to endorse specific, apparently easier and faster solutions, which are often sub-optimal and not particularly useful (Kingdon 1984; Bryson and Crosby 1992). Political leaders might find their ability to implement decisions constrained by the bureaucracy, with its institutionalised rules and working practices and

entrenched personnel obstructive towards change (Bryson 2004). In this respect, a charismatic leadership, with a coherent and collective project in which the local bureaucracy has also been involved, could successfully engender change within the local institutional culture (Selznick 1957; Tendler 1997). As examined in Chapter 1, participatory mechanisms are often understood by political elites in functionalistic terms, "[t]herefore, it is paramount to understand whether and how facilitative leadership can offset the risk of developing into technocratic leadership serving a functionalistic rationale and, instead, fulfil the promise of genuine democratic innovation and a collaborative mindset" (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

The four case studies show how leadership often entailed the coordinated work of political elites (generally the mayor and/ or one *assessore*) and a public service CEO. Whereas the former would act as the sponsor of the SP, offering legitimacy and resources, the second would be its champion, organising and managing the process, and keeping SP high on people's, and politicians', agenda (Bryson 2004; Hendriks and Tops 2005). This political and administrative leadership will have access to regulative and redistributive resources and to higher institutional levels that control funds, and in this respect it is in a privileged position to act as coordinator of different economic and social interests. If some scholars (Dente 1999) see the key role of politicians as drivers of innovative policies, all four case studies emphasise the contribution of public services CEOs as policy innovators, as the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats is based on the sharing of both policy objectives and instruments to realise them.

## Methodology The Dependent Variable

The main objective of this study is to understand the impact of SP on three dimensions, as examined in Chapter 1: the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, and the implementation phase. SP can in fact be a vehicle for the formation of a collective actor, by encouraging collective decision-making and fostering common interests through the institutionalisation of collective action and integration mechanisms, in order to produce innovative development strategies that will require internal and external representation, perhaps through a visible directly-elected mayor capable of animating the local polity (see Pichierri 1997 on the collective actor in Chapter 1). Identity incentives will have to be elaborated that can aggregate interests around a common vision safeguarding the process against opportunistic behaviour.

In terms of the democratic process, all participants (institutional actors and strong economic interests, as well as citizen associations or nonorganised interests) can potentially contribute by taking part and interacting with the other stakeholders (Segatori 2007). In fact, SP can help to reinforce and diffuse a deliberative approach, as an alternative to non-transparent elite decision-making behind closed doors, or to the corporatist practices that often impede any substantive development (Donolo 2003). Clearly the main issue here will be how truly inclusive and non-opportunistic the process will prove. There will be inevitable asymmetric relationships among participants, since certain actors will always play a more important role than others (i.e. the president of a trade association vs. the president of a cultural association); but the mode of participation (i.e. which interests are invited and which are excluded or exclude themselves and why, how actors interact and what effective influence they have and are perceived to have by other participants) can make a difference to the process. In terms of the empirical analysis the focus is on the level of inclusiveness, the number and the nature of the stakeholders involved, the methodologies employed to facilitate the debate, and the corollary participatory initiatives that developed around the SP. Factors such as the stakeholders' perceived influence on the final plan and the degree of their involvement in the implementation and monitoring phases represent important indicators of the level of inclusiveness of the process, in order to determine how/ if this affected outcomes.

With regard to the final dimension, implementation, this study acknowledges a general difficulty of local government (particularly in the case of medium-sized cities that enjoy fewer human and financial resources) to translate the process into tangible results or outputs. The objective is to further elucidate the reasons behind the weakness of the operational phase while also focusing on longer term outcomes, whether direct or unintended. In fact measuring the degree of success of SP solely based on the number of projects implemented and the relation between the expectations set out in the final plan and the actual results would be reductive. Other elements will be considered as indicators of value added in terms of governance dynamics: the effectiveness of strategies, the degree of institutional learning and influence on working practices, increased intersectoral and interlevel cooperation, and associational networking (see table 7.1).

The empirical research will therefore try to assess whether SP was able to start the process of formation of a collective actor and of communities of practice around a certain vision of the future, through new channels between institutions and less structured/ weaker associations; whether greater intersectoral and inter-institutional cooperation was encouraged across tiers of government both at a political and at an administrative level; to what degree the new working practices required by SP were incorporated by public services;<sup>73</sup> whether the working groups and deliberative forums of participatory process fostered new cooperation between stakeholders.

In each case, the final plan is examined to identify the rationale, the ambitions, the expectations, as well as the degree of awareness of the development potential of the locality and its polity. The development model elaborated through SP is generally based around two main dimensions: liveability and competition (Segatori 2007). The first dimension is associated with sustainable development, hence the concern for future generation vs. the global risk society (Beck 1992), but it is also linked to concepts of social cohesion and empowerment vs. fragmentation and isolation of individual family nuclei, and the sense of social and institutional neglect perceived by weaker segments of the population (see Donolo 2003; Segatori 2007). The competition dimension, on the other hand, allows the city to respond to economic and structural decline, by promoting a novel image of the territory and encouraging innovative, hence competitive, production structures (Segatori 2007). Here the main issue is the dialectic relationship between the liveability and the competition dimension, or the relationship between the social and the economic sphere. In fact, although the rationale underpinning SP should be a balanced approach to development, which coherently integrates economic profitability and attention to social issues and community building, some (economic) projects are generally given priority

over other (social) projects, because stronger interests are behind them, or because of the economic advantages they promise (ibid.). Projects that encourage social capacity, cohesion and sustainability are often relegated to a minor role, although they still have a highly symbolic value in the communicative process. The case studies will show how infrastructural projects still get the lion's share: in all four plans all flagship projects are infrastructural and represent the link between the SP and the Town Plan, which responds to a more traditional understanding of planning.

### The Independent Variable

Leadership is the independent variable of this study and it will influence the outcomes of the process. Within governance mechanism such as SP a facilitative leadership will be pivotal in providing identity incentives and ensuring internal integration and external integration (Pichierri 1997; Le Galès 2002). The first aspect refers to the leadership's capacity to integrate different interests, in order to pursue development strategies. The new local strategies need to be represented and defended to the outside world – and this is the second aspect, or external integration – to the EU, the State, and other regional and sub-regional governments, so as to develop the political capacity to situate the locality within the larger context of inter-state interaction and extract resources from higher tiers of government (ibid.).<sup>74</sup>

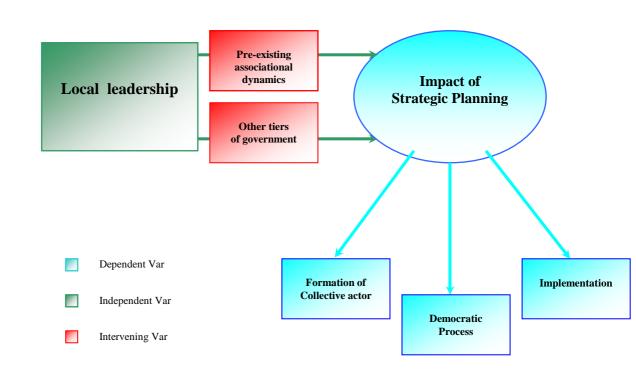
Short-term political interests and the local political structure might encourage or hinder the emergence of a facilitative leadership capable of integrating interests and guaranteeing continuity between the initial phase and the operational phase. Local political elites might have an interest in opening an inclusive process, in order to alter the balance of power with opponents to increase their visibility and widen their support base, or with higher tiers of government in order to have access to more resources and augment their competencies over policies. Local leaders might be stronger or weaker, enjoy more or less personal support, and have a greater or lower incentive to increase their legitimacy also through participatory instruments. Indicators for the strength of local leadership will be the personal support enjoyed by the mayor (percentage of votes), the strength of the coalition in power (number of mandates) and variance in the degree of fragmentation or cohesiveness of the local political structure, which will either constrain or reinforce the autonomy of local political leaders.

The previous section has examined the debate on the local culture vs. leadership. Pre-existing high associational levels are expected to enhance participatory mechanisms, as a strong social fabric will sustain participation and offer a counterpoint to political and business elites, ensuring greater government accountability. By contrast, strong associations could use the new deliberative arenas to further corporatist interests, and governance could thus encourage collusive behaviours between community leaders and political elites, while excluding weaker or non-organised interests (Tarrow 1994). The role of leadership will thus enhance or hinder the role of local associations. The pre-existing associational dynamics variable is here assumed as an intervening variable. Local associations can be more or less collaborative (the cases of Lecce and Prato are elucidatory in this respect), although this will often depend on the degree of inclusiveness displayed by the local leadership and/or how substantive the process is perceived to be by stakeholders.<sup>75</sup>

In terms of implementation and cross-sectoral cooperation, institutional constraints and dynamics of multilevel governance (or lack thereof) might affect the role and impact of local leaders. On the one hand, these new governance arrangements are often encouraged by the institutional rhetoric, at regional, national, and supranational level. On the other hand, political rivalries between regional and local government might affect policy outcomes, as certain projects, or certain partnerships, might be ostracised. More often the main constraints with regard to higher jurisdictional levels will be of an institutional nature, as the lack of coordination and a different approach to planning might determine fragmentation of local initiatives. Multi-level governance is thus the second intervening variable considered.

One important dimension in the relationship between the local leadership vis-à-vis other levels of government is represented by the *proceduralisation* of SP for Southern cities, as explained in Chapter 1. This also allows for comparative analysis between the two Centre-North cases, where SP was an entirely voluntary experience, and the two Southern cases, where there were regional-level financial incentives to open the process. On the one hand, these incentives can further restrict local autonomy, as local authorities will be reliant on regional/ European funds to implement their projects. Furthermore their capacity/ incentive to extract resources from the private sector or to integrate SP into their ordinary administration will be inhibited, as SP will be perceived by politicians and the public administration as an "extraordinary measure". Projects will be elaborated based on the criteria and requirements to access funds, which might foster blueprints rather than original plans that respond to truly local challenges. On the other hand, the availability of funds might encourage participation (although it could also foster opportunistic behaviours) and help to reinforce interdependence between stakeholders, as actors recognise the SP meetings as a substantive decision-making arena.

Figure 2.1 summarises the variables and their inter-relations.



#### **Figure 2.1 VARIABLES**

### The Case Studies

A comparative study of four subnational entities within the same country allows for greater control of country-level institutional variables (Bukowski et al 2003). The literature generally pays more attention to either large cities or regions (Bukowski et al 2003; Keating et al 2003; Piattoni and Smyrl 2003), examining their new role vis-à-vis nation states and supranational centres of power. Medium-sized cities, however, were preferred because of their greater representativeness of the Italian and European urban context. These cities also face fierce economic competition at the national and global levels, as they struggle to increase their territorial competitive advantage. However, they enjoy considerably fewer resources and less bargaining power than larger cities vis-à-vis higher tiers of government, while they also need to manage ever complex challenges from below and from above (from the restructuring of politics to the need of reinventing their development path in the face of global competition; from demographic changes to migration flows, and the issue of increasingly fragmented societies). These four cities (Trento, Prato, Lecce, and Sassari) display deep differences in terms of economic development, socio-political and cultural context. They are emblematic cases of different areas of the country: Trento in the North-East, the white belt long dominated by the Christian Democrats and catholic associations; Prato in the Centre, the epicentre of the so-called red-belt, traditionally the stronghold of the Communist Party; Lecce in the Mezzogiorno; and Sassari in the special status Region of Sardinia, which presents socio-cultural peculiarities compared to mainland Italy.

Cases were selected based on the *diverse case* method, whereby the objective is to achieve maximum variance along the dimensions under study (Seawright and Gerring 2008).<sup>76</sup> Such a selection allows for *spatial comparison* (Gerring 2007), whereby the phenomenon is observed in similar cases but different along the variables under study. The spatial variation on the independent variable will form the crux of causal inference, but is not observable through time. As Gerring and McDermott state (2007: 694-695) spatial comparison can help to measure the outcome of interventions that occurred at some point in time.

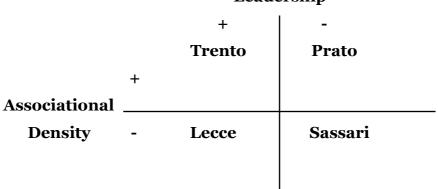
We call this a "Spatial comparison" since the causal comparison is spatial rather than temporal. To be sure, there is an assumption that spatial differences between the two cases are the product of antecedent changes in one (or both) of the cases.

These four cities represent comparable contexts as they display similarities in terms of size (between Trento's 100,000 inhabitants and Prato's 180,000) and broad institutional framework; they are all provincial capital cities and represent the main political and cultural centre in their province. However, they display different socio-cultural contexts, different degrees of leadership strength and cohesiveness of the local political structure, but also different political orientation, which represents another dimension of the leadership variable. Traditionally left-wing administrations tend to be more open to civil society and more inclined toward participatory initiatives, with left-wing parties generally ranking participation more highly in their electoral programs (Heller 2001; Fung and Wright 2001). However, participatory mechanisms have gained popularity across the political spectrum and, as these cases demonstrate, at the local level other dynamics play a role. In Prato, a traditional stronghold of the Left, an inexperienced centre-right coalition backed bottom-up participatory initiatives, as it sought to build its support base, while the Left, which had been in power since the post-war period, felt no need to open a dialogue with local neighbourhood associations. Comparing four cases that present different types of leadership and local political structure, within contexts characterised by different degrees of associational density and autonomy from the centre, will help to determine how leadership influences the three dimensions of the dependent variable and what type of leadership is most conducive to collaborative mechanisms.

Given the small numbers involved, random sampling would not have been appropriate; moreover, as the study intends to capture maximum variance with regard to the independent and intervening variables, cases needed to be purposively selected so as to exemplify such differences. They were thus identified by defining *qualitative typologies* (Elman 2005; see also George and Bennet 2005): pre-existing associational levels (low/medium/high; voluntary vs. civic associations etc.); the political orientation at municipal, provincial and regional level when SP was adopted; the level of support enjoyed by the mayor<sup>77</sup> and by his coalition; and the degree of autonomy vis-à-vis other tiers of government (see Table 2.1 here below).<sup>78</sup>

In the three studies (Putnam 1993; Sabatini 2005; Cartocci 2007) that have attempted to measure "social capital" in Italy, Puglia has fared consistently poorly, being third last, out of twenty regions, in Putnam's study, last in Sabatini's and among the bottom five regions in Cartocci's. Conversely, Trentino-Alto Adige is first in Putnam and Sabatini's charts and fourth in Cartocci's, followed by Tuscany, while Sardinia is consistently in the middle, scoring slightly better in Cartocci's study than in the other two.79 According to all these studies, there is a strong polarization in Italy between the Centre-North and the *Mezzogiorno*. Northern regions such as Trentino and central regions administrated by centre-left administrations, such as Tuscany, vaunt strong social capital of the bridging type (social networks between heterogeneous groups). Conversely social capital of the bonding type (social networks between homogenous groups) is prevalent in the South of the country, particularly in Sicily and Calabria (Sabatini 2010; also see Granovetter 1973; Gittel and Vidal 1998). Interestingly, the presence of bonding/ family networks is positively correlated with political participation - although not civic conscience – perhaps because political militancy is perceived as a way of building clientelistic relations for personal gain (Sabatini 2005).

### Figure 2.2 Leadership vs. Associational density



### Leadership

All four cities have adopted SP and are members of the Network of Strategic Cities.<sup>80</sup> This Network, described in Chapter 1, counts among its members several Italian municipalities, but only provincial capitals were considered for selection, because of the major role they play in coordinating strategic plans, which are often area-based and involve smaller municipalities in the surroundings. At the time of selection there were 34 provincial capitals among the Network's members.

### Table 2.1 CASE STUDIES SELECTION

CASES	Associational Density	Leadership Political Orientation Strength		Degree of local autonomy
Trento	High (cooperatives/ voluntary organisations)	Municipal: Centre-left Provincial: Centre-left Regional: N/A	Three consecutive mandates of current executive (deputy mayor in previous administration now mayor) – very high consensus	Autonomous Province
Prato	High (voluntary/ civic organisations)	Municipal: Centre-Right (2004-2009 Centre Left) Provincial: Centre Left Regional: Centre- Left	Weak leadership. Highly fragmented and conflictual party structure	Ordinary Status Region
Lecce	Low	Municipal: Centre-Right Provincial: Centre-Right (2004-2009 Centre-Left) Regional: Centre- Left	Three consecutive mandates of current executive (deputy mayor in previous administration now mayor) – high consensus	Ordinary Status Region

Sassari	Medium (voluntary organisations)	Municipal: Centre-Left Provincial: Centre Left Regional: Centre- Right (2004-2009 Centre-Left)	First mandate, following centre-right administration; fragmented party structure	Special Status Region
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Trento is part of the autonomous province of Trentino, in the special status region of Trentino-Alto Adige, in the North-East of the country; thus, in terms of relations with other tiers of government, it enjoys the highest degree of freedom. Its social fabric is strong and characterised by the presence of several associations and well-resourced cooperatives, which have developed sophisticated political skills. The centre-left coalition has been in power at municipal and provincial level since the beginning of the Second Republic, and it enjoys a high majority at both jurisdictional levels.

Prato, in the ordinary status region of Tuscany, has long been at the centre of a textile district (see Bellandi and Trigilia 1991; Becattini 2000 Bacci and Bellandi 2007), which has been deeply affected by the current recession. The clothing industry is increasingly in the hands of the growing Chinese community, who have developed their own district, albeit for the most part working in the informal economy (Toccafondi 2010). The social fabric is still vibrant, with several active associations, although the deterioration of the district, proverbially based on trust and social cohesion (Becattini 2000), has fragmented the local community. As new political parties are unable, unlike the old Communist party, to channel participation, neighbourhood movements, often based around single issues, are filling the new participatory vacuum. Though the city had been a stronghold of the Left for 63 years, the last local election in 2009 saw the victory of the centre-right coalition.

Lecce, within the ordinary status region of Puglia, in the South, is characterised by a fragmented social fabric, weakened by clientelistic relations. It has been governed by a centre-right coalition since the beginning of the Second Republic (four consecutive right-wing administrations). At the provincial level a new centre-right coalition followed a centre-left one. Conversely, at the regional level a centre-left coalition has been in power since 2005 and it is now on its second term; the regional president is a representative of the far left. The regional government is strongly promoting citizen participation in local governance,<sup>81</sup> and Lecce first introduced participatory programmes back in 2001.

Finally Sassari is part of a special status region, Sardinia, and is the second city of the island in size and importance. Several citizen organisations, and particularly volunteer associations, contribute to a dynamic civil society, though this has always been marginalised by political elites and lacks experience in engaging with state institutions. The centre-left coalition has been in power since 2005, following a centre-right administration, and immediately introduced SP to open a much needed dialogue with local associations. At the regional level, a centre-left administration, which had enthusiastically embraced integrated planning, was in power between 2004 and 2009; elections in February 2009 saw the victory of the centre-right coalition.

As these cases are meant to encompass the full range of variations, their representativeness, within the limits of a small-N study, should be enhanced (Seawright and Gerring 2008). Four cases can hardly ensure a "representative" sample, yet, since they interpret the vast socio-political, economic, and cultural diversities that characterise Italian cities in different parts of the country, they suit the agenda of this research work and the types of analytical conclusions that the study wishes to draw. In this respect such a case selection can facilitate *typological theorizing*, or "the development of contingent generalizations about combinations or configurations of variables that constitute theoretical types" (George and Bennet 2005:233).

Methodologically, this study will thus consist of two main parts: a within-case heuristic analysis of each city, in order to assess the impact of SP on the local polity and governance relations, and a comparative case-study to identify the factors (with a focus on the three independent variables identified above) that can either constrain or enhance outcomes (Stoecker 1991; Yin 2003; George and Bennet 2005).<sup>82</sup> The comparative method can help to uncover causal mechanisms of local political and social change; in fact comparative studies are "critical to take the study of urban governance to a theoretical level" (Pierre 2005:458). The challenge will thus be that of reaching the right combination between reducing complexity to highlight the

phenomenon under study and offer generalisable insights, while allowing for the contextual richness of each case.

### **Methods**

Analysis of official documents and websites, newspaper articles and other relevant material (see Krippendorff 1980; Neumann 1989; Nissan and Schmidt 1995; Bauer and Gaskell 2000) helped to assess in each case the rationale behind the adoption of SP, what rhetoric was employed, what methodologies facilitated the deliberative process, what vision of local development was elaborated, and the local response. Document analysis also helped to understand whether the SP built upon other governance instruments and whether or not the plan was linked to and coherent with the Town Plan and other sectoral plans, and with what implications.

These findings were triangulated with 175 semi-structured in-depth interviews (Merton and Kendall 1946; Marshall and Rossmann 1995; Bauer 2000) with stakeholders selected so as to ensure a balanced mixture of all the interests involved (see questionnaires in Appendix 1).<sup>83</sup> Interviews were designed to elicit information on how participants perceived their involvement in the process, what political space they felt they had gained or lost, whether the deliberative process encouraged greater cooperation among actors, if anything changed in terms of decision and policy-making, and whether they believed such changes were sustainable. The mayor and the main institutional and administrative figures and institutional agencies coordinating the SP process (including at other levels of government) were also interviewed (see list of interviewees in Appendix 2).

## **Conclusion: Planning the Future**

The 1990s institutional reforms in Italy were driven by dissatisfaction with central government's performance and the legitimacy crisis of national political parties following the *Mani Pulite* investigation. The reforms certainly strengthened the role of the mayor, who now represents the "head of the local community" and enjoys greater powers, to the detriment of the council. Such concentration of power in the hands of the cabinet vis-à-vis the council has profound repercussions on political mechanisms of checks and balances, hence on the quality of local democracy. However, decision-making cannot be understood as a "one man's job", since local interests are vocal and social conflicts need to be resolved. The mayor is now in a privileged position to coordinate different interests, since he has access to regulative and redistributive resources that can at least facilitate agreement among local actors.

The reforms should be examined in the context of a post-Fordist global economic order that demands a rescaling of politics, as the relationship between the economy and the territory has been redefined and the local collective competition goods a place can produce will determine the degree and the nature of development. These dynamics have fostered a new understanding of local development, which increasingly rests on the central role of territorial institutions and on governance mechanisms that encourage, at least in rhetoric, a cooperative and deliberative approach. Therefore the inclusion of a varied range of interests becomes one of the defining dimensions of new modes of governance. Leaders are expected to coordinate and engage different stakeholders, in order to elaborate a collective vision of development that can enhance the local social capital, which is now understood as an integral aspect of a territory's competitive advantage. Thus, instruments that foster collective decision-making and build consensus around local issues, such as SP, continue to gain popularity, albeit with mixed results.

Local development is increasingly conceived in terms of structural projects that require integration and coordination of policies at several jurisdictional levels, in the logic of multilevel governance. SP can represent an opportunity for local government to reinforce cross-sectoral relations and foster more coordinated and collaborative interactions with higher institutional levels, in order to respond to the challenge of multilevel policies promoted by the EU. It can also help the territory to create new common identities and reinvent its image to increase the locality's competitive advantage in the regional and global system. It promises to foster innovation, in terms of methodology and content, through a collective development project that integrates economic and social policies. These new governance mechanisms are spreading rapidly, encouraged by formal legislation and informal inter-municipal networks and "good practice" lessons disseminated by national and supranational institutions. However, to date results are poor, as implementation of these strategic plans, particularly in the Italian context, faces several administrative and political challenges. Certainly short-term political interests and search for visibility at all levels will often conflict with longer-term collective goods.

A comparative case-study that assesses how these mechanisms interact with different socio-economic and political environments can help to clarify whether, and under which circumstances, they have any tangible effects on governance and power relations, how leadership uses and influences these arrangements and what type of leadership is most conducive. The experience of the four cities selected is somehow emblematic of these new governance developments, their limitations and potential. Notwithstanding deep differences in terms of socio-political and economic context, these four local administrations were eager to invest, for different reasons, in innovative methodologies, in order to build a collective development project. Stronger interests might tend to capitalise more on the new political space, especially at the beginning of the process; however, as weaker groups gain access to new political arenas, the traditional power balance might at least be challenged. The role of a *facilitative leadership* might prove pivotal in ensuring a more inclusive and substantive process.

The next chapters will present the case study analysis, starting with the experience of Trento, one of the pioneers of SP in Italy, where a strong leadership enjoying high levels of support and a collaborative civil society failed to translate the plan into a transformative process, turning it instead into a government tool to govern and systematise administrative activities.

# PART TWO: THE CASE STUDIES

## Chapter 3 "Trento città delle opportunità"<sup>84</sup>

Trento was one of the first Italian cities to adopt Strategic Planning (SP), officially launching the process in December 2000 when a protocol of agreement was signed between the City Council and representatives of local interests. Between the end of the 1990s and the early 2000s, the city launched a season of plans on social policies, tourism and culture. The SP represented a framework to incorporate, integrate and give greater coherence to all these sectoral plans. Unlike several other Italian and European cities that chose to adopt SP to respond to particular challenges such as the reconversion of their development model within a post-Fordist global system or a deep economic and/ or social crisis, Trento, the capital of the autonomous Province of Trentino, is a "fortunate" city. It vaunts very low unemployment rates, with a development model strongly dependent upon public investments. Trento counts over one fourth of the whole provincial population (106,000 out of Trentino's 500,000 inhabitants) and it ranks highly in Italian statistics for quality of life and public services, while its status as an autonomous Province has so far represented a strong financial guarantee (Brunazzo and Fabbrini 2005).85

The rationale behind the plan was thus the need to re-interpret the old welfare system in light of declining public finances to ensure sustainable development in the long term. The idea was that deliberation with all local stakeholders would help to identify critical issues that could generate problems in the future (Detassis and Penasa 2005), to reframe the role of Trento within an international context and increase its bargaining power visà-vis a powerful provincial government. The empirical research unveiled how the SP was also an attempt of the local administration to alter the balance of power vis-à-vis the strong provincial government, and gain greater legitimacy with private stakeholders that normally see in the Province their privileged institutional interlocutor. Over a decade since the launch of the first SP and as a second SP has been approved, the city is reflecting and questioning itself over the methods of new governance mechanisms, on the validity and feasibility of long-term planning and how to resolve the conflicts between participation and decision-making.

Findings presented in this chapter are based on official documents, newspaper articles, and 37 in-depth interviews with local officials, at the municipal and provincial level, and stakeholders who took part in the SP process and in a corollary of sectoral plans.<sup>86</sup> The next section will highlight the socio-economic and political context before delving into the analysis of SP and its impact on local politics and polity.

## The Socio-Economic Context

Trento has been an autonomous Province since 1972, when the new special status for the Region of Trentino-Alto Adige<sup>87</sup> transferred most competencies over health, education, welfare, transport, and infrastructure from the regional to the provincial level, whereby the two provinces of Trento and Bolzano are now entirely responsible for economic and social development and all matters which are not of strict national relevance (Losito 1997). The special status configures a highly favourable centre-periphery relationship, with a clear divide between national and local competencies.<sup>88</sup>

During the First Republic, the whole province was characterised by high electoral turnouts (Brunazzo and Fabbrini 2005), always above the national average. This was symptomatic of the strong local subculture that characterised the North-East, or the so called "white belt" (*zona bianca*), influenced by the Church and catholic associations, which became the main point of reference during the post-war social identity building process (Brunazzo et al 2008). The end of mass parties, following *Tangentopoli* and the end of the First Republic, has marked the decline of politics as an integrated system, since it is now increasingly based on territory and personalisation. In the transitional phase of the 1990s, new political formations emerged from the crisis of the old mass parties, which either disappeared or had to rebrand themselves.

Since the 1990s in Trentino there has been strong political continuity between the municipal and provincial tiers, as twin centre-left coalitions at both municipal and provincial level would suggest great synergy in terms of policy-making. At both tiers of government, leaders tend to enjoy strong electoral support, with over 60 percent of the votes. The strong administrative role of the Province and the forceful personality of its governor, however, have tended to hinder all attempts at multilevel governance that the new season of planning launched by Trento at the beginning of 2000 had tried to encourage.

Trento has a high degree of associationism and cooperation characterises all relevant sectors of the economy. Social cooperatives have an important role as service providers, being the principal actors of the so-called welfare mix model. The emphasis here is on the multi-stakeholder approach, which entails the representation of all interest groups concerned and the active participation of all sides (service users, volunteers, professionals) in service shaping and provision. This approach has led to high democratisation of decision-making processes within social cooperatives, but it has also encouraged entrepreneurship. There are over 500 cooperatives in Trentino, counting about 200,000 members and 12,000 employees, and making roughly €2 billion turnover (Bobbio et al 2008; Bobbio and Pomatto 2008). The Cooperatives Federation is an important institution, whose presidency is by many perceived to be the second most important "political" position, after the Province's governor (Bobbio et al 2008).89 Strong associations might have triggered a "delegation effect" on the part of individual citizens, whose participation in projects of local development and planning is comparatively scarce. However, a study by Fazzi and Scaglia (2001) found that Trento's citizenry displays a very high level of participation in the local social life, as 32.8 per cent of interviewees were members of associations (volunteer, cultural, civic) and/ or cooperatives. Although local authorities, both at provincial and municipal level, have invested greatly in participatory experiences, with positive outcomes in terms of innovation, such openings have sometimes favoured particularistic interests. Some interviewees [TR17; TR30] noted how associations can become an instrument of local corporatism; as they tend to be very close to political institutions, they are sometimes used to promote partisan policies and even raise electoral support for a particular party.

Overall cooperatives have a very positive impact. There are farmers and shops in the valleys that would not exist otherwise. Small farmers can grow produce that would otherwise be extinct [thanks to cooperatives]. The other side of the coin is that it is difficult to understand where the provincial government ends and where the Cooperative Federation starts. The laws that others have to abide by – you send application forms and if a stamp or the right documentation is missing, everything stops... There [within the federation] packs of money go through... like that. [TR17 - Farmers' Association]

Overall the interactions between representative democracy structures and associations have contributed to the high degree of responsiveness and accountability from municipal and provincial institutions.

Technological innovation has received great attention in Trentino, which has heavily invested in the *knowledge economy*. Several research centres, including FIAT, Microsoft and OCSE, are today based in Trento, which also vaunts one of the best universities in Italy and several renown research centres, such as the *Fondazione Bruno Kessler* (Fbk) and the *Centro Interdipartimentale Mente/Cervello* (Inter-departmental centre Mind/ Brain), dedicated to neurosciences. The technological district on renewable energy has also opened office branches here, when it launched its project on green building certification (Campestrini 2008).

However, the economic structure of this province is very different from the rest of Northern Italy, which is characterised by strong entrepreneurship and the presence of industrial districts; by contrast Trentino mainly relies on the public sector. All local and provincial government offices are naturally based in Trento, where the public sector absorbs 40 percent of the workforce, or about 24,700 people (SP document<sup>90</sup>). This has translated into relative wealth and stable levels of high employment even in the current recession. The public sector is thus the dominant actor in guaranteeing the delivery of all services and enhancing the competitiveness of the local economy.

## **Strategic Planning: A Governmental Tool** *The Process*

Trento's first SP, launched in 2000, represents an integral part of a participatory approach to development, which aims at reinforcing synergies among different policy areas. Mayoral elections after the reform represented the chance to start a new approach to local governance. Mayor Pacher, first elected in 1999, seized the opportunity of the SP to face problems that normally go beyond the administrative borders of a city and that cannot be confronted through traditional instruments, requiring instead multilevel governance (i.e. delocalisation of enterprises and the re-organisation of labour, demographic changes due to migration and population aging).

In 1999 the newly elected centre-left administration promoted a survey among stakeholders to elaborate a vision of the city within the next 10 years. The municipality's Local Development Department organised a forum involving the main local actors to identify the city's strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities, through a SWOT analysis (Detassis and Penasa 2005). In 2000 a protocol of agreement was signed with the main trade unions and associations, including the Chamber of Commerce, the University, a local research institute (*Istituto Trentino di Cultura*) and the provincial government, in order to agree on the method and the process to be employed for the elaboration of SP. The territorial pact of Mount Bondone had already been launched in 1999 to enhance the development of the area as a tourist resort, and it represented a fundamental step towards the logic of participation and a moment of learning for the actors involved, which later facilitated the SP process.

You need to make sure that all the actors involved are on the same wavelength and start together, and everyone has to put something in and commit, so that you don't have smaller actors that are sidelined. They all have to start together and have to know where they're going. This I've learnt from the territorial pact for Mount Bondone, which I was involved in. At the time there was this idea of thinking strategically, beyond the five years of an administration and look beyond the limited municipal resources, through involving the private sector, the hotel managers, the cultural resources... [TR3 - Former *assessore* for Local Development]

The SP developed at a time of great fervour. The Social Plan helped to carry out a radical re-organisation of the Social Policies sector, through wide involvement of each borough. An important change to the Town Plan was being discussed at the same time and a renowned Spanish architect, Busquets, was hired to work on a project that would reinterpret the city's image in relation to the surrounding territory, by moving the railway station. A conscious effort was made to strengthen the relationship between the ongoing SP and the new urban projects, which became a complementary part of the SP (Gastaldi 2003). Thus, within a few years, a new season of participatory planning was launched as a series of plans were produced, including a Plan on Tourism and one on Culture.<sup>91</sup> The SP, though following its own participatory course, acted as a "container" to incorporate all these sector-based plans and ensure coherence of policy-making within an intersectoral strategic agenda.

This new participatory approach to planning was reinforced through a change to the municipal statute by introducing art. 96, which inserts SP, specifically defined as a participatory process, among the planning instruments that the administration has to employ by law. This decision represents an innovative approach that highlights the importance of participatory governance. Trento's local government decided to adopt SP as a compulsory instrument, not because of top-down regulations but because of its perceived validity as a method of planning to promote local development through wide cooperation between the private and the public sector. The authors of the SP document emphasise that the plan represents a unique opportunity to give coherence to private and public projects and other planning instruments and to stimulate and collect ideas and concrete proposals from local stakeholders in order to integrate them within a common project of development.<sup>92</sup>

The process was articulated into three main phases: diagnosis, planning, and implementation. The local administration had a strong leadership role, as the initiator and facilitator of the process. Politically the mayor and the then *assessore* for Local Development, already familiar with governance mechanisms such as the territorial pact for Mount Bondone, fully endorsed the SP process. The local University was immediately involved through the creation of a *mixed working group* in February 2001, consisting of academic experts and two public service directors.<sup>93</sup> The working group produced a preliminary document in April 2001.

The whole process was organised by the university, in particular the department of Economics. There were three scholarship-holders from the university, including myself, who facilitated and organised the meetings, and collected the ideas that emerged from the meetings onto documents. So there was this scientific coordination from the university, while the administration, as the champion of the process, organised the meetings. [TR11 –Local Government Officer]

A first round of nine public meetings in summer of 2001 led to the elaboration of a diagnostic document. The *mixed group* carried out an articulate analysis concerning all dimensions of local development to be circulated among participants in the deliberative forums ahead of the meetings. In summer 2001 three thematic roundtables on territory, culture, and services involved 250 representatives of citizen associations, institutions and the private sector. A second cycle of roundtables took place between July and October 2002, when 321 people, representing 163 associations, participated in five thematic groups concerning infrastructure, quality of service delivery, education and training, culture and tourism, and finally environment and liveability. So-called *cognitive maps*, short files that would summarise the outcomes of previous meetings, were prepared and distributed to participants through the administrative office of the Local Development Department, which offered technical support throughout the process (Detassis and Penasa 2005).<sup>94</sup> The final plan was approved by the Council in 2003.

Trento's SP was thus a top-down effort coordinated by the local government and the university; it stands out among other plans for its emphasis on the internal coherence of the plan and on its synergy with other planning instruments. 20 interviewees out of 36 agreed that the SP represented an opportunity for the city to collectively reflect on itself and its future, but also to reaffirm a more prominent role at the regional, national and international levels. In a way the SP also interpreted the new administration's intention to readjust the balance of power in favour of the local government vis-à-vis a very strong Province. The administration opened up to structured actors as its privileged interlocutors in an attempt to increase its legitimacy vis-à-vis the Province, perhaps hoping that the involvement of local powerful stakeholders might incentivise the provincial government to endorse the process. Highly organised, however, and hierarchical organisations, such as trade associations, tend to identify the provincial government as their main institutional point of reference; thus they participated in the municipal SP with scarce enthusiasm.

I don't think it [the SP] was perceived to be the decision-making moment. I had previous experience of participatory planning and my impression is that diverse stakeholders interact and respond in a coherent fashion when they understand that that is the venue where decisions are taken. If they believe that's just a moment of discussion, then yes, they might take part in the conversation, but their commitment in the following phase is not necessarily congruent with what had been previously discussed and perhaps agreed. [TR26 – Former President of the Architects' Association]

By contrast smaller associations perceived the process as a window of opportunity to gain some visibility. Some of these stakeholders (TR7; TR18; TR30) agreed that the SP facilitated networking with other local actors and strengthened their relationship with the administration.

There was space for everyone, that's for sure. There was the space and the time to discuss an issue and develop it, reflect on it and then perhaps put forward observations the following time. It was a pleasant way of working. And then you realised that the idea that you had put forward in the first meeting could be developed in more concrete ways during the following meetings. Your own thoughts and ideas were later developed by other people. [TR18 - President of voluntary association for disabled people]

However, others (TR17; TR22; TR36) were very critical of the inclusiveness (or lack thereof) of the process. Although facilitators tried to ensure everyone had the opportunity to speak out and put forward proposals, high numbers of participants and the lack of familiarity with deliberative methods meant the meetings often turned into assemblies, where a diverse platform of participants proved difficult to coordinate.

It's like English courses for adults. There is the highly educated person with some knowledge, the young one that learns fast and the one that really... [does not get it]. When you have such a diverse audience, it is difficult. [TR16 – Farmers' Association]

Smaller associations and non-organised citizens naturally struggled the most. One interviewee, with reference in particular to the meetings for the Plan on Tourism, complained that there was limited substantive participation. "The university worked on the plan with the public sector, so there was little room for us to influence the strategic lines." (TR36) Associations often struggled to take part in all the plans that were being organised at the time, as they lacked human resources (TR16; TR17; TR18; TR19; TR22; TR33; TR34). "I guess these things could help and be good for us, but we don't have the time." (TR16)

### The Plan

The document of the plan is divided into two main parts. The first part describes the ambition of Trento to be "a city of opportunities" (*città delle opportunità*) and organises the future scenarios through four lines of action:

city of urban quality; city of rights and services; city of research and innovative development; and finally city of the Alps, city of the Council<sup>95</sup>, of Europe and of the world. These four actions are divided into 73 projects, mostly sponsored – and later implemented - by the public sector. The second part of the document is a more in-depth analysis of the actions and measures, explaining the rationale behind each of them, the degree of innovation, the sponsors, and whether they are linked to EU or local directives, so as to convey the level of feasibility (Mazzara 2009).

The document highlights the intention to create a collective actor, by sharing responsibility among the stakeholders in the implementation phase, promoting communication strategies, so as to guarantee an inclusive process, and updating the document regularly in accord with changing situations and in response to new issues. Overall the SP document shows the administration's awareness of the difficulty and the importance of SP, as also attested to by its institutionalisation in the local statute. One of the strength of Trento's SP in terms of cognitive effects is the adoption of quantitative evaluation as an instrument to assess the feasibility of each project and the coherence of the plan in its entirety (Pasqui et al 2010). However, the implementation phase suffered from several shortcomings given the ambitious expectations set out in the SP document.

### Implementation is for government

Based on the number of projects implemented, Trento's SP should be considered as a success case;<sup>96</sup> however, most of the measures listed in the final SP were implemented by the administration, with limited input from other actors. This apparent success could also raise some suspicions over the causal relationship between the plan and its projects. It might suggest that these projects would have also been implemented without an SP, which had however the merit to intercept and organise inertial dynamics. A permanent office was created to overlook and coordinate the implementation phase, but this was an internal organisation and did not involve representatives of private or social actors. In fact the SP became a *government tool* of the municipal government (Pasqui et al 2010), while other institutional actors, such as the Province, stayed at the margins, somehow hindering the overall impact of the process.

In several decision-making processes, the trend towards the simplification of "working groups" led to a reduction in the number of associations involved, favouring the strongest, in terms of financial and mobilisation capacity. Communication and publicity were perhaps the weakest aspect of an otherwise highly structured process. No newsletter was in place to maintain communication with the stakeholders following the planning phase; the limited information available was communicated through the City Council's bulletin. A dedicated website was designed and set up but it was not supported by more incisive and interactive communication tools (i.e. online forums and polls),<sup>97</sup> while the media offered limited coverage of the process which was perceived to be too complex for their average readership. Coordination mechanisms to ensure the involvement of all the participants in the implementation phase were weak. There follows that, although the implementation of the plan proceeded swiftly, the stakeholders did not appear to be aware of this.

If I'm honest, in these past few years there were no formal moments to monitor [the implementation of] the plan. We did not have clear strategic objectives. I feel the plan never translated into a strategic project, it remained as a plan, as guidelines. Perhaps this was the City Council's intention [...] [TR7 - Director of the Science Museum]

Although representatives of several private, social and cultural interests took part in the process, the involvement of simple citizens was intentionally limited and the organisers argued that the themes discussed required structured interlocutors. Even citizens otherwise very active and politicised such as neighbourhood associations' leaders were completely oblivious of the SP (TR14). Key actors, such as environmental associations (TR22), failed to participate in the process (or were they not invited?), while some participants were clearly relegated to a secondary role, as there was a tangible divide between partners with real decision-making powers and partners that were just expected to legitimate decisions. Some participants commented that on certain issues they just felt obliged to agree (TR17; TR36). Thus the risk is to miss the difference, which should not be limited to

semantic terms, between structured consultation mechanisms and authentic public participation in decision-making.

In terms of reinforcing local networks the plan had a limited impact, while the value added of the SP process, and of other plans, is more evident in terms of organisational learning within public services, since a new integrated approach to planning, though amidst some resistance, is being adopted.

The most important effect produced [by the planning season] has been within the public administration. Because it has fostered some repositioning in terms of strategic vision of the City Council's organisation and it has encouraged some changes in the way we work and we deliver services. [TR5 - City Council's General Director]

Perhaps the main merit of Trento's SP is to have ensured greater coherence within local administration, through elaborating a collective vision that would guide future planning. In this respect the administrators conceived the plan not simply in terms of the projects it listed, but as a process incorporating measures from all the other sector-based plans produced simultaneously.

The influence of the changes to the Town Plan (March 2002) was particularly important and Busquets' project became the SP's flagship project. This entailed the rebuilding of the old railway station (moving it underground) in order to give way to a boulevard on the surface that would have reconnected the city to the river. However, due to costs, but mostly because the Province had different plans (i.e. a high speed rail project) that would conflict with this project, the idea was eventually abandoned. This had a very negative effect on the credibility of the local executive; and the community perceived the SP process as partly unsuccessful because the very project that had captured the city's imagination never materialised.

The redevelopment of the disused industrial area ex-Michelin and the north of the city (Trento Nord) represents an exception within the plan for the strong role of the private sector. Both projects were part of the new Town Plan, but they were also inserted in the SP as measures that would contribute to revitalising the periphery and recovering the relationship between the town centre and the north of the city. The project ideas, like several others in the plan, had already been in existence for a long time and the SP represented an opportunity to "popularise" them.

The project of the ex-Michelin industrial area was elaborated by *starchitect* Renzo Piano and implemented through a public-private partnership. On the initiative of the administration in 1998, a redevelopment agency called *Iniziative Urbane* (Urban Initiatives) was created by representatives of the local banking and business sector.<sup>98</sup> This same agency also presides over the redevelopment of the northern part of the city, where the need for an environment reclamation, due to the polluting nature of the chemical industries that used to be based in the area, has slowed down the project, since such an intervention is under the jurisdiction of the provincial government.<sup>99</sup> The most interesting element about these two projects, which interpret the logic of SP as a governance system, is the fact that the public sector does not finance the implementation but exerts a regulatory and monitoring role to guarantee the public interest. It should be emphasised that *Iniziative Urbane* was formed on the initiative of the public administration.

Overall, given the fervour around such intense planning activity, there were some inevitable polemics (TR8; TR15; TR23).

Town planning, I'm afraid, is interwoven with many interests and this weakens it. I don't want to get into the details, but there were two or three areas about which there was a big controversy on newspapers, because it looked like... a few presents were given to political groups and CEOs. It should be emphasised that this change to the Town Plan was effectively made by consultants. Busquets put forward these ideas but then the final document was written and signed off by the Town Planning Office. [TR8 – Coordinator of the Urban Centre]

## The Challenge of Collective Action

In 2005 Trento launched the elaboration of its second plan, which marked some elements of discontinuity and innovation compared with the previous plan. The new document *Towards a strategic agenda – Trento 2020 (Verso un'agenda strategica – Trento 2020)* sets out to evaluate the first plan a few years since implementation began, in order to understand the impact of this instrument on local governance. There was thus a redefinition of the approach to planning, moving beyond a self-referential plan rigidly focussed on its own content, and towards a *strategic agenda*, which prioritises the process instead of the plan as a list of projects. The document

reaffirms the commitment to participation, but when interviewed the author of the plan stressed that, since meaningful participation is extraordinarily challenging to coordinate, two conditions are paramount in order to guarantee tangible decision-making:

The first one is that people really follow you. Agreements are reached and things are realised if the administration has more power than the other [actors], therefore if we can impose these projects upon them, basically. Or, and this is the other condition, the partners, though having decisive power, have a clear convenience [to take part in the process]. [TR2 – SP Office CEO]

Thus, as highlighted by the literature (see Chapter 1), the interdependence of stakeholders appears to be a necessary requirement to guarantee a substantive process. Interdependence of stakeholders is however hard to engender, as more powerful actors are often able to control the process or have the option of other, non-collaborative channels (Ansell and Gash 2007; Innes and Booher 2003). The conclusion of Trento's administration was that a collaborative process will work if the local government is the dominant actor in the process, vis-à-vis other stakeholders and other tiers of government, in terms of bargaining power and competencies. Focusing on those policy areas that fall under its full jurisdiction and on few strategic lines that it is certain it can govern and monitor can certainly facilitate concrete outcomes. However, from this perspective the concept of collective actor becomes redundant, as stakeholders would just respond to a top-down agenda rather than actively contributing to a governance structure. Perhaps, there was a failure of the local leadership to offer identity incentives that could have stimulated more committed involvement of stakeholders. The administration was not able to present SP as a substantial decision-making arena because the Province, the most important actor in local development, was not involved. The SP was partly used by the local administration to antagonise the Province and gain some power and legitimacy, but this approach acted as boomerang and jeopardised the formation of the collective actor. The limited inclusivity of the participatory process also inhibited the emergence of new actors and new resources that might have in fact increased the legitimacy of the local administration vis-à-vis the Province.

## **The Politics of Strategic Planning**

Whereas the mayor and some *assessori* fully endorsed the participatory experience and acted as its sponsors, the champions of the whole process were public service directors, who played a pivotal role in coordinating and supervising.

I don't think this SP was launched for need of visibility. Mayor Pacher really believed in it and wanted to look further and engage [the city at large]. And he found in XXX [the head of his cabinet, later CEO of the SP office] someone that could share his need for a broader perspective, and so the whole process was launched. But the political groups didn't really participate. There was no hostility, but it turned out to be an administrative process. [TR9 - President of the Council]

The council and part of the executive were often left at the margins, although the reason was to be found as much in the lack of formal mechanisms of involvement as in their scepticism towards the new approach to planning.

[The reforms] have encouraged some dynamism [in local administration] thanks to a "lighter" relationship between the mayor and the political parties. The mayor is legitimised by the popular vote and this has pros and cons. The role of councillors has clearly moved away from the political limelight and this can be a bit frustrating [for the council]. Today I wouldn't do it [the SP process] in the same way and I'd care more about involving the council. [TR13 - Former Mayor and current Provincial Vice-President]

At the time the issue was partly addressed through ad hoc meetings to inform councillors about the various phases of the process and through the ratification of the final document by the council. Some majority councillors (TR24; TR29; TR35) were very involved and they understood this could be a learning opportunity for them as well, the chance to engage with the city at large, with private and social actors. The opposition just ignored the whole process, although there were never real conflicts.

Perhaps they just did not perceive it as something fundamental over which to fight, they saw it as something a bit too far away in the future. Fights are generally over the projects that follow SP, because on these smaller actions councillors can gain some visibility [...]. But the SP was rather perceived to be the mayor's dream book. [TR9 - President of the Council]

And the final document was judged as pretty unsubstantial.

They're just guidelines that make no difference. There's nothing innovative about it. Remarque would have said, "Nothing new on the Western Front". As I said, nothing more than an academic study... [TR25 – Councillor, opposition]

Since the whole idea of an SP process was to elaborate participatory, hence bipartisan, policies that could be embraced by both political sides to guarantee administrative continuity beyond political colour, there was a clear failure in this respect. The council resolution for the approval of the final plan in 2003 passed with 27 votes in favour, 4 votes against and 7 abstainers,<sup>100</sup> which means that the opposition was united in voting against it. Although the whole centre-left coalition supported the mayor, majority councillors also shared a few doubts, if not on the nature of the process certainly over the results and the feasibility of some of the projects.

We voted for it, after making a few observations and contributions, but we perceived it as a big risk. Rather than a risk, perhaps it was just the fear of not being able to implement it. Perhaps it's our culture, the way the city is, being a frontier post, and because it's often too dependant on top-down decisions that come from the Province. [TR24 - Councillor, majority]

One of the most important challenges of SP is that it requires continuity both in terms of strategies and coordination mechanisms that can sustain the involvement of actors in the long term. Since Trento launched its SP ten years ago, its experience can test the strength of the process vis-à-vis the pressure of every-day administration. Trento's political context, given the high level of continuity of leadership, should be most conducive. Although the current mayor, and former deputy mayor and *assessore* for Town Planning, is willing to revive the participatory approach, the high turnover within the council, a different executive, or even changes of staff within public services, deeply hindered the collective cognizance that was gained during the process.

Within the new council [the last local elections took place in May 2009] we have never even talked about SP yet. While within the 1999-2005 term many councillors were more or less involved, especially for the approval of the final plan etc., the councillors that started their first mandate in the following legislature [mayor Pacher's second term], in 2005-2009, would have known very little about SP. [TR9 - President of the Council]

Politically there was a long latency period (2005-2009) which translated into limited communication about the advancement of the implementation phase; once the plan was elaborated and approved, it gradually faded away from the local political limelight. The new mayor reaffirmed a strong commitment to the strategic agenda and a participatory approach. He stressed how participation has proved difficult and tiring; perhaps the real challenge was to reconcile the need for substantive and meaningful participation of civil society with political protagonism. To reconcile everyone's views [is hard], because they all want their space and want to be protagonists; everyone wants to have a say. If politics comes into play, then there are always issues of political visibility. [TR28 – Mayor]

Certainly political interests tend to conflict with substantive politics, as politicians' need for easy-to-communicate policies and short-term results clashes against the complex long-term vision and the long and at times inconclusive participatory debates that SP entails.

## The Limits of Inter-Institutional Cooperation

Twin government coalitions at both levels would suggest great synergy in terms of policy-making, but the relationship between the two levels is not an equal one. An *assessore*, and former councillor, commented, "Not a leaf moves which the Province doesn't choose" (TR29).<sup>101</sup> Although Trento's SP interprets the city's effort to emancipate itself from "Mamma Provincia", the limited involvement of the latter in the process, as examined above, has affected participation levels on the part of the private sector.

I believe that the economic dynamics concerning the city should be negotiated elsewhere. At the provincial level. Today the newspapers write that the president of the Province wants to establish a permanent space of dialogue with all associations and orders [...]. Because... who's got the legal competency? The Province. Who's got the money? The Province. 10 years ago with the SP we had opened a permanent working group to consult with the professional orders and the associations. We had a very detailed agenda of some very complex issues. But sometimes they [the stakeholders] turned up, sometimes one was missing, sometimes two were missing... These are people that work and they asked themselves, "yes but in concrete terms what are we achieving here?" [TR2 – SP Office CEO]

Busquets' flagship project on the rebuilding of the old railway station was never implemented. The local administration commissioned an evaluation study of the project and this new *vision* of the city had captured people's imagination, but the Province had its own project of the high speed rail in the pipeline, which made Busquets' plan redundant.

The Province has the mentality of the monopolist, "I take the decisions and we can discuss on the rest." If we want multilevel governance, we can go and coyly knock on their door and ask, "Please." But if decision-making on a particular project/ policy pertains to the provincial level, the SP will mean very little. The relationship between the two levels is completely unbalanced and asymmetric. On a political level, the relationship is fairly dynamic anyway, but on a bureaucratic and administrative level much less so. And the administrative level is the inflexible executor of what it believes is its own prerogative, by divine right. [...] The municipality is not completely dominated by the Province, because it has some bargaining power  $-\frac{1}{4}$  of the population of the whole

Trentino lives here. The city level is strong, but there's always a propensity towards compromise. [TR2 – SP Office CEO]

The limit of the SP was that decision-making often pertained to the provincial level which had limited involvement in the whole process. In this respect there was a far too optimistic approach on the part of the municipal administration, and perhaps some degree of naivety in judging its capacity of influence. Inevitably there was a widespread perception, at times unjustified, that the local administration was incapable of decision-making.

We lacked enthusiasm and decision-making capacity. Both the previous mayor and the new one in particular, who was *assessore* for urban planning in the previous administration, have a terrible fault: they're great mediators but they can't lead. [TR26 - Architect]

The synergies between the municipal SP and the Provincial Development Plan (*Piano Provinciale di Sviluppo - PPS*) are somehow guaranteed through this dirigiste approach on the part of the Province.

Trento and the other 222 municipalities receive the PPS already done and dusted and they have a month since it is published to send in their observations. Then it is formally approved by the provincial *giunta*. [TR2 – SP Office CEO]

However the relationship between the two levels also has several points of strength, as there is, for instance, coordinated political work towards areabased planning. A new project also includes the cities of Verona, Mantua, Brescia, and Vicenza, with the aim to create an integrated territorial system in terms of logistics and economic development, but also culture and research. The political continuity between the two levels (both the current president and vice-president of the Province are former mayors of Trento) ensures some degree of coordination, but the SP did not enhance or contribute to this relationship.

Among the most important collaborations is the transport plan, with this project of a high frequency railway, which was possible because the new provincial *assessore* for transports was the mayor of Trento until last year [2009] and the president of the Province also used to be Trento's mayor and so they have a certain sensibility and foresight. [...] But we could not say that this collaboration was fostered by the SP; it would not be true. [TR2 – SP Office CEO]

In 2004 the Province launched its own strategic plan, called *TXT Trentini for Trentino*, as a governance instrument which, rather than giving a definitive reading of the future or guaranteeing optimal solutions to certain issues and dynamics, tries to manage change through a greater reflexive

capacity in term of strategic vision. This was the rationale underpinning the effort of the Province to involve other institutions, as well as private stakeholders, to elaborate a new social pact to strengthen the territory's social cohesion. However, interviewees [TR11; TR22] believed that this was the Province's response to Trento's SP. Private stakeholders were perhaps more diligent in attending these provincial meetings. The working groups were an opportunity for new actors (i.e. the association of young entrepreneurs) to gain visibility and open new channels with provincial institutions; but the process suffered from the lack of legitimation from the top, and this affected outcomes.

For instance at the provincial level... the *assessore* was really committed – he was actually the sponsor of the process – but there was not legitimation from the top; the president of the Province took part in the meetings but did not really act as its sponsor and failed to give this signal of attention, of priority. [TR11 – Office of the general director]

## **Participation Is A Local Affair**

Trento's administration preferred engaging structured stakeholders rather than involving the wider community; there were few official communication channels (i.e. the official website) and the media offered limited coverage. An efficient administration with a popular mayor who won the elections with over 60 percent of the votes hardly needed to increase legitimacy with the city at large, while several and active associations already enjoyed direct channels with administration.

The Social Plan, focusing on social policies, was by many perceived to be more meaningful in terms of citizen involvement. It was based on the outcomes of two complementary participatory processes that took place in 2000. The first one involved individual citizens through assemblies where 800 participants formed 40 working groups; the second one consisted of three focus groups with third-sector organisations, several associations and institutional representatives, including representatives of the provincial government and the health service trusts (Fazzi and Scaglia 2001).

I have to say that the Social Plan in particular has had the biggest impact, [...] not just an internal impact within public services in terms of its organisation, but also an external one, since it has helped to move service delivery closer to citizens [through a decentralisation process] [TR5 - City Council General Director]

The Social Plan produced a dramatic change in the administrative organisation of social services, which have been divided into five decentralised centres (*poli sociali territoriali*) to respond to demands specific to the area where each office is located. A general office coordinates them all, while a separate central office manages city-level social issues. Although there was initial resistance from within the public sector and there are still limits in terms of coordination between the decentralised and the central services (TR1; TR20; TR21; TR27; TR30), change is being incorporated in routine working practices. The decentralised services are working together with ward councils to increase interaction with local associations and strengthen the local social fabric, with varying degrees of success. One elucidatory account on how decentralised services work concerns some new blocks of flats, *Il Magnete*, built in an area with no services, public spaces or green areas.

There were no associations, services or infrastructures. So we decided to organise this hot chocolate event, in the middle of winter. On private property, but we didn't care... We had the backing of the ward council, in case something happened... And so we met with the families living there, who wanted to meet each other and get to know each other. And so we started a series of events and workshops. We organised a monthly workshop on Saturday afternoon for the kids and that was an opportunity for parents to meet. [...] Initially we'd have these workshops in the front yards in between blocks, then a pizzeria nearby allowed us to meet in their gazebo and eventually in a room inside the pizzeria. Then the owner sold the place and there were other problems. [...] But in the meantime the local ward council and an *assessore* [for Social Policies] worked really hard with us and at some point the mayor got involved. And eventually we decided to hire this hall. Once we secured this space we could launch a series of workshops, meetings for teenagers. [...] And we involved *Arianna*, a cooperative that works with communities. [TR27 - Social Worker]

Participation at the very local level was easier to sustain since more tangible results could be ensured (Fung and Wright's *demonstration effect*), guaranteed by the autonomy that the local government enjoys vis-à-vis the Province over social policies, which are entirely delegated to the municipal level.

In order to encourage participation in urban policies, the SP also included among its projects an urban centre, called *CasaCittà*, which was established in conjunction with the new changes to the Town Plan, as the administration intended, at least in rhetoric, to open a public debate on the transformation of the city. The urban centre was inaugurated in 2005 and is managed through a collaboration between the municipality, the University and the local Architects' Association. It was originally envisaged as space to discuss urban transformations with the local community, to offer information and foster horizontal exchanges of knowledge through seminars, meetings, and lectures. However, the architects and the other interviewees involved in this project were sceptical about the way *CasaCittà* developed (TR8; TR15; TR23; TR26).

This urban centre was perceived to be something a bit scary within the administration, which saw it as a source of problems, because participation is difficult to control. So it was implemented and immediately weakened, since it no longer has a budget or a venue. It's an immaterial office. (TR8 – Coordinator of the Urban Centre)

One interesting participatory experience at the very local level was the participatory budgeting initiative in the S.Giuseppe S. Chiara borough; this was the only participatory initiative open only to individual citizens. It took place between April and June 2007 and involved a total of 180 residents. It was structured through different phases: a first phase of information and collection of proposals, a second phase where priorities were identified, among those technically feasible, a third phase where the administrators assessed the proposals. The local council agreed to implement at least one citizens' priority for each of the four areas considered: pavements, parks and green areas, street lighting, social and family policies. While the administration could discard some of the priorities voted by the citizen assembly, it had to clearly justify its choice and could not alter the priorities' ranking (Bobbio and Pomatto 2008; see also www.comune.trento.it). The process was not repeated, although it was initially agreed that it would run as a two years pilot. It was perceived to be a failure by the council, allegedly because of low participation levels. However, ward councillors believed city councillors felt bypassed and threatened in their role as sole representatives of the people and this would explain the lack of collaboration on their part. When a participatory process is opened from above and the people struggle to understand its rationale and do not perceive the urgency of the problems to be discussed, time is key to explaining the benefits of participation in the face of the time and resources that people are expected to invest in the

process; and time, argued the president of the ward council, is what they were not afforded.

The failure of the PB is due to the hostility of the city council, since there is competition with the ward level for visibility. Besides it is difficult to involve people when the process is opened from above and the people do not feel the immediate need to participate. In this case you need more time to prepare people. [...] And as in everything in order for things to work you need to repeat them a few times, because then people realise that it can work, that what they are saying has influence and then there will be greater participation the next time around. [TR30 - Ward President]

The logic of participation often clashes against political impatience with the participatory process which can be lengthy or produce unpalatable or unfeasible decisions. Thus, a conflict is apparent between the need for greater involvement and participation and the fear that this will further delay decision-making, in a context, such is the Italian one, where this has always been an irritating weakness of local and national democracy.

This is the question I ask myself, if the cost of participation is slowness, and it is like that to a point... but excessive slowness? I work on several Town Plans for small communes, we have plenty of meetings but in the end you have to decide. A planning process is useless if it lasts too long. If the SP continues to plan without ever deciding... The plan is a process but a process of decisions. And every now and then you have to decide, otherwise the plan is an end in itself. A sort of terrible blob that keeps planning while the city builds itself through different ways and decisions are taken in a different way. (TR26 - Architect)

The participatory process in Trento Nord, organised by a group of young architects on behalf of the administration, is yet another testimony to the fact that opening up a participatory process without the certainty that results can be delivered and the municipality has effective control and competency over the specific policy areas can backfire politically. The residents were invited to decide on how to redevelop a publicly owned area. There was a participatory process from which clear decisions emerged, such as the building of a square and green areas, but everything stopped during the implementation phase.

I personally took part in one meeting a couple of years ago and the neighbourhood was really angry. They said, "We went through this participatory process and we elaborated some decisions all together, we voiced our needs in a very responsible and realistic way. Why has everything stopped now?" So this is the risk of these moments of participation. The Italian public decision-making process, but not just the Italian one, is very complicated. If we open a participatory space we have to be serious about it. Participation shouldn't just be for consensus-building on decisions already made. [TR23 – Academic Expert]

Conversely politicians were highly responsive towards the demands of critical participation when the initiative came, swift and in great numbers, from the bottom up. Often unaware of top-down participatory events, such as the SP, neighbourhood associations were able to attract much media and hence political attention [TR12; TR14]. The neighbourhood association of *San Martino*, for instance, formed around 2008 to "put some order in the neighbourhood" (TR14 – Leader of the association), as the area was the scene of petty crime and drug addiction. Within a few months it turned into a very structured organisation with its own statute. The association was able to catalyse attention among residents who supported their cause and the wider public (Il Trentino 27 January 2009).

We had our hilarious moment of glory. Soon after our first meeting we were even on TV [...] It looked like we could do anything, a secession, put up barricades and declare the free state of S. Martino. At that point in time it seemed possible because the people were with us. You'd go to the supermarket and people would stop you and say, "Yes, we saw you [on TV]". It's something intoxicating. [...] People feel they don't have an immediate interlocutor in politics and then they feel they have to act themselves... Yes, you realise you have a certain power. I was surprised that all of sudden they [the politicians] were so eager to listen to us and gave us the mobile number of a reference person [an *assessore*]. The mayor could have said, "Leave it, we'll be dealing with the neighbourhood problems". But clearly we had some weight and they were afraid of us. [T14 – Leader Association San Martino]

The leaders of the association were offered direct access to the mayor and one dedicated *assessore*; they were able to ensure the whole area was constantly patrolled and that virtually every resident had police officers' mobile numbers. More recently the action of the San Martino association has been more oriented towards fostering greater integration within a very diverse neighbourhood, where there is a high concentration of immigrants. They joined a local cooperative, *Baricentro*, which puts together several associations working in the neighbourhood and helps organise local events. This neighbourhood association is now independently focusing on urban planning in the area, also through involving some local architects.<sup>102</sup>

# Conclusion

Trento is a wealthy city always ranking highly in Italian statistics on quality of life and characterised by high political continuity (also across institutional tiers), strong leadership at the local and provincial level, and a highly cooperative social context, with a dense network of voluntary and civic associations. In Trento the SP was a voluntary process based on the initiative of the mayor, who sponsored the process, supported by public service managers, who enthusiastically championed it, ensuring good levels of internal learning of new working practices.<sup>103</sup> Trento changed its statute to make SP compulsory and the plan became an important government tool to coordinate a series of sector-based plans, all elaborated almost simultaneously through more or less inclusive participatory mechanisms.

Based on interviewees' accounts, Trento's trade and industry associations thought the SP was an important space for the city to reflect on its future, but they perceived it more as a process that would give coherence to local planning. Thus, they did not feel it was something they had to engage with in a more proactive way and showed limited interest in being involved in the implementation phase. By contrast, the third sector and cultural and civic associations tried to capitalise on the process and participated actively. There was no real intention to engage with simple citizens, since administrators argued a dialogue with structured actors would prove more constructive. Citizen participation proved more substantive at the neighbourhood level through the Social Plan, perhaps because the objectives were more tangible and easier to understand than a *vision* of the city's future. Furthermore, as authority over social policies has been fully delegated to the municipal level, the administration enjoys greater freedom in defining and delivering policy change.

It is interesting to note how, while simple citizens and smaller organisations struggled to have their voice heard within the top-down participatory venues, the *critical democracy* of the neighbourhood associations of San Martino was more effective at attracting media and political attention. The next case, Prato, will offer an elucidatory account of the clash between incumbent and critical democracy (Blaug 2002).<sup>104</sup>

Reflecting on Trento's experience, the author of the plan (TR2) identifies three main failings, which also affected SP in the other three cases. First the process suffered from excessive "*Enlightenment*" (TR2) or naivety, as there had been the conviction that it would be enough to put collective decisions in writing or to institutionalise the process - through the

amendment of the statute and various public-private agreements – to ensure that such decisions would implement themselves as if through an organic process. Yet planning succeeds or fails at the point of implementation, which represents a decision-making moment in itself. Implementation is not some software that realises itself once the decisional hardware is in place. In this respect the new SP - Towards a strategic agenda, Trento 2020 - aims at reflecting on the meaning of planning, by understanding all the clashes, the uncertainties, the irrationalities of a decision-making process, as it tries to manage these dynamics. Thus, the focus is now on implementation, understood as a continuous process, rather than as a dimension that can be enucleated, as if there were an apparently logical sequence of diagnosis, planning, implementing, and monitoring. "This is only true in fairytales, I believe" (TR2). A second problem identified is the temptation of a holistic, all-embracing approach: one thing is trying to integrate policies, one very different thing is attempting at planning everything. On the contrary there should be greater selectivity, in order to control those truly important four or five policies. One last criticality was politics. In Trento the mayor supported the process, as he was eager to answer a twofold demand for innovation of planning instruments and a vision of local development. However, politics is not always aligned step by step with what it decides.

[I have witnessed] many situations, and I could quote reiterated evidence, where politics, whether the local council or the *giunta*, actually asked to elaborate some acts which they later formally adopted and which then went unheeded. [TR2 – SP Office CEO]

The mayor was generally supported by one or two *assessori* directly involved in the process, while the rest of the executive and the council kept at a distance, between scepticism and outright ostracism. Politics, with its need for visibility, seems to struggle to understand the advantages of a participatory and long-term approach to planning. Greater support came from within the public administration, especially where there were some highly committed and innovative individuals. Notwithstanding some initial resistance, the public administration is slowly adopting a more open and integrated approach to planning and service delivery, particularly within those departments, such as Social Policies, which are at the forefront of service delivery and have a more direct relationship with citizens. The presence of internal leaders committed to the process, such as the CEO of the SP office, was pivotal to ensure coordination, to motivate staff, and to support them through change.

One of the main constraints was certainly the lack of coordination and a different *modus operandi* between tiers of government, which can determine fragmentation of local initiatives and hinder the credibility of the local government. The Province did not participate in the elaboration of the SP, but had the political and financial authority to undermine it.

Thus, with regard to the three dimensions of the dependent variable (formation of the collective actor, democratic process, and implementation), the local leadership delivered mixed results. It failed to create those identity incentives which could have fostered a collective actor. In a context where the Province is the main institutional interlocutor, as it holds decision-making and financial power, local private stakeholders, albeit interested in collective reflection on the future of the city, did not perceive SP as a substantive decision-making arena. These were precisely the stakeholders whose support the local leadership believed it needed to increase its legitimacy and balance of power vis-à-vis the Province. Consequently the participatory process did not prove as inclusive of smaller interests as it could have been, given the rich social fabric. A more open approach could have enriched the forums and workshops with new ideas and resources that might have given greater substantiveness and originality to the overall vision and perhaps contributed to forming a collective actor, although with different interests from those envisaged by the administration. The latter did not feel it needed to increase its legitimacy with the city at large, since everything works in Trento and local institutions engage with civil society through other channels. It chose to focus on those actors that it believed could support its own emancipation effort from the Province, as in a trial of strength. However, the Province's involvement in, and support for, the process, were key factors to ensure private actors' commitment and the overall success of SP. As local elites also struggled to communicate the rationale underpinning SP convincingly to local politicians (i.e. councillors and political parties), the political focus faded away, leaving the SP in the hands of efficient public services, which

were ensured the implementation of smaller measures already integrated within ordinary administration.

# **Chapter 4**

# **PratoAgenda:** Between Weak Leadership And Strong Neighbourhood Associations

Prato, in the ordinary status Region of Tuscany, has only been a provincial capital since 1992, as it was previously part of the province of Florence. It has long been at the centre of a textile district, which has been often considered as a paradigmatic case of all Italian industrial districts (see Bellandi and Trigilia 1991; Becattini 2000; Bacci and Bellandi 2007). The district has been deeply weakened by the current crisis and it has developed into an ever complex reality where legal and informal enterprises coexist, and, next to the historical textile system traditionally characterising the local economy, the clothing industry is now increasingly controlled by the growing Chinese community (Toccafondi 2010).

The need to address the deep social and economic crisis was behind the decision to start the SP process in 2004, on the initiative of the newly elected mayor, who had previous planning experience at the regional level. Although it remained a formal process, the SP significantly contributed to highlighting the need for an update of the old Town Plan, just as a new regional law on Urban Structural Planning (USP) had been enacted. Under the new bill town planning, which should now be conceived as a participatory process, goes beyond the mere urban aspect to encompass the environment, the economy, and the social repercussions of planning interventions.

The regional tier played a major role in encouraging Prato's USP in 2007, which also employed the new regional law on participation to coordinate the participatory process. Thus, contrary to Trento, here the regional level strongly encouraged a participatory approach to planning. As these two plans – SP and USP - are inherently interlinked, this chapter will examine both processes (although the focus is primarily on SP).

The region of Tuscany has long been a stronghold of the Left and is often held as an example of good governance. However, in recent years Prato's left-wing coalition has been crippled by deep internal divisions. The highly charged socio-political context and internal political feuds undoubtedly affected the legitimacy of the administration and in particular of the mayor, who was isolated within his own majority and eventually did not run for a second term in the 2009 elections. This contributed to the historical defeat of left-wing parties and inevitably killed momentum and support for the wave of participatory plans. The new right-wing administration - the first in 63 years - does not seem interested in continuing the work carried out by the previous government and, at a time of unprecedented economic crisis, planning appears as a luxury while priority is given to ordinary administration. However, bottom-up initiatives have capitalised on the window of opportunity represented by the change of government and have renewed local interest in participatory mechanisms.

In Prato the ruling party's political infighting catalysed political interest, while the mayor was increasingly isolated. This negatively affected the legitimacy of SP, as the local community was already sceptical following previous governance initiatives that did not produce the expected results. The formation of the collective actor was thus jeopardised, as the process was perceived as formalistic and little-inclusive.

Findings presented here are based on official documents, newspaper articles and 46 semi-structured interviews with actors involved in both the SP and USP process.<sup>105</sup> The first section describes the local socio-economic structure and political system, while the second and third sections focus on the SP and the USP respectively, the rationale behind these governance mechanisms, the expectations and the actual results and repercussions in terms of local policies and local democracy.

# The Socio-Economic Context

Prato grew up around private textile factories and its urban development was characterised by a *laissez-faire* attitude on the part of local government in order to encourage local industries. The concept of *mixité* (Secchi 1996; Mariotti 1988) has often been employed to describe this town. It refers to a strong interconnection between residential areas and (polluting) industrial production, causing excessive overload of the plumbing system and the road network (Bressan et al 2007). The city, whose population doubled between 1951 and 1971 from 77,631 to 143,232 (PratoAgenda 2004)<sup>106</sup> reaching 188,579 inhabitants in recent years (statistica.comune.prato.it), has experienced regular immigration flows since the post-war period from southern Italy and, particularly in the past few decades, from abroad. Immigrants today represent over 13 percent of Prato's population and the Chinese community is the most numerous (Bressan and Radini 2010). Prato has the highest number of foreign nationals in Tuscany, as a proportion of its population (PratoAgenda 2004).

The Chinese community, mostly coming from the Zhejiang province (and in particular from the city and district of Wenzhou) (Ceccagno 2010), has created its own shadow clothing district, which exploits the labour of the numerous undeclared immigrants. The Chinese who are legally registered are 12,000, but the illegal ones are at least 25,000 (Corriere della Sera 06-11-2010). As the post-Fordist de-industrialisation process advanced, several local entrepreneurs began to rent out to the new Chinese immigrants the old factories that had to be closed down. They all settled around the so-called Macrolotto o and via Pistoiese, an area bordering the town centre, which has recently turned into a "Chinatown" (Johanson et al 2010). Successive administrations were unable or unwilling to control such developments, as they represented an easy and lucrative way out for local manufacturers forced to close down their business. Thus, rather than opting for a reconversion of these buildings led by public institutions, local government closed an eye, contributing to the development of the Chinese informal economy. In the face of the difficulties experienced by the local industry,<sup>107</sup> the Chinese district is flourishing notwithstanding the crisis. Its competitiveness is mostly based on low-cost labour and this is causing resentment among the *Pratesi* and fuelling social conflicts.

The historical trust in the future and in progress that had always characterised the *Pratesi* has started to deteriorate. Their optimism has cracked. And their fears have been channelled in a very ideological way against immigrants, the Chinese, as if they were the cause of their inability to replicate the splendours of the past. They [the Chinese] have become a scapegoat for our inability to positively interact with the present. [PR15 - Trade Union]

Conflicts have so far been contained by sections of a rich social fabric eager to avoid unbridgeable distances between the two communities (Spini 2007) but Chinese immigration is perceived to be a threat by the town's several medium-sized enterprises. However, the Chinese community predominantly focuses on clothing rather than textile. The challenge is then to continue to support the manufacturing tradition while understanding the transformation of the district. The textile and clothing industries tend to offer developing countries a comparative advantage since they require low-skilled labour. Prato's textile district has long struggled to maintain its competitiveness, but in the post-war period when the district started to thrive thanks to the *cardato* (a fabric made through recycling) the *Pratesi* became the "Chinese of Europe" and put out of business many of their competitors in other European industrial cities, such as Manchester.

The idea of linking the two production lines, the Chinese clothing industry and the Pratese textile district, which in theory could be complementary, is supported by many sides (Toccafondi 2010; PR5; PR19). It is however difficult to put in practice, because of the difference in terms of quality and price (PR35). Perhaps promoting them as complementary districts could represent an effective strategy to encourage the legalisation of black market labour, but to date only one Chinese enterprise is regularly registered with the local industry association (Unione Industriali Prato): *Giupel*, owned by Xu Qui Lin, well known in Prato as Giulini.<sup>108</sup> The Chinese community in Prato tends to be secluded and lacks accountable representatives or spokespersons, but to date local institutions have made few serious efforts to engage with it. Dialogue between the two communities has been patchy at best, and the hope is that second generation Chinese might eventually be able to bridge the gap. However, Junjy Bai, president of the association Associna, when interviewed by Il Corriere (Corriere della Sera 06-11-2010) argued that there was an increasing distance between the two communities. The most vulnerable victims of this situation, he added, are second generation Chinese, who, having been raised in Prato with similar values to the young *Pratesi*, often feel rejected and discriminated against.

The inability of successive administrations to act in a decisive manner and address economic and immigration issues partly explains the victory of the centre-right coalition in June 2009, after 63 years of left-wing governments. Prato was traditionally a stronghold of the Left and part of the so-called red belt (*zona rossa*), dominated by the Communist party (PCI) during the First Republic. The city has developed a corporatist model based on effective negotiations and collective bargaining between the industry associations, representing the several entrepreneurs of the area, and the trade unions, which enjoyed enough leverage to secure the highest worker salaries in Italy. The tripartite alliance of the PCI, the trade unions and the industry associations proved instrumental in ensuring a thriving district, which made Prato one of the richest cities in the region, while successive administrations tried to favour the interests of entrepreneurs, even when this translated into a disordered urban development. Renowned Italian architect Bernardo Secchi drew the last Town Plan (1993/96), but that was never implemented and was instead altered through several zoning variances signed off by the local Town Planning Department.

220 zoning variances were made on Prato's current Town Plan, which means that it is totally arbitrary. The public services won't tell you, but when you work through variances, it means that it's all arbitrary. If there are 220 variances, even if they are published, who's going to check? There is no public monitoring. Hence it is arbitrary. [PR9 - Architect]

During the last administration the left-wing coalition was weakened by internal conflicts. The new Democratic Party (PD), established in 2007 after the merging of Margherita (mainly former Christian Democrats) and Democracy of the Left (one of the numerous rebrandings of the old Communist Party), never resolved the differences between these two factions. Already in 2004, prior to the birth of the PD, internal divisions meant that Democracy of the Left was unable to agree on a mayoral candidate. The name of Marco Romagnoli was eventually "suggested" by the then regional president, Marini, also from Prato and former mayor of the city. Romagnoli, an expert in planning, had long been living in Florence, where he worked as a regional government CEO.<sup>109</sup> Although highly respected for his long-term experience, he found himself isolated within his majority and was perceived to be "a foreigner" by the local community.<sup>110</sup> He followed a controversial administration, which had implemented several contested planning decisions favouring big business and eroding the environment (PR9). Thus, from the start he was in a very difficult position for reconciling existing divisions and simultaneously building momentum and cohesion around the season of participatory plans he intended to launch. Being a technocrat more than a politician he struggled to communicate his vision of the city and the whole administration was often accused by the local

media of being far removed from the "real" people, an attitude that contributed to jeopardising the participatory process.

As an administration, and a political elite, it was a bit closed, they did not pay enough attention to what was happening in town. There was a stand-offish attitude, because they believed that in Prato the Left would always win. The electoral result in the end proved them wrong. [PR10 - Editor of local newspaper]

While trade unions, industry associations and several structured social actors nevertheless showed support for the administration, dialogue with neighbourhood associations proved extremely challenging. Prato vaunts numerous active associations that contribute to enriching the social fabric, although the deterioration of the industrial district has partly fragmented the local community. As new political parties are unable to channel participation, neighbourhood movements, often based around single issues, are filling the participatory vacuum.

During the first few years of the Romagnoli administration, several of these associations were involved in a participatory process to decide on the redevelopment of a square, *Piazza Mercatale*. A project was collectively elaborated, but the administration – which lacked the resources to finance it - decided to leave it aside and proceeded with a different project put forward by ASM (Ambiente Servizi Mobilità - Environment Services Mobility), a company under municipal control. This project entailed the building of an underground car park and cutting down the trees in the square, but all the neighbourhood associations involved in the participatory process rose against the decision. There were attempts by the administration at placating them by proposing some alterations. "Mercatale, ahead but with caution. Among many perplexities, the project has been altered to make the associations happy", headlined Il Tirreno (24-02-2007). Although the administration's project would have had no negative aesthetic or economic impact, since new trees would have been planted and the underground car park would have helped to relieve traffic congestion, the associations never accepted the fact that they had been bypassed and their trust towards the administration was fatally compromised. They thus became weary of all new participatory mechanisms. The *Mercatale* project was finally put aside, when even the regional government, which had to intervene at the request of the

associations, suggested so. "Suddenly the *Mercatale* question has been frozen [...] But don't dare talking about a u-turn: in the rooms of Town Hall they say it's 'an afterthought in order to review in a coherent manner the complexity of the urban transformation" (La Nazione 06-06-2007).

By the end of the administration prior to Romagnoli's, following the constant erosion of the environment and the transformation of productive areas through bad planning, the political class felt the need to regain some support and they had the idea of redeveloping squares around the city through a participatory process. They had no money, people mobilised and participated, but then nothing happened. Then people rightly said, "I'm not going to participate again. Why did you call me? To take the mik?" With this administration it was really an operation of political speculation. It was rhetorical demagogy. [PR9 -Architect]

# The Strategic Plan: Expectations and Outcomes *The Rationale*

SP was launched in 2004 (Il Tirreno 28-10-2004); the mayor initially championed the process, assisted by the director of the Local Development Department, the assessore for Local Development and a local research institute, IRIS. The rationale underpinning the plan was to respond to the challenge of the urban transition of an industrial district in the doldrums, through a process that included all local institutional, private and social interests (Pasqui et al 2010). The social crisis triggered by immigration flows also needed addressing, but traditional negotiations needed to be reinvigorated by also inviting new social actors to the table. The administration conceived the process as a Convention of all major actors to find solutions and decide together whether Prato could afford to remain a manufacturing town or whether it should choose a different development path, based on tourism and services. Notwithstanding the contraction of manufacturing and the textile industry<sup>111</sup>, while the growth in services has been constant, the city still remains an industrial hub where the textile industry continues to represent nearly 40 percent of the economy (PratoAgenda 2004)

By 2004, several other Italian and European cities had started their SP process and the Network of Strategic Cities had already been established, thus encouraging policy transfer (Wolman and Page 2002). The imitation factor certainly played a role, as the nearby city of Florence had also launched

its SP. Although, as mentioned above, the mayor was an expert in planning, it soon appeared that the process lacked focus and coherence. Several documents were produced on Prato's economy and its social context, but very few substantial proposals emerged from the working groups, which some felt turned into endless "talk for talking's sake" (PR5), while meetings were held during working hours preventing many among smaller organisations from attending regularly.

*PratoAgenda* [Prato's SP] took place at the Pecci Museum [the museum of contemporary art]. This is a place where the *Pratesi* don't even go when there is an exhibition. Clearly they were not going to go there to hear someone talking to them about how good it is to invest in knowledge and that the new economy won't be textiles but imagination. [PR9 - Architect]

One of the characterising aspects of SP is the fact that it offers the space for diverse stakeholders to elaborate projects together. Similarly to the case of Trento, also in Prato most project ideas were long-standing proposals which pre-dated the plan. The meetings mainly served to "popularise" them. Already before the process started, the industry association had 27 projects that it intended to put forward at the meetings (La Nazione 21-11-2004). What became the flagship project (the redevelopment of an area called Ex-Banci, which will be described below) had been in the backburner for several years. The SP became an opportunity to intercept all these projects and put them together within a coherent vision of the city. While this is not a negative thing in itself, expectations were different and some of the less structured actors felt bypassed.

The main limitation of Prato's plan was that the elaboration phase was not opened up enough. There were projects on the table that were already at an advanced stage. In the end the risk was that it would become a consultation exercise. At these meetings there were five presentations of existing projects and we just had to listen. [PR13 – Environmental Association]

In general, although a website was set up to facilitate communication and interaction, the wider public was not aware of the process and the local media quickly lost interest and limited their contribution to publishing notifications on new events, as instructed by the local government's press office. The fact that the mayor was politically weak and felt under constant scrutiny, not only by the opposition but also by part of his own majority, meant that political support for the process faded quickly.

Little support, little commitment. There were many important problems facing the city, but [politicians] chose to address the emergencies rather than working through strategic planning. This was disappointing, because in the end this plan didn't even exist in terms of local awareness. [PR4 – Local think tank]

#### **The Process**

Prato's SP was called *Agenda Strategica* and according to the official document (PratoAgenda 2004) it was the necessary framework to innovate urban policies, create synergies and enhance cooperation among actors through using the existing networks that already characterised the district. The Plan reasserted Prato's identity as a manufacturing city and stated the objective of reinforcing the production chain and supporting innovation within the district. A strong commitment to strong participation and an intense marketing and communication campaign as an integral part of the plan were optimistically emphasised in the preliminary documents.

Three phases were identified: context analysis, the elaboration of the plan, and the implementation of the strategies agreed, whereby the local government and in particular the Local Development Department would lead the process, assisted by external experts. The working groups were organised around four main themes: urban planning, sustainability and innovation (focussing on economics, logistics, energy, the environment, and innovation and research), culture (cultural services, education, and tourism) and finally welfare, identity, and citizenship. The preliminary meeting took place on 20 September 2004 and experts from Formez were also invited. About 500 people were involved in 26 meetings between November 2004 and June 2005, although only a few attended regularly. A series of 40 workshops and institutional meetings were also organised and, according to official documents, over 800 people took part (PratoAgenda 2004).

The final document includes several studies on the local context and the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, which identifies the challenges of globalisation for the local system and the need to invest in the *knowledge* economy. Protection of the environment and industrial innovation emerged as the main priorities, but the emphasis was also on enhancing an alternative image of the city, complementary to its manufacturing vocation: for instance, the renowned museum of contemporary art, built on land donated to the local government by the owner of a woollen mill, Luigi Pecci, was identified as pivotal in helping to relaunch Prato as a centre of contemporary art in Tuscany (Marinetto 2008).<sup>112</sup>

The document, which was discussed and voted by the council in September 2005, fails to elaborate concrete projects and its main strength lies in the rich complementary documentation on the local economy and social context. La Nazione on 23-09-2005 reports an interview with one local councillor (independent), "I did classical studies and I have a degree, but I didn't understand much of that document. The Red Brigades' leaflets were easier to understand." The reaction of the local media was fairly negative. La Nazione wrote on 23-09-2005, "Over one year of work through meetings and reflections translated into an 80 pages report, which is unreadable and presents no relevant innovation. The experts reassure us that this is how you write this kind of documents. But the distance between the report and the real problems that the *Pratesi* have to face every day is frankly abyssal." Only very general ideas were put forward. The emphasis was on the manufacturing vocation but on a metropolitan scale (Prato-Florence-Pistoia), whereby Prato would play a strategic role within central Tuscany, particularly in terms of logistics, while benefiting from the powerful image that Florence enjoys worldwide. The strengthening of the intermodal and logistics centre thus emerged as pivotal (PratoAgenda 2004).

The urban aspect, here as in Trento, was prioritised and the redevelopment of a disused industrial area – Ex-Banci – stood out as the central project. This was however a project long in the pipeline and also became the central idea around which the new USP (Urban Structural Plan) developed a few years later. The SP became therefore an instrument to communicate this project to the city and legitimise it. The project envisages the transformation of the area, partly owned by Consiag (an enterprise under municipal control). The idea was to build an exhibition centre, which would have initially been linked to Florence's own exhibition centre, while the main building, *Fortezza da Basso*, was closed for renovation. The project included a master plan for an area of 30 hectares (the part owned by Consiag), signed by renowned *starchitect* Massimiliano Fuksas, who was the winner of a competition called by Consiag.

The project was allocated €10 million of regional funds as part of a regional programme called PIUSS (Integrated Urban Plans of Sustainable Development), funded through Objective 2 structural funds (Il Tirreno 21-11-2004). The rationale behind the PIUSS programme was to redevelop disused buildings and factories to promote a development model based on "knowledge" through urban, cultural, and environmental projects. The overall cost of the redevelopment of the Ex-Banci area or *Parco Expò*, whose feasibility and benefits in a period of recession have been questioned by many sides, would amount to hundreds of millions of Euros. However, the former mayor and the architects working on the project [PR9] were confident about its positive repercussions, and the *Cassa di Depositi e Prestiti* - a joint-stock company under public control – was interested in financing it.

The *Cassa Depositi e Prestiti* was ready to finance this project for €100 million. It was a very difficult, complicated project, which clearly needed the support of the community. The trade and industry associations were enthusiastic. It could have really given some hope, a new vision of [development for] Prato. Our position was that when there is a crisis you have to rise to the challenge, if we're in a corner we have to start attacking. [PR35 - Former Mayor]

The new centre-right administration, elected in 2009, refused to go ahead with the project and argued that it was as majestic as it was useless. As they were unable to renegotiate the terms of the regional funds Prato eventually lost the money already awarded. Although the objective of these participatory mechanisms is to produce shared policies for local development, beyond political divides so as to ensure continuity, clearly it is politically difficult for a new majority to support specific projects that voters ascribe to the previous administration. In February 2011 the right-wing administration proposed the redevelopment of the Ex-Banci area with a new project, possibly more majestic (and useless?) than the one they had dismissed: an exhibition centre that would become a museum of all the different cultural and ethnic traditions that characterise Prato today. As reported by a local newspaper, the mayor proposed, "I'd like to ask all local administrations in the world to send us one kilo of earth to be placed around the Ex-Banci area, so as to have a small-scale world here in Prato." [La Nazione 15-02-11].

One of the main limits of the SP was its inability to involve the immigrant community in the elaboration of the plan, when, as examined above, this community represents an important and growing part of the productive sectors. This is particularly striking since much of the preliminary documentation of the SP as well as the SWOT analysis highlight the threats and the opportunities that the Chinese district in particular could represent for Prato's economy. Furthermore, some of the redevelopment projects included in the plan concern the very areas where the Chinese community has settled, such as the *Macrolotto o*. As political elites are well aware of the difficulties in, and the urgency of, engaging the Chinese community, which was not going to spontaneously take part in the process, perhaps greater effort should have been invested in outreaching exercises through informal forums held in Prato's Chinatown, face-to-face interviews etc., so as to encourage some level of involvement.

#### **Building A Collective actor: Lights And Shadows**

The idea of a collective response to the crisis was welcome, albeit with some scepticism because of lack of trust towards local institutions (following the disappointing outcomes of previous administrations). As the mayor, under pressure from his own party, withdrew his support, at least on a financial level if not in rhetoric, the process went ahead thanks to the commitment of the Local Development CEO and the local think tank IRIS that intercepted EU funds,<sup>113</sup> by linking the SP to an existing project (District).<sup>114</sup> In Prato, a mayor expert in planning could have played a major role in coordinating the process, while a social context used to negotiations and cooperation should have been fertile soil for a participatory approach. Instead pre-existing conflicts with the local civil society, weak political commitment and deep divisions within the party in government translated into poor coordination and the absence of a unitary vision. It was soon clear to participants and the local media that the meetings would hardly produce any substantive policies.

We reached a point when we lost an overall vision. Everyone specialised in their own subject, but there was no coordination to help us reflect together in view of synergic implementation. [PR5 – Local think tank]

Within such a context, a collective actor would struggle to come by. There were, however, important networking efforts in terms of policy design, as a research system was put in place that involved think tanks such as IRIS and *Tecnotessile*, which helped to elaborate policies. The SP process facilitated the integration between local planning and European programmes by putting emphasis on new technologies in the textile industry and the transition towards the *knowledge* economy (Pasqui et 2010). In this respect there are two interesting projects included in the final SP. Texmedin<sup>115</sup> is an EU funded project which aims at creating "transnational clusters to increase the competitiveness of the partners' territories in the textile and clothing sector by fostering the focus on quality, design and innovation" (<u>http://www.texmedin.eu/</u>). In Prato the project was coordinated by a local think tank that carries out research on new technologies for the textile and clothing industry, *Tecnotessile*. The second project concerns Prato's Museum of Textiles (*Il Museo del tessuto*). This museum saw its role enhanced through the SP as a research centre and as an agent of development of the "fashion system" of the territory.

For us this plan entailed a reflection on our role and made us work with a department [Local Development] which we had had no relationship with prior to the process. This is a process that we are continuing even with this new administration – perhaps with less intensity and not in the same planned manner, but this channel remains open. [PR18 - Museum of Textiles]

One of the most interesting networking experiences facilitated by the SP developed as a bottom-up process involving a few stakeholders that shared the common objective of encouraging local and sustainable agriculture. The associations initially gathered together after meeting at the SP working groups. They initially formed a forum of the various associations interested in the project, coordinated by an architect working at the University of Florence but originally from Prato (PR1). The forum included environmental organisations such as *Legambiente* and *Slow-Food*, and a group promoting sustainable farming (GAS), but also institutional actors such as the local sections of the national associations of farmers (*CIA* and *Coldiretti*), and the South ward council covering a large green area on the outskirts of the city.

Despite its fast urban and industrial development, Prato still has over 3000 hectares of green land, which still hosts some small-scale farming requiring new environmental policies to guarantee its preservation. The associations intended to promote the idea of a Farming Park (*Parco Agricolo*) to protect the environment and invest in high quality small-scale farming of zero miles local and traditional produce. The idea was already part of a 2003 provincial plan, but it was a bottom-up effort that brought it back on the political agenda and developed it into a feasible project. In 2007 the forum officially registered as an association of associations to acquire greater legitimacy and coherence when interfacing with institutions (http://www.parcodellapiana.it) "Today the association has its own statute. [...] And the SP allowed us to meet, which is not a small thing." [PR20]

The most important aspect is that all these associations sat for the first time around a table, at least in my experience, to work on a common objective. There are conflicts but we are also united on this project that we call *Parco Agricolo*. [PR21 – Environmental Association]

The project of the *Parco Agricolo* is directly linked to a regional project, *Il Parco della Piana*, covering green land in the metropolitan area of Florence-Prato-Pistoia to redevelop a vast plain, which also includes the area of the *Parco Agricolo* (Il Tirreno 14-11-2008; PR3). The regional government and the provincial governments of Prato and Florence are the main institutional actors involved in this metropolitan project. This represents an important experience of multilevel governance which goes beyond institutional actors, since several associations are involved in what appears to be an inclusive participatory process.<sup>116</sup> The agencies coordinating the participatory process on behalf of the regional government and the provincial administrations are *Sociolab* and *Avventura Urbana*. They explained how the process was organised,

We organised a series of interviews and public assemblies. We also had a mobile information point to collect citizens' ideas around the area, so as to reach out to those people that tend not to participate. We organised an event of great media impact to launch the process, the Festival of Creativity. About 3600 people came to visit us and they had the opportunity to visualise the project of the park, identify the different commercial and farming activities. They could all leave comments and write recommendations. [PR3]

However, conflicts are rife even on this apparently successful project. In the park there is an airport that the regional government intends to expand. This caused many to believe that the redevelopment of the green land was simply window-dressing to sweeten the bitter pill of the airport (http://wwfprato.altervista.org/index.php/aree-protette/103-parco-della-

<u>piana-o-effimera-espansione-di-un-aeroporto-che-comunque-non-potra-</u> <u>mai-essere-un-grande-aeroporto.html</u>; La Nazione 15-04-2011).

# In Search Of A Leadership

Similarly to what happened in Trento, political parties and the local council tended to remain at the margins of Prato's SP process. They perceived SP as a "pie in the sky" exercise and a publicity stunt to increase the mayor's popularity (PR16; PR26; PR31; PR38; PR39; PR42; PR43; PR46). Councillors in particular often lack political expertise and parties no longer offer the institutional space to engage in constructive political debates, further worsening already low levels of political and administrative competence.

Political parties perceived it [SP] as something abstruse and far away, thinking that politics was elsewhere, a system of relations, alliances, responses on very specific, corporative issues. So they viewed it as intellectual stuff, nothing to do with the real world. [PR35 - Former Mayor]

Several among the councillors interviewed believed that as yet there were no instruments in place that could guarantee the representativeness of these new political arenas, which, from a politician's point of view, can at best aspire to act as consultative bodies.

I'd never dare to say no to popular initiatives but I might vote against them in the council. Because I have a responsibility towards those who voted for me and I don't know whether they might agree or not. A neighbourhood association is only part of a city, no matter how important. How many people might take part in a participatory process? 100? Still less than the votes I got. [...] I think these things should be kept as consultative instruments, also to develop a civic conscience among citizens, which at the moment is nonexistent. [PR42 – Councillor, majority]

There was some degree of organisational learning, as public services had to get used to the idea of participatory planning. In Prato the Local Development Department and the Town Planning Office had long been grouped in one department. The Romagnoli administration decided to separate them by establishing a new office which would focus on economic and strategic development and which would be in charge of coordinating the SP process. Setting up this new office was instrumental in supporting the SP process and ensuring that coordination mechanisms among all participants were in place throughout. The presence of this office also ensured that, even when the mayor withdrew financial support, the process could continue. However, some interviewees, particularly from within public services, argued that the rationale behind the new office was entirely political, as a way of distributing roles within the majority and appease contrasts between opposing factions.

There was no integration between these two departments. There's always been this idea of competition between economic development and town planning, particularly at the political level [between the two *assessori*]. In fact with the last administration [Romagnoli] what used to be one department was divided into two. And they ended up sponsoring two very different projects for the exhibition centre [Ex-Banci]. It was pretty much a fight with cold steel. We got close to seeing blood running. [PR14 – Town Planning Office]

In fact while the *assessore* for Local Development came from the old Democracy of the Left, the assessore for Town Planning was an old Margherita member, and they each had a very different understanding of the future development of the city. The project of the Ex-Banci area represented the link between the SP (sponsored by the Local Development Department) and the USP (coordinated by the Town Planning Office), which was launched in 2008. The administration made the questionable choice to appoint two different teams of architects to work on the project. On the one side Urban, a public consortium which was also involved in the SP process, and on the other side urban planners from Florence that also coordinated the participatory process of the USP, as explained in the next section. Each team elaborated its own project of the Ex-Banci redevelopment, which reflected a very different understanding of the exhibition centre and its role within the city. As the architects from Urban had been directly involved in the elaboration of the SP, this only served to exacerbate contrasts between the two teams and the two public services they referred to, further diminishing the synergy between the two plans (and the two departments).<sup>117</sup>

Although the SP was adopted, at least in rhetoric, as an instrument of governance to inform all future policies, it did not carry enough legitimacy to actually impact on working practices within public services and improve inter-sectoral communication and cooperation.

The public sector has always had its autonomy and was not interested [in the SP]. They never accepted the idea of having to refer to the SP for their activities [PR6 - *Assessore* for Local Development].

Some sectors, such as the Town Planning Office, displayed limited awareness about what a participatory process entailed and strongly resented interference from citizens and experts in what they viewed as highly technical issues. Several local government officers and CEOs have been in their role for decades and this might contribute to their limited propensity to any external innovation, whether from politics or civil society.

Each office went its own way. XXX [CEO of the Town Planning Office] felt that his "territory" had been invaded, the *assessore* a bit less since he had been nominated only recently. [PR23 – Academic Expert]

In such a conflictual context, an inclusive and facilitative leadership able to foster identity incentives could have hardly emerged. The participatory process in this environment only served to escalate conflicts.

#### Multilevel Governance, Or Not

The regional government of Tuscany has long been at the forefront in promoting governance mechanisms in the face of a cultural context traditionally characterised by strong parochialism. Among the several attempts at multilevel governance of the past few years, the idea of creating a metropolitan area including Florence, Prato, and Pistoia received great attention and a protocol of agreement was signed in May 2010 to encourage coordination and common policies that promote tourism through a joint fund of at least €200,000 per year. This was welcomed by local media. La Nazione on 27 May 2010 wrote of "a Copernican revolution", a strategy "to relaunch the town of textile among the great capitals of tourism." Furthermore, a few initial agreements were signed to promote collaboration between the two intermodal structures of Livorno e Prato, as there is a clear perception of the need to create "governance systems" beyond the commune.

These admirable efforts often clash against the parochialism of the communes. In Prato the relationship between City Hall and a young Province in search of political identity fuelled conflict. The Province struggled to get involved in the SP but later organised its own working groups with associations and institutions, such as the District Working Group (*Tavolo del Distretto*). This was the provincial attempt to respond to the crisis and "relaunch the *Prato question* asking for greater support for those who have

lost their job but also for concrete initiatives for local enterprises" (president of the Province interviewed by Il Tirreno 25 May 2010).

Local government in Tuscany treasures its own autonomy and Prato resented the Region's interference in its USP, as explained in the next section. Unlike Sardinia and Trentino which are special status Regions and enjoy greater powers vis-à-vis Central State but also over local authorities within their borders, in Tuscany local government is politically very strong and the Region has limited coordination capacity. As the Tuscan association of communes [ANCI] commented, "We are in a very difficult economic season and the ambition of the new [regional] president is that he will be the mayor of Tuscany. But here we are splattered. Atomised." This also explains why the Province and the Region had very marginal roles within the SP.

# From SP to the Urban Structural Plan: Critical Democracy vs. Incumbent Democracy

In the past decade Prato has witnessed the birth of a high number of neighbourhood associations. The association of *Piazza Mercatale*, which was formed in protest against a project concerning the town's largest square (see above), was particularly militant against the administration. Its leader became the point of reference for several other associations in their battle against participatory mechanisms that they perceived to be tokenistic exercises. Following the disillusion with the participatory process for the redevelopment of *Piazza Mercatale*, these neighbourhood associations set out to boycott the new participatory processes opened for the USP, while starting an alternative participatory proposals.

Tuscany, with law 1/2005, has transformed town planning by substituting the traditional land use regulations (*Piano regolatore generale*) with two new sets of regulations: the USP, which sets the overall strategic lines for long term planning, and the urban regulations, which regulate land settlements through five years plans. Before urban regulations can be approved, the USP, which represents the general framework, has to be elaborated. The USP goes much beyond the old land use plan, since it defines the characteristics of the territory, the resources of the local community as well as land use and environmental protection regulations. It identifies which transformations will be permitted, by dividing the territory into unities and sub-systems. It also has to consider landscape, living standards, mobility, the economy, labour, public services. Under this new law, administrators and citizens should work together to elaborate the plan through a participatory process.

The regional government has invested greatly in citizen participation and is one of the first regions in Italy to have passed a law that institutionalises it, whereby local administrations and/ or residents, including immigrants, can request that participatory decision-making processes opened on regional and local issues are any (www.regione.toscana.it). Law 69/2007 was elaborated through a bottom-up process, which was intended to give procedural form to the normative principles conceptualized by the literature on deliberative democracy (Floridia 2007). The regional government offers to fund participatory mechanisms on the agreement that the process is completed within 6 months and the final decision is binding.

As noted above, planning in Prato has been a messy affair in the past few decades, as administrators have favoured private interests. Thus, in 2008, the regional government strongly recommended that the new laws on USP and participation were experimented in the city. A few urban planners from the University of Florence were asked to coordinate the USP process. This was articulated in two phases: a first phase of 'active listening' to the local community and of interactive construction of the plan, which took place between April and December 2008; a second 'deliberative' phase to discuss the founding principles of the new Town Plan, which was concluded with a deliberative Town Meeting on 28 March 2009. The first phase of the process was aimed at collecting the numerous points of view of very diverse stakeholders, particularly those sectors of the population that are traditionally marginalized and poorly organized; several meetings and interviews helped to identify proposals and needs. The second phase was about conflict resolution through deliberation, so as to ensure shared solutions. One of the academics coordinating the process, an architect, also began to work on the technical plan in Prato's Town Planning Office and this

served to strengthen the link between the participatory process and the technical elaboration of the USP, to ensure participatory decisions were incorporated into the final plan.

However, the mayor did not enjoy enough legitimacy to sponsor the participatory process, particularly after the disappointing results of the SP. The academics from Florence lamented poor collaboration on the part of the local professionals that had previously been involved in the SP process. According to one interviewee (PR23), local architects and public officials refused to share results of the preliminary studies carried out for the SP, which could have been relevant to the USP. The Florentine experts felt ostracised; by the same token the SP team was convinced that the Florentines misunderstood the rationale of the process and that they were just interested in reporting economic statistics and attempting an unnecessary and "slavish analysis of the whole land registry back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century" (PR34). As there was limited communication between the two groups and the mayor was unable to act as a mediator, there was insufficient flow of information between the SP and the USP teams and the synergy between the two plans was thus jeopardised.

On their part the experts in charge of the participatory instruments failed to convey to the community the value of a participatory plan and to explain clearly how they intended to structure the process. As they were not from Prato, they were perceived by the community as outsiders and many local experts and public officials resented their interference in their own territory. Furthermore, the experts, initially unaware of the ongoing conflict between the administration and some neighbourhood associations, found themselves caught in between dynamics that they could not control.

We realised that there was deep resistance on the part of local associations to interact with us, not because we were bad and ugly, but because there was structured obstructionism against the administration. There was total lack of trust and an absolute de-legitimisation of the mayor, which resulted in an actual boycott. When we organized our meetings, there were people protesting outside. [PR23 – Academic Expert]

Political and bureaucratic resistance as well as the coordinators' excessive faith in the effectiveness of the theories behind participatory instruments negatively affected the process, fuelling confusion between communication, consultation and participation. The opposition in the

council was unsurprisingly vehement against the participatory meetings. The deputy secretary coordinator of Forza Italia (now PDL) talking to La Nazione about the USP said "Even the [political] majority recognises the limits of certain meetings, which are in fact melodramas financed with public money..." (09-07-2008).

The participatory law 69/2007 provides for the establishment of a guarantor of communication, who oversees the process, ensures fair and farreaching communication on all the events and outcomes, and promotes participation. As stressed by one of the experts (PR23), this is a key position to guarantee an inclusive and successful process. However, the Town Planning Office was dismissive and felt this appointment would be a simple formality. Following a first disastrous appointment, a second one was made by literally forcing an employee to cover for that role, in addition to her regular workload. As she did not really grasp the importance of her tasks, emails were often not sent to stakeholders, events were not advertised properly and, as the local media, following the disappointing outcomes of the SP process, were not always supportive of this experience, meetings often went unattended.

By the time the Town Meeting took place there was a hardening of positions, with the mayor refusing any contact with the neighbourhood movements, whose crusade against the USP and the Town Meeting (TM) received much attention from the two main local newspapers (Il Tirreno, La Nazione February-March 2009). In the end both the experts from Florence and the neighbourhood associations believed that the TM should be suspended, since the process had lost legitimacy within the community; they pleaded with the Regional guarantor<sup>118</sup> to halt the process. The regional guarantor refused and the TM went ahead. At this point the experts decided that, since they had been the target of so much discontent, they would involve a neutral third party that would organise the TM, a private agency specialised in participatory events, IDEAIS.

150 men and women took part in the TM (62.8 percent between 34 and 71 years of age, 33 percent between 16 and 33); they were randomly selected so as to be representative of Prato's population. The level of scepticism surrounding the event at this point was very high. When asked, "How much do you think you can influence the future of Prato?" a large group (31 percent) answered, "very little" (La Nazione 30-03-2009). IDEAIS decided to organise a one day event (rather than a two day event as originally planned) to save on financial resources; this, however, might have well reduced the impact and the level of awareness that the participants were able to acquire. The TM had been envisaged as the conclusive part of the participatory process, the final stage where to illustrate and discuss projects following the participatory meetings where these ideas and proposal had been collected and elaborated. However, the two phases were in fact disjointed and the TM only allowed for the discussion of very general issues.

During the TM the neighbourhood movements protested outside, in a clash between top-down participatory (or incumbent) democracy and critical democracy (Blaug 2002). The associations argued that not enough information was provided to the participants, which were not always well equipped to take part in the debate. While some members accepted the invitation of the *assessore* for Town Planning to act as observers at the TM, the rest organised a "garrison of counter information" just outside the sport centre where the TM took place, distributing informative leaflets to engage the people passing by. They prepared some questionnaires to test TM participants on their way out and claimed that very few were aware of the issues at stake and what the USP entailed.<sup>119</sup>

To date the USP has not been approved, as the change of administration in 2009 has certainly affected the implementation phase. The new centre-right government, although it is expected to conclude the process, might not take account of the participatory initiatives previously carried out. However, the change of government might have opened a new and unexpected window of opportunity for the associations. In the months following the TM, several neighbourhood movements, whose leaders are traditionally left voters, started meeting regularly and elaborated a series of proposals, which they submitted to the centre-right coalition once the latter was in office. The new government, which has never been in power before, has an interest in opening up to civil society to widen its support base and to compensate for its lack of administrative experience. In fact the *assessore* for Citizen Participation is actively supporting a new civic network, *Casa del*  *Cittadino* (Citizen's House) created by the neighbourhood movements with municipal funds but open to all local associations and citizens to discuss public policies. Seventy associations and civic lists spontaneously organized into a constituent assembly that produced a series of proposals to amend the existing Regulations on Citizen Participation of the town's statute. These were partly revised and finally approved by the local council, which added however several constraints. Participatory arenas can now be opened on the initiative of the administration or of citizens, although they will only have a consultative role and important limitations in terms of time (the participatory process needs to be completed within 90 days) and structure. The administration, however, has committed itself not to take any final decisions on issues under discussion by citizens, to consider citizen proposals and, if they are not accepted, to justify clearly why.

The project that we put forward [...] is the creation of this meeting place to bring together all the neighbourhood movements and citizen associations, the wider community, a sort of citizen council, but with a clear structure and rules, not just a random thing, as happened before. And the last, and most important, request we put forward is to amend the statute. All our efforts will be meaningful if we can change the regulations. [PR26 - Leader of neighbourhood association]

Although these associations could hardly claim to be representative, their leadership has enabled a new channel between citizens and institutions through opening up a participatory space where citizens and associations can bring issues to the attention of the city and the political elites. They have created an association of associations, PratoPartecipa, with its own website and Facebook page, and they organise regular meetings to discuss issues and elaborate policy proposals. These will automatically be debated by the council. PratoPartecipa's latest proposal, which has been welcomed by the current mayor, entails the establishment of a new figure, the Civic Observer (Osservatore civico) and its institutionalisation under the corpus of norms that regulate the USP. The function of civic observers will be to "regularly monitor the implementation of the USP, to propose and evaluate projects and to know in advance the administration's choices and intentions with regard to town planning" (Il Tirreno 22-01-12). The Local newspaper Il Tirreno has also launched a fortnightly column to facilitate communication between citizens and local politicians, called "You've got mail, assessore" (C'è *posta per l'assessore*). The mayor, through this new column, has already stated his support for the institutionalisation of the civic observers. "Of course I believe it is right that citizens actively participate and that they perform a control function on the implementation of the structural plan. I have already sent out instructions to study a formula to insert the figure of the civic observers in the statute of the plan" (Il Tirreno 22-01-12). A team of experts will elaborate the new norms which will then be discussed with the associations of *PratoPartecipa*.

### Conclusion

The case of Prato is particularly interesting in many respects. The context appeared highly favourable to participatory and governance mechanisms such as the SP and the USP. There were important issues that needed urgent and effective political action. In Trento the need for an SP was not entirely understood by local stakeholders, since the city is not facing particularly urgent challenges and the provincial level, which did not fully endorse the process, is generally viewed as the main institutional interlocutor on development policies. By contrast Prato is confronting important economic and social crises and it needed to elaborate a new strategy to overcome the recession and re-invent its economic structure. The social conflicts spurred by growing immigration flows had to be finally addressed. The private and social actors were committed to finding solutions, in a context where tripartite negotiations (trade unions, trade associations, and local government) have successfully encouraged economic development during the past century.

The mayor, an expert in planning with several years of experience at the regional level, initially acted as the committed sponsor of the process, assisted by the CEO of the new Local Development Department, also an expert in planning at the regional level. The social fabric, although it has been weakened by the crisis of the textile district and the restructuring of the old Communist Party which used to be the main channel of local participation through political circles and the so-called *case del popolo*, is still vibrant with several structured and citizen associations. Unlike the case of Trento, the Regional Government of Tuscany was highly supportive and offered a strong normative framework and financial incentives to sustain the participatory processes, even awarding funds to finance the flagship project; but local politics resented regional interferences, particularly on the USP.

However, many factors intervened to hinder the impact of this season of participatory plans, which overall lacked a vital ingredient: a leadership able to communicate identity incentives and encourage the formation of a collective actor, in a context of distrust and pre-existing conflicts between part of civil society and local institutions, and feuds within the ruling party. Gritty political conflicts weakened SP and were the main cause of the first ever defeat of the Left in local elections. As the mayor was isolated within his own majority, which felt he had been "imposed" upon the city by the regional government, he often shied away from taking strong stances. Complaints grew about dispersing resources on something like the SP which, like in all other cases, was generally perceived to be unsubstantial by political parties and the media. Thus, the mayor withdrew financial support. It was only because of the commitment of the CEO of the Local Development service and the think tank IRIS that the process went ahead.

The collective actor never emerged, the participatory process was perceived as non-inclusive and unsubstantial as a decision-making arena, and it soon lost legitimacy. Finally implementation of the flagship project, which had been endorsed by Region, was jeopardised by the change of government. Had a solid collective actor been developed around this project and the vision of the city's development it interpreted, the opposition would have find it difficult not to endorse the project. On the contrary, there was an important failure of the leadership in fostering and communicating a vision.

The council for the most part never shared or understood SP and perceived it as a wish list with limited impact on administrative life. If some level of scepticism was justified, since in the end the process produced few tangible results (but perhaps it was partly a case of self-fulfilling prophecy), generally councillors displayed limited awareness about the potentials of SP. The lack of political and administrative competence is certainly a hinder when it comes to complex governance and long-term planning.

Thus, a fractured political structure translated into the isolation of the mayor, who struggled to communicate identity incentives to the local community and was not able to continue to support the process in the face of political obstructionism even from within his own party. As political leadership faded away, this signalled to stakeholders that the process would turn into a formality, reinforcing the most sceptical views of the media and the local council. Internal political divisions and conflicts between the recently divided Local Development Department and Town Planning Office, each referring to a different political faction, contributed to hampering collaboration and synergy within public services.

One of the most remarkable aspects of this experience was the spontaneous bottom-up networking of social stakeholders, which developed during the meetings and outside of the institutional framework. As some environmental and farmers associations had a common objective in protecting green land on the outskirts of the city and enhancing sustainable farming, they formed a forum to elaborate policy proposals and later registered as an association of associations to facilitate interfacing with state institutions.

Both Trento and Prato's administrations showed limited enthusiasm for citizen participation, mainly because they did not need to build legitimacy with the city at large: in Trento everything works, in Prato the Left had been in power for over 60 years and was confident it would never lose an election in this communist stronghold. In Trento, smaller organisations were sidelined by stronger and highly structured interests, while the process eventually fell under the full control of an efficient local authority, which turned it into a governmental tool. In Prato, there was widespread distrust and irritation towards local institutions, following several failed attempts at governance processes and consecutive equally unresponsive administrations. The leadership was perceived by local stakeholders as incapable of addressing the conflicts with the growing immigrant community and the crisis of the district, which seemed irreversible. These dynamics spurred a bottom-up (re)action, which gained the limelight during the elaboration of the USP. As the new mayor was not able to manage the escalating situation and open a dialogue with local neighbourhood organisations, the whole process was perceived by associations as non-inclusive and inevitably exacerbated conflicts.

Single-issue neighbourhood associations have been mushrooming everywhere in Italy in the past 10 to 15 years. They generally organise against local urban projects, but dismissing these associations as a "Not-in-mybackyard" phenomenon would be to underestimate the growing distance between citizens and politics, to which the neighbourhood associations are a physiological reaction. In theory, the new participatory governance should help to bridge such distance. The example of Prato is emblematic of people's interest in participating, but the rhetoric and sanitised formality of top-down efforts alienated local associations, which perceived these mechanisms as tokenistic exercises. Whether these arrangements were intentionally tokenistic or not is beyond the point. The distrust on the part of the associations might have been justified by previous "top-down" participatory mechanisms whose outcomes were bypassed by the administration and which were unable to deliver the *demonstration effect* (Fung and Wright 2003), creating further disaffection. The fact that the participatory process linked to the USP was opened roughly one year from the end of mayor Romagnoli's first term reinforced the conviction within the community that this was just an attempt to increase political support.

The experts that coordinated the participatory events were from Florence and not entirely aware of some of the conflictive dynamics in town, hence they were unable to manage them. By this point, the administration was torn apart by internal divisions and the mayor struggled to communicate in an effective manner with the local community. By the end of the process (and with new elections looming), the mayor ceased all dialogue with the associations. By that point it was already widely known that the governing party would not support its incumbent mayor at the forthcoming elections; this further diminished the legitimacy of the process in the eyes of the associations. After the elections, as the city was still bamboozled by the surprise of having the first ever centre-right administration after 63 years of left-wing governments (which no one, not even the centre-right parties, expected) the associations joined forces and were proactive in organising a bottom-up participatory process, as they took advantage of the window of opportunity represented by the change of government. The recurrent question was whether these associations were at all representative of the wider population. They clearly are not, but by opening up a new deliberative space for all citizens and associations, whether structured or not, and by including several professionals, architects and engineers, they can provide local politics (which often lacks technical competence) and public services with alternative resources and valid knowhow. Politicians still seem to understand participatory arenas as consultative at best, but a public debate involving citizens and experts from civil society in an open and transparent fashion, sustained by the media attention that the new projects of *La Casa del Cittadino* and *PratoPartecipa* are enjoying, could foster both greater citizen empowerment and more accountable and efficient local government.

# **Chapter 5**

# Lecce: "Un Ponte Verso Lo Sviluppo Economico-Sociale-Culturale"<sup>120</sup>

In Lecce the Strategic Planning (SP) process was launched in 2005, as the Region decided to use SP as an instrument to invest EU structural funds. Lecce, with a population of 100,000, represents the main cultural and administrative centre of the Salento area, in the ordinary-status region of Puglia and, like most of the Italian South, it has long suffered from poor economic growth and decreasing financial capacity. After a long season of governance arrangements, which started in early 1990s with territorial pacts, SP gained popularity as an instrument to help cities and their surroundings to encourage economic and social development. The evident contradiction in Puglia's case emerges from the fact that, while SP is generally conceived as a voluntary instrument, here it was the regional government that strongly encouraged the creation of area-based agglomerations of municipalities, which would together elaborate an SP, making it a necessary requirement to access regional and European structural funds. This had pros and cons, inevitably affecting actors' motivations to participate as well as the nature of the SP projects.

Whereas the lack of coordination and clarity in the relationship with the regional level partly hindered results, surprisingly high levels of cooperation between the local and the provincial tiers, notwithstanding the different political colour, facilitated the elaboration of the plan through a fairly inclusive process. The interesting aspect of this case indeed lies in the emergence of a facilitative leadership through the coordinated work of the political sponsor, the mayor, and the administrative champion, the CEO of the SP office. Beyond effective results in terms of project implementation, which in this case strongly depended on regional transfers, the process, notwithstanding several shortcomings, fostered new cooperation between some associations and the local administration. Thus SP has, directly and indirectly, opened new channels between civil society and institutions through a series of redevelopment and cultural projects based on participatory methods, some of which were included in the final plan. Like in Trento, and contrary to Prato, leadership was strong and based on well coordinated work between politics, represented by the mayor, and the bureaucracy. Here the political leadership had an interest in building greater support with the city at large, as the mayor aimed at emancipating himself from the previous and very charismatic mayor, who was at the time still part of the *giunta* but often contesting its work. The mayor thus needed to create a collective actor to increase his personal consent. In this he was aided by the CEO of the SP office, an expert in governance eager to raise his professional profile, and by the provincial government, which chose a collaborative stance rather than a conflicting one. Influence over the process was equally distributed among all the stakeholders, including trade and third sector associations and the Province, whose representatives chaired several working groups. This enhanced cooperation and augmented the collective sense of ownership of the process.

Findings presented here are based on relevant documents, newspaper articles and 45 semi-structured interviews with institutional, private, and social actors involved in the SP process.<sup>121</sup> The first section describes the local socio-economic structure and political system, while the subsequent section offers an overview of governance experiences at the local and regional level, to help contextualise the emergence of SP and its impact. Finally, the last section focuses on SP, the process and its outcomes to date.

#### The Socio-Economic Context

Lecce's economic structure is characterised by the presence of nuclei of artisanal tradition and industrial production operating since the inter-war period. In the 1980s lower production costs attracted foreign and northern firms looking to sub-contract work to local entrepreneurs, who began to launch new activities, mainly based on traditional manufactures, such as clothes, shoes, leather goods, and furniture (Piattoni 2004). During the second half of the decade the international situation changed. Industrial activity had created new wealth among the local population and made the local labour less willing to work for lower wages, while competition from developing countries became tougher (ibid.). There were attempts to create consortia, a route that had successfully been implemented in the North, but which required mutual trust and cooperation. Lecce's local authorities instead chose to support individual entrepreneurs. They gave the latter "permits to build their factories outside infrastructured industrial areas, failing to enforce national contractual agreements and indeed helping them to break the nascent local trade unions." (ibid.: 328). Today the few remaining companies successfully export in Italy and Europe, but "they achieved their hegemony at the expense of the diffused know-how which is at the basis of the success of this type of industrialisation" (ibid.: 328).<sup>122</sup>

Over the past 20 years, the gap in terms of human capital and research between most of the Italian South and all other European regions, including the least developed, has deepened (Svimez 2008; Svimez 2011)<sup>123</sup>. Insufficient investment in research and development has a detrimental effect on Mezzogiorno's economy, as well the unsolved issue of salary differentials between northern and southern regions, which continue to cripple growth in the South (De Rubertis 2010). However, Puglia has recently been investing in innovation and new technologies, and Lecce is now becoming the capital of nanotechnology, with the inauguration of a specialised site a few years ago (L'Espresso 3-4-2007).<sup>124</sup> Interestingly, as the recession is determining a steep decrease in the number of entrepreneurs in the North of the country,<sup>125</sup> there has been a boom of new enterprises in the South, with 31 percent of all new businesses being created here (Linkiesta 16 August 2012). The lack of labour demand is incentivising young people to create their own jobs. In Puglia, a new regional scheme called Bollenti Spiriti (Passionate Spirit) funds new projects by young *Pugliesi*. Good ideas receive funds for €10,000/ 20,000 and Puglia now generates the highest number of business spinoffs in Italy.126

In the past European programme period 2000-6,<sup>127</sup> structural funds helped enhance significantly the city's architectural heritage and Lecce has rebranded itself as a tourist destination. Although the past programme period has produced significant outputs, there was a persistent implementation deficit in the South, due to the lack of human resources, adequate co-financing, weak project design and poor inter-institutional coordination (Svimez 2011). This meant that simpler and smaller projects, with a weaker long-term impact, were privileged. However, among southern Operational Programmes, Puglia's showed the best investment capacity, with payments of 111.2 percent of the total contributions for the 2000-2006 programme period (ibid.).

The emphasis on the discourse of participation and partnerships, which over the past 15 years has informed several new participatory initiatives at the regional and local levels, has been embraced by the regional government, which chose to invest funds for the programme period 2007-13 through SP. The rationale, according to official documents, was to increase local responsibility on investing funds and implementing projects, as well as reinforcing the local social capital, through enhanced networking between institutional, private and social sectors.

Puglia's social fabric is generally fragmented, characterised by clientelistic relations. Low levels of trust are reflected in relatively high perception of increasing criminality, despite the fact that the rate of violent crimes has been decreasing.<sup>128</sup> Several voluntary and cultural associations tend to be self-referential with limited propensity towards cooperation. An interviewee (LE15) described this as a "nil-nil" logic, whereby if one cannot achieve something it is preferable to him/ her that no one else does.

It is true that there is a lot of associationism here, but this is a consequence of the fact that everyone wants to have their own piece of the cake, since they're incapable of cooperating. Because 50 associations could just mean that they cannot cooperate. [...] In a territory like ours these dynamics are destructive. And this [the SP] for us was an attempt to overcome this logic and foster an idea of common good beyond each person's own turf. [...] In a parochial context like this one, if one tries to do something, they're always boycotted, so everyone learns that it's easier to mind their own business, if you don't want to be ruined. [LE15 - Local Association]

However, in the past few years, encouraged by new institutional openings, particularly at the regional and the provincial level, new initiatives have spurred in Lecce, whereby associations spontaneously cooperate to organise participatory urban laboratories and workshops, cultural events, and even debates using deliberative methodologies, such OST<sup>129</sup> (Il Quotidiano 25-04 2008; 3-06-2008).

Puglia's political culture has been described by Piattoni (2004: 321) as based on "ineffective clientelism," whereby patrons are weak and divided and have limited bargaining power vis-à-vis the centre to attract resources or visà-vis the periphery "to enforce any given distribution." During the First Republic, the Christian Democrats (DC) were the dominant party in the region, with a strategic programme based on pushing for the industrialisation of the South. Puglia's leading political figure, Aldo Moro, was behind this programme. After his assassination in 1978 Puglia's political landscape appeared extremely fragmented, determining the loosening of channels between the centre and the periphery. There followed fluid policy-making based on shifting coalitions of interests, with no stable leadership. Innovative policies interwove with clientelistic practices, often hindered by the inertia of the public administration (ibid.; also see Chubb 1982).

The reforms of the 1990s shifted the focus from the parties to the candidates' personal resources and charisma. The vicissitudes of Lecce's DC began to be determined by a new actor in Salento's politics, Raffaele Fitto, who, in the 1990 regional elections, had won a seat becoming the youngest regional councillor in Italy at the age of 21.130 He founded a new centre-right formation, the CDL (Christian Democrats for Freedom), and in 2000 he was elected regional President with the centre-right coalition. Fitto's influence was crucial in reversing the results of the 1995 municipal elections in Lecce, when the centre-left candidate, Salvemini, was elected mayor.<sup>131</sup> In 1998 his support thus helped the centre-right coalition to win the elections, with Adriana Poli Bortone as the mayoral candidate of the post-fascist party AN (Alleanza Nazionale/ National Alliance). Poli Bortone won a second term in 2003 and in 2007 the same coalition won a third term with Perrone (deputy mayor in the previous administration) as mayor. He won a second term in May 2012. While the power dynamics have changed at the regional level, with the centre-left in power and a far-left President, Nichi Vendola, Fitto's influence has remained strong in Lecce.132

The centre-right vicissitudes at the national level and the divisions within Berlusconi's party (with part of the former AN leaving the majority) also had an impact on Lecce's local government. The deconstruction and restructuring process of Italian political parties, which still experience great difficulties in finding a stable bipolar system (Minaldi and Riolo 2005), translated into divisions within Lecce's centre-right majority, which had seemed very strong and compact under the previous mayor Poli Bortone (Il Quotidiano and La Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno May-October 2010). The degree of charisma and strength of a mayor, who concentrates on himself several powers, clearly plays a pivotal role in guaranteeing a cohesive majority in the council. In Lecce, personal as well as political conflicts (mostly concerning projects carried out by the previous administration which left the municipal coffers in deficit to the tune of €10 millions) poisoned the relationship between the former and very charismatic mayor Poli Bortone – who in the Perrone administration was initially acting as deputy mayor - and the new mayor. These conflicts translated into a difficult situation, whereby part of the majority sided with Poli Bortone and no longer supported the mayor and his cabinet, and yet refused to move to the opposition benches.

Here as in the rest of Italy, the new political class displays very weak ties with political parties, which struggle to interpret society and channel citizen participation, and politics tends to revolve around big personalities.

The difficulty of the Left, for instance, is that globalisation caught it unprepared. The capacity of Lecce's PD (Democratic Party) to channel participation is scarce, nothing. But it's also hard because today there is this parcelling out of society. I used to be the provincial secretary of the PDS (Democratic Party of Left) when Occhetto [secretary of the Italian Communist Party in the late 1980s] put an end to the old PCI. But it was a different, more compact society. I used to go to the FIAT factories, I knew the workers' shifts, because they were all members of the party. When you went out they would recognise you. We were their party. [...] Today the situation is much more magmatic. [...] In the old world people's profession defined them, it was a clear expression of society. Today, the worker no longer recognises me as his/ her party. The middle class, the professionals, might still have some distrust towards the old communists. So we risk being neither fish nor fowl. [LE 29 – Councillor, opposition]

Several interviewees (i.e. LE2, LE9, LE16, LE29, LE36, LE39, LE42) complained about the lack of political and administrative competence within the council. Although political parties still exert influence, this is often limited to the selection of candidates and, proportionally to the mayor's personal political capital, to cabinet formation.

The councillors have some room of manoeuvre if they want to, but few, no one really, know the instruments at their disposal. [...] Party schools no longer exist. When councillors are elected they think they have been struck by a beam of divine light and then they do not even bother reading the regulation book, the statute. They know nothing. When there is a council meeting they do not even know how to move and they are often crashed [by the cabinet]. [LE42 - President of the Council]

As examined in Chapter 2, what has effectively become a presidential system at the local level is missing a strong framework of checks and balances, as councillors lack the capacity to exert control functions over the executive. Lecce might now be facing bankruptcy, with a €10 millions deficit inherited by the previous administration. The previous mayor governed with scarce opposition, as she enjoyed strong electoral support.<sup>133</sup> European structural funds were instrumental to carry out several infrastructural projects to regenerate the city centre, which increased the mayor's visibility. There were few controversial projects, such as the trolley bus line, whose usage in a city like Lecce is questionable and which, according to interviewees (LE13, LE42, LE45), was just a way of intercepting European funds that would have otherwise been diverted elsewhere. The trolley bus, whose overall cost amounts to €23 millions, still does not function, 1500 days after it was built, with a considerable waste of public resources (Il Paese Nuovo 4-07-2011). The City Halls' bond debts crisis is also proving a challenge for the commune's finances, and a leasing for buildings in Via Brenta turned out to be a fraud at the expense of the commune, which still owes large sums to the company involved (Corriere del Mezzogiorno, 03-09-2011; La Repubblica 03-09-2011)

Poli Bortone [former mayor] did a lot but she created a massive deficit. I was part of that administration, as her *assessore* for Finances and I produced a lot of money through addressing tax evasion. This money, as fast as I spread poison to make it, she spent it. This is clearly how you create support and gain visibility, because a mayor that rebuilds a city is clearly loved by citizens. Paolo [Perrone, the new mayor and former *assessore* for Public Works] found himself in a situation where three or four ill-omened decisions - the bonds and Via Brenta - brought the commune on the verge of bankruptcy. And it is clearly politically difficult to antagonise a previous mayor that was so loved, although today many are questioning some of her decisions. [LE42 - President of the Council]

In June 2011, Lecce's mayor had to respond of the budget deficit before the Regional Court of Auditors and presented his plan on how to restore the budget to balance, through cutting expenses and addressing tax evasion, while "cleaning up" bad debts (Online National Press Agency http://www.dasud.com/regioni/puglia/notizie-dalla-puglia/4605/la-cortedei-conti-promuove-l%E2%80%990perazione-risanamento-del-comune-dilecce.html.) His plan was accepted by the Court.

Thus, in this case, although the SP was incentivised from the regional tier, the local leadership had a strong interest in promoting and supporting an inclusive process, as the formation of a collective actor around a new vision of development represented an opportunity to increase the new mayor's visibility and legitimacy within a conflictual political context and visà-vis the former mayor, whose charisma continued to cast a shadow over the current administration.

### A New Approach to Local Governance

In the past decade, Puglia's local development strategy has been increasingly based on negotiated planning, with several area-based projects for local development characterised by an approach which combines private and public resources and integrates social and economic policies. Several territorial pacts and territorial integrated projects (PIT)<sup>134</sup> have been activated in the region since the 1990s, and, albeit not always effective in terms of outcomes, they have proved important in promoting cooperative behaviours among different local actors and in defining a consensual development strategy (Santandrea 1997; Santandrea and Giorgio 2004). These governance mechanisms, by including all interested actors, have been able to open new deliberative arenas (Bobbio 2002), yet successful experiences seem to be often based on the consensus built around a strong and informed political leadership (Tedesco 2005). In Puglia, as elsewhere, the main problem with territorial pacts and other governance mechanisms is the risk of fragmentation of actions because of lack of coordination between local governance projects and relevant regional programmes (Santandrea 1997).

Since 2005 the left-wing regional government has put great emphasis on concepts of participation and has established a new Department for Active Citizenship to elaborate collective strategies on how to invest EU funds. A few thematic internet forums were set up (Bobbio 2007); the website includes different thematic areas and for each area there is a forum where citizens can discuss policy issues or send their suggestions by email.<sup>135</sup> Despite the innovation and the potential of the idea, the website has so far failed to attract "average" citizens and most contributions are from experts (ibid.; see also <u>http://pugliattiva.regione.puglia.it</u>; Gangemi and Gelli 2006).

Lecce launched its own participatory programme back in 2001, in response to regional directives on planning and development under Measure 5.1 of the regional Operational Programme for EU structural funds (see www.comune.lecce.it).<sup>136</sup> The main objective was the creation of partnerships between social and institutional actors, through three phases: diffusing information about the new strategy through representatives of the public and private sector; distributing short questionnaires to collect ideas and proposals from the general public; and organising a series of meetings with coordinated groups of representatives of the public and the private sector. A final Protocol of Agreement (*Protocollo d'Intesa*) was signed by 43 associations, including religious associations, the local University, and nearly all the private and public organisations that operate locally. This initiative, which was a first attempt at an urban SP, aimed at implementing an integrated system of development based on networks among all the organisations involved.

In 2004 the first area-based *Piano di Zona*,<sup>137</sup> involving the city of Lecce and neighbouring municipalities, was launched to reorganise and develop social policies, through a participatory process open to relevant association representatives, as well institutions and trade unions. A few rounds of meetings were organised between November 2004 and June 2005, followed by the activation of working groups for each thematic area to decide on priorities and elaborate proposals (<u>www.comune.lecce.it</u>).

Lecce is the only city in Puglia to have received funding for two neighbourhood contracts (*contratti di quartiere*), during the Poli Bortone's administration. These are participatory projects of urban and social regeneration of degraded neighbourhoods, which lack services and suffer from weak social cohesion. They were first launched under Law 662/96, which set aside funds to invest in these types of projects. Following the experience of the neighbourhood contracts, in 2005 a new programme for the regeneration of peripheries (PIRP), also based on a participatory approach, was designed on the initiative of the regional government. Lecce immediately applied the new law to the regeneration of the neighbourhood of Via Leuca, which was approved with cabinet act 470/ 17-07-06.

Thus, the SP process developed within a context of great institutional enthusiasm for new governance mechanisms and partnership-based development policies. On the one hand the decade-long season of territorial pacts and other arrangements based on partnerships certainly helped to build up important technical experience to capitalise upon. On the other hand previous arrangements, as they often delivered disappointing results, constituted a liability and stakeholders inevitably showed some scepticism. Nevertheless, some dynamic associations (LE15, LE38) were able to use the new legislation to open new channels with the administration and carry out innovative participatory experiences.

Under regional law 21/2008, a group of local young architects expert in participatory urban planning (LUA – Open Urban Laboratory), a cultural association, *Manifatture Knos*, and Lecce's local government made a bid for funds for a regeneration project in via Leuca, which, as examined below, is also linked to the flagship project of the SP. As these associations had a history of collaboration with smaller municipalities around Lecce, they showed a high degree of awareness of institutional dynamics and participatory processes.

We responded to a call for bids of the regional Ministry of Culture for €5/10,000. We had a project of participatory democracy called "Knos [Manifatture Knos – cultural association] listens" [...] But LUA always told us that it makes no sense to arrange participatory events without the backing of the local administration and its involvement as a partner, since it's the only way to ensure that participatory decisions are implemented. If several citizens participate and then nothing happens it's worse than having no events at all. So we approached the City Hall and they suggested we worked in Via Leuca [since there were already funds for projects in that neighbourhood, under the PIRP legislation]. [LE15 - Cultural Association]

Several other local associations also participated and a series of outreaching events were organised to collect ideas and involve local residents in the elaboration of projects (LeccePrima.it 29-07-2011).<sup>138</sup>

[...] Every association had different ideas on how to involve people. Some visited private residencies to measure energy waste; others organised theatrical performances involving school children. In the end we produced a document with all the ideas that emerged from this outreaching exercise. [LE15 - Cultural association]

Some institutional actors complained about the fragmentation of all these initiatives.

The PIRPs, for instance, do not take account of a wider understanding of planning that encapsulates the whole city. [...] If you only involve the community through the PIRPs the impact is going to be limited. [...] Before implementing very local projects, one should ensure they are well integrated within a wider urban plan. [...] If we keep moving in small pieces and through small projects, we end up worsening the overall urban logic of the city and making it uglier. [LE39 - Councillor, independent]

Had it been understood as a process rather than a mere list of projects, the SP could have represented the necessary framework to ensure the coherence of several smaller governance initiatives; but, as examined below, the excessive politicisation of the decision-making body (*control room*) meant that a collective and coherent vision was finally sacrificed for sub-optimal solutions that ensured greater consensus.

### The Strategic Plan: Coordinating Action

Lecce adopted SP in 2005, during the Poli Bortone's administration, when the current mayor was deputy mayor and *assessore* for Public Works; however the bulk of the process developed during the first years of the Perrone administration. The regional government financed 10 area-based strategic plans covering the whole regional territory (BURP 07-04-2005).<sup>139</sup> The Region published its guidelines two years after launching the process, in 2007, creating much confusion among local authorities; the guidelines defined a highly centralised process (Pasqui 2010).

In Lecce the rationale was to elaborate a development model coherent with other plans and projects, also at other institutional levels, around three main themes: tourism, the environment, and culture. 16 protocols of agreement were signed by the local administration with several private and social actors, such as trade associations and unions, the Chamber of Commerce, the University of Salento, and several research institutes. Suggestions from the community were collected through the so-called "box of ideas", scattered around schools and public squares, where citizens could post their visions for the city's future. Working groups involving institutional, social and private stakeholders were formed around 11 thematic areas<sup>140</sup> to elaborate proposals and projects, following the presentation of a SWOT analysis. The thematic areas were identified based on the preliminary documents but also the measures of the Operational Programme for EU structural funds, thus bending the SP to European requirements.

A "Strategic Planning Office" was set up for the technical management of the process, the coordination of the participatory mechanism and the supervision of the elaboration of the plan (Document Strategic Planning Lecce)<sup>141</sup>. The "inter-institutional assembly" grouped the political representatives of the 31 municipalities involved in the plan and was expected to formulate clear political and strategic guidelines during the planning phase. A decision-making body, the so-called *Cabina di Regia* (control room), assembling the mayor of Lecce, the provincial president, the presidents of the two unions of smaller municipalities and the mayors of five other communes, overviewed the process and guaranteed final decisionmaking. Another assembly comprised of all the social and private stakeholders.

Prior to the SP, a mapping exercise was carried out to identify local actors and their degree of influence and representativeness, based on AccountAbility 1000 (AA 1000). This is a tool developed by ISEA (Institute of Social and Ethical Accountability) which aims at ensuring the credibility and authoritativeness of the social mapping through using shared international standards.<sup>142</sup> A Task Force was created to identify local priorities with regards to the chosen thematic areas. Each thematic area was studied in depth by specific working groups (involving local actors based on voluntary adherence), through research and analysis and through identifying relevant and feasible proposals. The whole task force was coordinated by the CEO of the SP office, who indicated deadlines, procedures and objectives. Each group had to nominate a representative who, with the help of the SP Office, would define the methodologies and tools that would facilitate the debate. The SP office also appointed a facilitator to work with the group representatives and manage the micro-process; the facilitator was also in charge of drawing up a final report on the entire process. The choice of having representatives of different associations and institutions (i.e. trade unions, trade associations, public service CEOs, and provincial government officers) as chairs of different working groups ensured a highly inclusive process and greater interdependence of stakeholders.

According to official documents (Document Strategic Planning Lecce) the governance model was inspired by the European Commission's White Paper (2001) which encourages institutional openness and wide and diffused participation. The rationale was to support local administrations in facilitating interactions between institutions and other stakeholders and in guaranteeing the effectiveness of subsidiarity and the coherence with other planning instruments at the regional, national, and European level. The process employed participatory tools to facilitate the meetings, and in particular the European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW). This is a methodology introduced by the European Commission DG Enterprise, in order to promote participatory democracy in local government through workshops, with the aim to identify and plan solutions to existing problems regarding the environment, urban planning and/ or regeneration and sustainable development. The participatory philosophy underpinning the plan, as emphasised in the official documents, was inspired by the transparency principles promoted by European guidelines, such as the European Green Book on transparency, the Plan D for Democracy, and the White Paper on European communication policy. Publicity and information on the process were ensured through a Communication Plan that referred to Regional guidelines 1828/2006, to guarantee transparency regarding final funding of the selected projects and continuous information on the process.

We paid much attention to things such as the logo, a coherent image, continuity in the message and the posters. [LE1 - SP Office, officer]

It took a long gestation period between the initial research work, where the local university performed an important role which helped produce the preliminary documentation and the mapping of local stakeholders (as well as the social network analysis which identified power centres within the local community), and the elaboration of the projects by the working groups. The control room of the mayors finally selected 500 projects – an excessive number perhaps, as examined below - and the final plan was voted by the council in October 2008.

#### The Participatory Process: Promises And Disappointments

There was an impressive effort on the part of the SP office to ensure an inclusive process, which reflected the high technical expertise in participatory planning and governance mechanisms of the SP office's CEO. In this case, as in Trento and in Prato, the meetings were open to the public, but a thorough preliminary analysis of the social context allowed the organisers to select an ample number of stakeholders representing all interests, who were directly

invited to take part in the working groups. There was careful preparation of the agenda of the meetings, while the presence of local government officers that acted as facilitators guaranteed space for all participants. The choice to involve representatives of different interests in coordinating and chairing the working groups served to guarantee greater cooperation and interdependence. Thus, for instance, the working group on local development was chaired by the president of the trade association; the working group on welfare by the CEO of the Social Policies department; and the working groups on town planning and the environment by a provincial-level CEO.

The involvement of the provincial level and the coordination between the two tiers, notwithstanding the different political colour of the two administrations at the time, represents one of the most positive aspects of Lecce's case, as it ensured good coordination throughout the process. The fact that regional and European funds were at stake clearly represented an incentive to participate and guaranteed interdependence of stakeholders, since it was clear that the SP had the potential of becoming a substantive decision-making arena. However, financial incentives twisted the very nature of SP, since the elaboration of a vision of development was not a priority per se, but a means to capture available funds.

There was perhaps excessive faith in the capacity of methodologies to guarantee by themselves a true horizontal debate, but some less structured participants failed to understand the rationale of the initiative and what was expected from them (LE3, LE6, LE12, LE31, LE34). Thus, their contribution was undermined. Furthermore, here as in Trento and Prato, participatory mechanisms proved difficult to sustain after the initial planning phase.

Initially I was very enthusiastic about being involved in the project, but I later lost all enthusiasm. We put in a lot of work, but they [the City Council] stopped giving us information on the projects. [...] At the beginning we were a bit confused. We did not fully understand what we had been invited to. We were told that local authorities wanted to submit some projects to the regional government. But there was never a preliminary meeting for all the stakeholders to explain what the process was about, that our proposal would be one of many and that later a *cabina di regia* would select some proposals. [LE31 -Researcher]

The selection of the final projects out of the working groups' proposals pertained to the control room. While a body that guaranteed final decisionmaking was necessary, the control room being very political (and politicised), it was often excessively responsive to mayors' pressures; and political compromise partly jeopardised the strategic approach, as attested to by the high number of projects included in the final plan. Interviewees (LE1, LE2, LE22, LE24, LE43) believed that the inability to focus on a few strategic lines was a fundamental weakness of Lecce's SP. The plan was perceived by many as an unrealistic shopping list that sacrificed strategy for compromise among the institutional actors represented in the control room.

The outcome was the creation of omnivorous plans, where the centrality of the vision was dispersed in thousands of trickles. [...] All in all the 10 SPs of Puglia list projects for C22 billions, and this is a contradiction for an SP. [...] C22 billions worth of programmes and projects that on average would cost about  $\vcenter{C150}$  thousands each and that have very little value added. Some are near ridiculous: cultural events costing one  $\vcenter{C4000}$  and the other one  $\vcenter{C10,000}$ . [LE43 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Officer]

The staff of the SP office justified their choice of listing several, even small, projects, but this would seem to conflict with the understanding of SP as elaborating few strategic ideas that can drive economic and social development in the long term, rather than producing a list of projects that could become redundant or irrelevant within a few years.

We wanted to collect the desires of the community and we did not want to exclude the project of a partner that plans to have, one day, a park for dogs, for instance. That might not be our priority now, but, within a hierarchy, we have also inserted that project and others that might not receive regional funding now, but for which we could find funds later through others channels. So, we didn't make this list with the idea that 500 projects worth over €2 billions would be financed immediately. [LE1 - SP Office, officer]

There were no formal regulations of co-decision with partnerships and this engendered fragmentation of projects and a re-awakening of mayors' anxieties to bring home something tangible, which resulted in a strong hierarchy of projects, based more on the municipality's influence rather than on quality and strategic impact.

Notwithstanding the important funds available here, the response of the media was similar to that of Trento and Prato. Local newspapers did not show much support for the process, claiming to interpret the scarce interest on the part of the general public. Most articles in the local newspapers were informed by the City Hall's press office, which by contrast was very active, and were generally notifications of the events taking place, with few articles that offered an analysis of the process and what it entailed. I think this is because this idea of area-based development, which has its logic, ends up overlapping [in people's imagination] with other initiatives that clearly did not stand out for strategic vision, so to speak. These are clearly operations that do not generate great interest. And so inevitably there was little attention from the media. Perhaps the implementation phase will see greater attention from the media and more satisfaction of the general public. [...] I think the plan was not understood. The strategic vision was a bit vague and there was little communication capacity beyond institutional milieus. This has weakened the elaboration phase. [LE45 – Journalist for local newspaper]

Thus, even where, as in Lecce, there was strong commitment to an inclusive and participatory process, as attested to by the fast paced, multi-faceted communication campaign of the SP office, the SP did not seem able to attract public interest. The language might still be too technical and, beyond the results promised by the most innovative participatory methodologies, local administrations are still too inexperienced to be aware of, and bridge the gap between, professionals and ordinary citizens (or perhaps unwilling to invest too much in these exercises). This inevitably inhibits participation on the part of certain actors. Sometimes even professionals, who were familiar with the language if not with the political dynamics (LE31, LE34), did not feel they had enough leverage on the process vis-à-vis other, savvier actors, who were more used to interfacing with institutions. Nevertheless, as examined above, some proactive associations such as Manifatture Knos and LUA were able to capitalise effectively on the new openings.

Like in the previous two cases, as the elaboration phase came to an end, coordination and communication mechanisms weakened and stakeholders were no longer informed about further progress. While local government waited for regional funds, the whole process stalled for several months.

Frankly initially the participatory process was intense when general objectives had to be identified, through the usual forms of forums, OST, EASW, but there was no co-decision process throughout each phase. Once that first planning phase was completed, the social and private partners were forgotten. And it became an institutional and political problem. [LE43 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Officer]

In Lecce there was a political interest in, and the administrative capacity for, an inclusive process to foster a collective actor, but the excessive politicisation of the control room, and the exclusion of other stakeholders after the planning phase, jeopardised the strategic vision. Without a genuine collective actor, the need for selectivity clashed against inclusivity, as the initial rationale of few core strategies was sacrificed for several sub-optimal project ideas that kept all the mayors happy.

#### The Outcomes: A Plan Of Compromise

The flagship project of the plan was an infrastructural measure, as in Trento and Prato. It concerned the redevelopment of the quarries of Marco Vito, envisaging the creation of a grandiose park, and was signed by the wellknown Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza. This project had long been in the pipeline and, as in the previous two case studies, the SP offered the opportunity to "popularise" it and communicate it to the city, hence the emphasis on *starchitects* who can capture people's imagination.<sup>143</sup>

According to official documents, in Lecce 59 percent of the projects included in the final plan are entirely new projects, which emerged from the working groups, and 22 percent are pre-existing. Some interviewees, however, (LE3, LE31) argued that projects were not necessarily debated within the working groups, rather individual stakeholders would just propose their own project, which would then be selected if in line with the overarching strategies. The control room and the stakeholders that signed protocols of agreements with the institutions selected the strategic themes through the Evaluation of Social Sharing (Valutazione di Condivisione Sociale). Such themes correspond to the thematic areas of the working groups. The final priorities identified mainly concerned infrastructural projects and interventions to enhance energy saving activities, as well as several projects to promote local research and development, and tourism. The main challenge in this case was to bend the strategic lines of the plan so that they fitted the dimensions and measures of the structural funds, which clearly constrained the overall vision. The CEO of the SP office reiterated how, beyond weak coordination with the regional tier, the very institutional framework of the SP in Puglia, as it was a compulsory regional programme to access funds, generated an ambiguous set of incentives contrary to the nature of SP.

The other side of the coin is that this initial consensus over the projects, this sharing and being together and so on - or the fundamental principles of

bottom-up planning... This initial consensus, which we [as the SP office] built through intense daily work including on Saturday and Sunday, was driven, and this is a weakness of the whole experience, by the prospects of regional funds. So this often implied that instead of focussing on the qualitative and quantitative impact of a project... The projects did not always integrate within a certain development scenario, because this scenario kept changing. The Region changed the guidelines, they changed the procedures, even the Operational Programme changed. On the one side local creativity was very helpful, but the expectation of receiving funds was disappointed. [LE2 - SP Office CEO]

Since there were delays in disbursing the funds of the new programme period that would finance the SPs and as the first two years of the EFRD (European Fund of Regional Development) were already available (€340 millions), the regional government decided to start funding few strategic projects (the so-called progetti stralcio) provided they were ready for implementation (Cabinet act N. 2685 28/12/2009). Whereas Lecce's areabased plan was among the few that were submitted to the regional government according to the agreed time schedule, several other areas had not completed their planning phase, five years from the launch of SP. The rationale behind the decision to disburse a first lump of money was to give a tangible signal to the community in order to guarantee at least some shortterm outcomes. Nevertheless, this strategy was perceived by local mayors (LE44) as a political exercise, since there was now an attempt to redistribute the available funds among all the local authorities, irrespective of whether they had completed their plan or not and of the quality of the projects. The regional *assessore* justified his choice, since the risk was to increase the gap between economically stronger areas, like Lecce, and weaker ones.144

We could have given the funds to the cities that had completed the plans on time according to the first guidelines, but we would have exacerbated the gap between areas. The two clusters of municipalities that were fastest were also the strongest economically – Lecce and Bari. So we would have strengthened the strongest and weakened the weakest. [LE25 - Regional *assessore* for Finances]

However, contradictions between the first set of guidelines and the latest *progetti stralcio* generated much confusion and resentment among local authorities. The mayors of Lecce and Bari clearly resented this lack of clarity and they perceived this new strategy of money allocation as a political U-turn from the initial guidelines.

They forced us to reason and reflect on ourselves and then they said, no we'll decide. And they mortified us. [...] They were in a hurry to spend this EU money, and that's why they insisted on the fact that the projects had to be ready

for implemention. They went back to the same degenerate logic of the previous programme period – so give us something ready, small and ugly, rather than beautiful, difficult and strategic projects. [LE44 - Mayor]

There were a few conditions. To access the new funds projects had to be strategic and involve several municipalities.<sup>145</sup> These should be large structural projects with an overall cost of at least €5 millions, which fostered coordination of networks to produce collectively generated strategies. They had to enjoy the approval of both public and private stakeholders and be clearly linked to the overall vision of the plan. Inevitably the whole process became very political. In Lecce, the project selection process turned into yet another exercise in compromise to please all the mayors. In the end several, sometimes small projects were submitted.

After our regional meeting to present the new funds, the mayors went back home and started beating the living daylights out of each other to get a bit of these funds. The quality of the projects was not that great either. A third of the projects could not be funded with EFRD money. They wanted the sewers, but the EFDR does not fund them. [...] Or they wanted to pave a square, but you can't do that with the EFDR. [...] Another series of projects had very long completion times or were not feasible. So our regional officers had to contact municipalities and help them identify other projects. [LE25 - Regional *assessore* for Finances]

Local administrations made a good case for the argument against the requirement of submitting projects ready for implementation, which conflicted with the idea and the nature of SP. If the rationale behind SP is to elaborate strategic projects collectively - and some municipalities were still defining their SP, while no feasibility studies had been conducted yet – the condition that only finalised projects could be submitted often forced local government to search beyond their SP portfolio of projects and present long-standing project ideas.

I believe that the problems arise basically from the first guidelines [...] for areabased strategic planning. One thing above all – SP is not naturally conducive to a planning dimension where the rationale is accessing public funds. This approach has partly distorted the process itself and frankly I think that the EU structural funds do not bend well to the logic of integration of projects, because of their separation into axes and measures. [LE43 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Officer]

Although, according to independent experts [LE24], Lecce's plan stood out for consistency between the vision and the projects elaborated, in the end the effort to please too many (institutional) actors with the *progetti stralcio* was clear. The lack of coordination capacity (and perhaps political commitment) on the part of the regional tier and the immaturity of local administrations in terms of planning capacity severely weakened the plan.

In Lecce the elaboration phase worked very well, both the way working groups were formed and the way they functioned, and at least some of the choices that emerged from these groups were actually the result of group discussion and deliberation. [...] The main criticisms regard two aspects. First, the Region no longer believes in this process. [...] We don't know what resources are actually available to finance it - it seems there was an afterthought. Second, the institution of the *cabina di regia* as a representation of only institutional actors affected the final decision-making process, and projects were often chosen not for their quality, but to please everyone. [LE10 - Province CEO]

The nature of the control room was also problematic, as it only included political actors, but no representatives of private and social stakeholders. This inevitably exposed the SP to excessive political pressure.<sup>146</sup> Thus, the lack of clarity from the regional level and political ambitions within the control room dispersed the potential built by an inclusive and thoroughly organised process.

Perhaps the SP was too ambitious a project. During the season of the PIT<sup>147</sup>, the regional government chose the thematic areas and local action was limited to identifying projects within already defined measures and for a fixed amount of money depending on the project. For the SP local authorities enjoyed greater autonomy, without knowing how much money they would receive, because we'll decide that ex-post, based on the results of the SP. Perhaps we were too ambitious given the average cultural level of local authorities, but also of the regional level. The Region showed really poor coordination capacity. [LE24 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Independent Expert]

### **Facilitative Leadership**

The efforts of the SP office<sup>148</sup> ensured good levels of coordination throughout the process, and the collaboration between the office CEO and the mayor guaranteed consistency in the relationship with the stakeholders and the other local authorities involved. The mayor had an interest in encouraging an inclusive process to increase his legitimacy with the city at large, private interests and civic associations (vis-à-vis the popular former mayor with whom there were deep conflicts). By the same token, the CEO was passionate about fostering working practices based on governance, around which he had built his whole career. The SP also gave greater visibility to his expertise and he certainly hoped to raise his own professional profile within public services.

Institutional learning within the SP office was significant, although it was perceived to be a foreign body by the rest of the public services and the impact in terms of inter-sectoral cooperation was disappointing. Nevertheless the office, which since the end of the elaboration phase of the SP has been downsized, continues to promote governance programmes and still plays a pivotal role in identifying EU calls for bids and funding opportunities at the regional and national levels, thus enhancing the local government's capacity to extract external resources (Le Galès 2002). By the same token, it continues to drive the innovation process of the local public services.

As an office we went through a very significant experience, both in terms of inter-institutional cooperation and our work with associations, but also in terms of the degree of coordination within the office, the relationship with other local administrations. And we created a series of projects that I believe are very interesting, since they have fostered a significant level of creativity. [LE2 - SP Office CEO]

The highly positive aspect about Lecce's case was the emergence of a *facilitative leadership*, whereby leaders work *with* others to achieve results (Svara 2008).<sup>149</sup> In this case the SP office worked closely with the mayor and the provincial level, which played an important role in coordinating and managing political pressures. The provincial tier, which had traditionally been in charge of development strategies, initially resented the regional government's decision to devolve planning functions to local authorities. Nevertheless, a conscious decision was made to be actively involved in the process led by Lecce's City Council, and the Province, despite being of a different political colour, gave an important contribution to the plan, through public service managers and political representatives who were actively involved in coordinating the working groups and who participated in the inter-institutional assembly.

Over the past few years, the provincial level tried to reaffirm its role as coordinator of this type of governance and planning. The Region made a different choice and instituted this system of area-based planning, although I gather there has been an afterthought regarding these funds. In the end we participated and we tried to be generous and within Lecce's plan we contributed actively. I coordinated two working groups and a colleague of mine chaired a third one, hence three out of 11 groups. Not only did we offer our human resources but also projects and know-how that we had developed over the years. [LE10 - Province CEO]

This coordination between Lecce's local government and the Province gave greater legitimacy to the process in the eyes of local stakeholders and it also helped to manage (to a point) the political ambitions of the other 30 mayors involved in the area-based plan, who were inevitably under pressure to bring home tangible results - and funds. The change of provincial government in 2009 weakened coordination, although the new administration has the same political colour as Lecce's centre-right administration, and notwithstanding the commitment of the new provincial president to the SP plan. Once again, continuity at all levels is paramount yet very difficult to secure.

Here as in the previous two cases, political parties and local councillors showed limited awareness of the process and did not participate.

[Political awareness even within the cabinet] was unclear. Some were aware, like myself, since I am the political point of reference of the whole process. It was mainly the public administration that followed everything, the SP office and those CEOs that coordinated working groups. The rest had very little involvement. [LE 44 - Mayor]

SP was perceived to be a "pie in the sky" and as something too removed from ordinary administration to be of political interest.

But it [the SP] is clearly a very political act! These things though have little political returns for politicians. And here there is a political class that thinks this is just a fairy tale. They all have their very specific issues to be preoccupied with, very specific reference groups. This is how they build political stock. You represent certain interests and defend only those. Most councillors know very well their constituency and which small projects they need to put forward in order to maintain support. [LE24 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Independent Expert]

As the focus of the community is quickly shifting away, there is a general sense of disaffection among the stakeholders who were actively involved in the elaboration process, who have not informed about developments. The successful elaboration process failed the test of implementation, unable to guarantee continuity of the coordination mechanisms once the plan was finalised. As funds were delayed and there was much administrative and political confusion, the SP office was not sure how (and what) to communicate with stakeholders, and the process became an affair of experts and mayors. These developments have engendered much disappointment among those who had enthusiastically championed the process.

For me this experience won't go anywhere. It will be like water dispersing in the ground. It's pessimistic but it's what I think. Unless a visible politician decides to endorse SP, even just in rhetoric... In that case perhaps things will start moving again. [LE24 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Independent Expert]

In Lecce, however, the mayor has recently managed to secure new national and regional funding for the implementation of the SP's flagship project: the redevelopment of Marco Vito's quarries (resolution Cipe n.62 03-08-2011). Since he has recently been re-elected for a second term and the SP office is still managed by the same CEO, who has been the true champion of the process throughout, there is hope that the plan will come back on the local political agenda.

# Conclusion

Lecce's SP is one of "lights and shadows". The SP office acted as an effective champion of the process, which was legitimised and strengthened by the sponsorship of the mayor. The good coordination between the political and the administrative level and the expertise of the SP office (which has diligently learnt the EU lesson on governance) guaranteed consistent organisation and a fairly inclusive process. New channels between local government institutions and some local associations were opened and existing institutional relationships with some structured stakeholders were strengthened, as the latter were directly involved in the organisation and facilitation of several working groups. This helped to increase the mayor's legitimacy vis-à-vis the former mayor, Poli Bortone, with whom there were growing political conflicts. Her administration had started the SP process, when the current mayor Perrone was assessore for Public Works. As Perrone tried to emancipate himself politically from her cumbersome presence, the SP also represented a way of augmenting support for himself among private and social actors. There were surprisingly high levels of coordination between the local government and the provincial level, notwithstanding different political colours, and greater cooperation between public services at both levels was fostered through the active collaboration between Lecce's SP office and some provincial CEOs.

Two aspects weakened the plan, partly jeopardising outcomes. The first aspect concerns the regional initiative of offering financial incentives and linking the SP to the European programme period. The regional government, by frequently changing guidelines and mechanisms for fund disbursement, created much confusion among local authorities, which, on their part, lacked planning capacity and experience. Chapter 7 will examine in greater detail the pros and cons of offering financial incentives to start a process that should be a voluntary choice of local administrations, as it requires high levels of commitment and awareness. By the same token, one wanders whether local stakeholders would have participated so actively, had they not seen the clear prospect of accessing public funds. In other cities, where the process was voluntary, stronger and more structured actors did not participate as intensely. In Lecce, with the exception of political parties and councillors, most stakeholders perceived SP as the main decision-making space to capture public funds. This initially encouraged and sustained high levels of participation and guaranteed some degree of interdependence.

The second aspect concerns the highly politicised nature of the control room, which had the final word on project selection. Since the most important body in the architecture of Lecce's SP only included mayors and other institutional actors, while excluding private and social stakeholders, final decisions became a political affair, often sacrificing strategy for political compromise. As decision-making eventually appeared confined to the political level and as the prospect of prompt funds was disappointed, there was a growing feeling of disaffection among private and social stakeholders. Furthermore, the SP office, once the elaboration phase was concluded and its human resources downsized, struggled to sustain communication and coordination mechanisms with the same intensity, with the risk of dispersing the social capital that was built during the process. The mayor, who has recently been re-elected for a second term in May 2012, is now putting the SP back on the political agenda, through the financing of the flagship project, with the intention to enhance and re-invigorate the legitimation of his new administration, following the deep conflicts that weakened his majority during his first term.

Thus, Lecce's case offers a more mixed picture. Here, like in Trento, the local leadership was strong, but had an interest in being more inclusive. Local associations, unlike in Prato, were collaborative and some small organisations were able to capitalise on the SP to open stable channels with local institutions, which have only recently started to be more open to civil society. However, excessive politicisation of the control room (from which private and social stakeholders were excluded) jeopardised the formation of that collective actor that an inclusive participatory process had begun to foster. Without a genuine collective actor, the tension between selectivity and inclusivity resolved in favour of the latter and political compromise, as hundreds of little-strategic projects were included in the final plan to please the political ambitions of 31 mayors. Weak coordination with the regional level, from which project funding depended, contributed to that implementation gap from which all these plans, albeit to different degrees, suffered.

# **Chapter 6**

# "Sassari bella, buona e forte" 150

Sassari's Strategic Planning (SP) process started in September 2006, under a new centre-left administration. Sassari, which numbers about 120,000 inhabitants, is the second city in size and importance of the island of Sardinia, a special status Region since 1948. It was one of the first cities in the Region to launch a participatory process of this kind, responding to regional financial incentives.

Overall the notion of governance, encouraged by EU programmes, is gaining momentum within Sardinian local government, whose public administration's working culture has slowly started to change over the past decade. Conversely, political elites still struggle to fully understand and embrace the new governance instruments. As examined in the previous cases, the commitment and coordinated work of the political and administrative leadership is paramount to guarantee positive outcomes. A leadership that is strong and inclusive can *facilitate* an open and meaningful process. Here, although there was initial political will to sponsor the SP, limited political awareness meant the process soon became an administrative affair, championed by the department of Local Development and its CEO. In this case the mayor, a doctor that actively worked in the voluntary sector, already represented a break from previous political cycles and he already enjoyed greater legitimacy among civil society. As a mayor he opened several new channels between local institutions and associations. However, as a relatively inexperienced politician he did not want to be perceived as lacking control and was careful not to upset influential political interests within his own party. Weak political endorsement affected the legitimacy of SP, while the lack of coordination between local government and the provincial and the regional levels translated into the familiar implementation gap. Coordination between tiers is clearly a necessary condition to guarantee tangible outcomes, particularly where, like in Sassari and Lecce, the process fully relied on

regional funds, with all the pros and cons that this entails and which will be discussed in greater detail in the final chapter.

Findings presented here are based on relevant documents and 47 semi-structured interviews with actors involved in the SP process.<sup>151</sup> The first section describes the local socio-economic structure and political system, while the subsequent section offers an overview of governance experiments at the regional level, to help contextualise the emergence of SP and its impact on Sassari's polity, which will be examined in the rest of the chapter.

### The Socio-Economic Context

Sassari and its territory have been suffering from a prolonged period of economic stagnation and a progressive weakening of the social fabric, but the city remains economically one of strongest areas in Sardinia (Svimez 2011). Among the factors underpinning the decline is high unemployment. Sassari's economic activity rate is above the overall average in Sardinia, with 62 percent, compared to the regional average of 59.3 percent. According to the Svimez report (2008) on Mezzogiorno's economy covering the 2001-2007 period, Sardinia fared better than most other Southern regions, with a GNP growth of 1.5 percent per year, although all Southern regions have a very low per capita GDP if compared with Northern regions. However, the recent economic downturn has marked the decline of Sardinian industries, with several factories closing down and unemployment on the increase. In 2011 the economy was stagnant with 0 percent growth (Svimez 2011). Sassari's production structures are scarcely diversified and hampered by a technological lag, since even within relatively mature sectors, such as tourism and the food industry, the productive chain still presents several incomplete links.152

Albeit sharing problems such as a weak economy and poor infrastructure with the rest of *Mezzogiorno*, Sardinia is very different from other southern regions in terms of social capacity. A survey from ISTAT (March 2010) finds that Sardinia displays higher than average levels of participation in demonstrations and election rallies, second only to the autonomous province of Bolzano, in Trentino-Alto Adige. Sardinian men rank first in Italy for time spent volunteering for political parties (3.7 percent) and Sardinian women are only second to women from Emilia. The study also finds that 63 percent of Sardinia men and 56 percent of Sardinian women regularly read newspapers. Sassari displays an important presence of cultural and volunteer associations and, having built the first university in Sardinia, founded in 1671, still represents one of the main cultural centres of the island.

You can't imagine how many organised groups there are. A lot. Political groups, voluntary groups. Groups that organise to exchange books... [...] We count 17 internal groups [to our association] that deal with the most diverse things, whether music, cinema, child activities. Then there are youth groups, old people groups that organise card games tournaments etc. [...] I think the associational fabric is quite rich and well organised. [SS19 - Cultural Association]

The social context, notwithstanding the cultural decline, is dynamic, but, as was the case in Lecce, it is also fragmented as associations are often self-referential and struggle to co-operate. Timid attempts at creating umbrella associations, such as the Voluntary Council, gathering together several voluntary associations in order to increase their capacity and bargaining power vis-à-vis institutions, have failed to work because of particularistic interests, search for visibility and competition for funds on the part of often very small organisations. What is difficult is to foster networks of associations.

Associations don't network and this is a weakness. [...] Everyone just minds their own business and this is the limit of associationism. [...] I think there is not yet awareness of what associationism should mean. [SS39 - Sport Association]

Civil society was long excluded from local governance and even trade and employers associations often lamented they had limited involvement in policy-making. The centre-left administration, which first took power in 2005 and was re-elected in May 2010, has opened to civil society, both through structured participatory mechanisms, such as SP, and more informal channels. Some voluntary and non-profit organisations have started to work regularly with the local government, and in particular with the department of Social Policies and the department of Youth Policies and Education.

The previous administration didn't even talk to us. Not only did they not consult us, they did not even talk to us, which is different. They never agreed to see us, they never even looked at us. This administration is another world, we're in heaven. You have to consider that the mayor used to be president of this association. He knows us, he knows what we do and how we're organised. [SS19 - Cultural Association] Often such channels build upon a personal relationship, for instance between a particular administrator and the president of an association. These informal links are generally highly effective, although more institutionalised mechanisms could help prevent the lack of continuity often experienced when there is a change of *giunta*, or even of just one *assessore*.

The *assessore* [social policies] is very sensitive to our issues – she listens to us. But it's episodic, it's not a structured process, it depends on individual good will, mine or the *assessore*'s. By chance, I also happen to have a good personal relationship with this *assessore*. [...] But this cannot be the criterion. It's not politically acceptable. [SS19 - Cultural Association]

The fact that the current mayor is a doctor and very active within the voluntary sector has certainly increased the bargaining power and the role of some associations.

The mayor comes from [our association], he used to be our regional administrator. We organise sport activities for vulnerable people and the mayor, who is a doctor, was among the professionals helping out. [...] There is also a personal connection. [...] Administrators that come from the associational world are better, perhaps because they have a more open mentality than those that grew up within political parties. [SS39 - Sport Association]

As examined in earlier chapters, the mayoral reforms have certainly changed local politics by opening greater space for candidates outside party circles and by reinforcing the direct relationship between the mayor and the local community. During the First Republic, Sardinian politics was dominated by the DC (Christian Democrats), although some of the secular parties (Socialists, Sardinian Autonomists, Liberals and Republicans) also had a large support base. Between the 1970s and the early 1980s the Communist party (PCI) was led at the national level by the Sassarese Enrico Berlinguer, and it represented the main opposition party. As part of a coalition with the Socialists and the autonomist party, the PCI governed the city between 1975 and 1980 and again between 1990 and 1994. In 1995, after five tormented years during which about four different executives and three mayors took power, with several councillors changing sides and altering the balance of power between the majority and the opposition, the first direct mayoral elections represented a major turning point and a chance to finally ensure some political stability.

The centre-left coalition won and a woman (an innovative factor in itself), Anna Sanna, a primary school teacher with previous political

experience as an MP for the Communist Party, was elected mayor. Divisions within the coalition meant that Anna Sanna ran for a second term in 2000 as an independent. As the Left split, the centre-right coalition won the elections and the candidate of National Alliance (AN), Gian Vittorio Campus, a plastic surgeon, was elected mayor. The new administration was also characterised by deep divisions and, as political parties continued to shape and reshape themselves and they repositioned themselves in the political spectrum at the local, regional, and national level, councillors shifted from side to side, even threatening the dissolution of the council. The transition from the First to the Second Republic was still in progress in Sassari, and the divide between administration and citizens was still profound. The main accusations that civil society raised against the centre-right mayor and his executive were excessive authoritarianism and refusal of any dialogue with local associations. At the following elections, in 2005, the centre-left coalition was back in power.<sup>153</sup>

The current mayor Gianfranco Ganau, also a doctor, seems to have learnt that the *decisional illusion* (Trigilia 2005) characterising the previous two administrations was not a winning strategy and he is far more inclined towards mediation with all sides. However, few interviewees perceived him as fully autonomous and recognised he was sometimes too responsive to the influence of specific political tendencies within the party that supported his candidature.

This mayor, unlike the previous two, is quite nice, personality wise. The two previous mayors, outside formal council meetings, never met anyone, not even people from their own coalition. Not only does this mayor regularly meet with his majority but he also helps the opposition. [...] Clearly as a mayor is also subject to... and we clearly saw what pressures from those political tendencies he had to respond to. [...] He was forced to replace *assessori* that he would have never changed, only because of threats from these currents, which would say, "Either you do it or I won't support you". [...] And these pressures always respond to personal rather than collective needs. [SS13 – Councillor, opposition]

Nevertheless, the mayor's mediation skills and greater openness to the local civil society contributed to his growing popularity and his re-election in May 2010 with over 65 percent of the votes, something unprecedented in Sassari's politics. The strong support he enjoys also led a few smaller centreright civic lists, within a highly fragmented party structure, to align themselves with the government coalition, in view of forthcoming elections.<sup>154</sup>

Now, the last mayor's report received 30 votes – our majority is 24. [...] This is symptomatic that some people are getting ready for the forthcoming elections [in May 2010] [...] They understand that our mayor worked well and he's likely to be the winning candidate at the next elections. Thus, part of the opposition starts to gravitate around the mayor also by supporting his programmatic agenda. [SS7 - Councillor, majority]

Although Sassari's mayor has shown some degree of enthusiasm towards participatory mechanisms, political awareness of such instruments is still low and often clashes against the need for political visibility and quick results. The understanding of local democracy is changing towards a more direct relationship between political leadership and citizens, whereby political parties are unable to act as mediators, while large associations often suffer from a representativeness deficit. The most clamorous victims of these changes, as examined in Chapter 2, appear to be elective assemblies, reduced to ratifying executive decisions and unable to feel comfortable in the new role of steering and scrutiny.

### From Government to Governance

Sardinia has acted as a pilot for several planning and development experiments, whereby high expectations have been duly mortified by poor results (Toscano 1982; Marongiu 1991; Zurru 2005). Over the past fifty years this island, which displays important cultural and geo-physical characteristics that set it apart from the mainland, experienced three main planning phases: a first phase of industrial conversion that marked the entrance, albeit marginal, of Sardinia within the spheres of modernization; a second phase of cultural production and emphasis on tourism and beach resorts that was perceived to be full modernity and that in a way acknowledged the failure of the local industry. Finally a third phase was characterized by hyper modernism and hyper tourism, based around a consumption economy (Mazzette and Tidore 2008).<sup>155</sup>

Within the last fifteen years, as a consequence of the end of traditional extraordinary intervention in *Mezzogiorno* and as an effect of the EU cohesion policy, new resources have been invested in planning and development projects, particularly in the South of Italy. A range of new

instruments came about, from Territorial Pacts to LEADER Programmes and Area Contracts.<sup>156</sup> Sardinia elaborated its own governance mechanisms, such as territorial integrated projects (PIT - *Progetti Integrati Territoriali*,) and integrated area plans (PIA - *Piani Integrati d'Area*),<sup>157</sup> thus launching a new planning season characterized by partnerships with private and social stakeholders and an integrated approach (Bottazzi 2005).

Sardinia, perhaps because of previous experience with planning instruments, is among the first regions in Italy to have embraced the new governance approach. Because of its special status and its greater autonomy, planning, as an effort to accelerate economic and social development, has always enjoyed great support (ibid.). More recently 80 percent of Sardinian local authorities were involved in programmes such as LEADER (I, II and Plus), Urban, Agenda 21, INTERREG, which place great emphasis on local involvement and partnerships. The so-called GAL (Groups of Local Action) helped to ensure high levels of participation and to augment local authorities' awareness of their new responsibilities. In 2005 Sardinia passed a regional law on integrated social policies to implement the novelties introduced by the 328/2000 Act (Piano di Zona).<sup>158</sup> The new Local Plan of Sardinian Social Services (Piano Locale Unitario dei Servizi, PLUS) aims at promoting integrated and inter-municipal planning and a culture of participation and subsidiarity, through continuous dialogue among institutions, the third sector and beneficiaries (Salis et al 2006).

The regional government maintains an ambiguous attitude towards bottom-up policy-making. On the one hand it has responded, at least formally, to central and EU pressures for greater decentralisation and local participation, also through encouraging participatory mechanisms at the local level, such as SP. On the other hand it has continued to centralise decision-making in the operational phase. In 2004 the new centre-left regional administration launched a process of integrated planning for local development (*Pianificazione integrata*), to invest new EU funds (Bobbio 2007). Different bodies – a regional group in charge of coordination, local planning workshops and technical regional groups - overviewed the process, which covered several sectors: industry, agriculture, rural development, tourism, environment, and social inclusion. The local planning workshops represented the most innovative part of the process: these were technical units with a stable presence in each of the eight provinces to facilitate interinstitutional cooperation among local stakeholders (ibid.).

Initially institutions were highly represented, while private citizens and businesses' attendance was scarce.<sup>159</sup> The Regional Government then launched an *outreach* process (animazione territoriale), by using the local workshops. Eight new local forums were organised and new methodologies used to facilitate participation. Working groups were formed (each including 30/ 40 participants) and each one had to identify four strategic thematic areas, with the facilitators' help. About 1600 people took part in the new forums, with high attendance of individual citizens (from 100 at the beginning of the process to 500) (ibid.). The money initially allocated to this process was doubled (to €700 million), by adding new regional and national funds; the Regional Planning Centre received 14,000 applications for partnerships, attesting to the success of the process. Once the partnerships were formed the Region decided that methodologies such as Project Cycle Management (PCM)<sup>160</sup> and GOPP (Goal Oriented Project Planning)<sup>161</sup> should be employed to facilitate participatory planning. By January 2007, 200 integrated projects that had been put forward were under examination; the first 59 have been approved and concern the productive chain in agriculture and rural development.

The process proved successful and in 2007 it received an award from the central government's department for Development and Local Economy (ibid.).<sup>162</sup> However, the lack of political awareness and continuity meant that even the approved projects have not yet been implemented. The *assessore* for Regional Development left because of divergent views with the President and once again the whole process stalled when it reached the operational phase.

The problem was too little commitment, and of this I'm sure. Limited commitment. I only need to bring you one example. When we had a call for bids for CIVIS [a EU programme], it clearly said that local authorities would have to prove to be part of existing partnerships with other stakeholders. But there were very few partnerships in place. I and other local government officers met with all local authorities to explain that partnerships would represent the main selection criteria. In the end this element was not considered, because the regional government published the rankings before we even completed our evaluation work on CIVIS, which was patently ignored. Here we really lacked political commitment to the process. If you start the process, you don't then go and make face to face deals with provincial presidents, if you had first launched a process that entailed an integrated approach. The risk is the same with SP, the lack of commitment, but not necessarily on the part of mayors, rather on the part of 'mamma' Region, which then says, "Whatever, one of many processes..." [SS24 –Regional Officer, Regional Evaluation Centre]

These failings at the regional level clearly affected participation levels in Sassari's own participatory mechanisms, particularly on the part of local businesses.

## The SP: Between Innovation and Inexperience Collective Action And Democratic Process

As examined in the previous section, Sassari's new participatory approach to planning was not born in isolation, instead it built upon several governance experiences within the last decade, at the local and regional levels. The city is involved in several Programme Agreements and Area Contracts for local development, including several PIT and PIA. Particularly within certain departments, such as Social Policies and Youth and Education Policies, several regional and national instruments and laws have contributed to building awareness of governance mechanisms and to promoting a culture of greater openness towards the involvement of stakeholders and service users. Sassari's SP process had already been agreed by the centre-right administration (2000-5), since regional and European structural funds were available to finance these new mechanisms. The centre-left administration elected in 2005 strongly sponsored the process and in 2006 launched its SP, as the deadline to claim funding approached.<sup>163</sup>

An *ad hoc* administrative office, consisting of City Council employees and a few scholarship holders, offered technical support and oversaw coordination mechanisms and relations with external stakeholders. Here as in the other cases, the champion of the process came from within public services, the CEO of the Local Development Department. She was assisted by a few experts from the local University and by a provincial government agency for local planning and sustainable development, DEMOS. The latter has an autonomous administrative structure and its main function is to offer technical support for socio-economic and territorial planning.<sup>164</sup> As many lamented (i.e. SS4; SS6; SS40; SS45) the University was not as involved in the process as the administration would have expected. With the exception of few academics that chaired some working groups, the University limited itself to producing diagnostic documents, while it took no active part in the planning phase.

Let's say that there [in the SP process] the big institutions were the weak link. They had no ideas to bring to the table and did not fully believe in strategic action as an instrument. Because it is well known that within the University there is little governance and, I can add, little familiarity with democracy. So it is difficult for them to embrace this way of doing things. [SS45 – Academic Expert]

The first phase of SP, based on listening to, and collecting ideas from, citizens through postcards distributed in the most degraded areas and in local schools, was concluded with a week of collective meetings (settimana strategica), in September 2006. Each of five working days was dedicated to the discussion of a particular aspect of local development and social policies, whereby citizens could interact with experts and local administrators.<sup>165</sup> In the morning experts from the local University and various political and civil society figures would give lectures to discuss the *diagnostic* documents. In the afternoon experts from Demos and from a local agency offering professional consultancies on deliberative instruments for policy-making, Policy, coordinated the working groups, using methodologies such as the European Awareness Scenario Workshop (EASW). People were divided in several groups, according to whether they participated as administrators, citizens, experts, and private sector representatives, to envisage the future of the city in terms of best and worst case scenarios. Later, groups mixed according to interest and expertise, so as to ensure interactions among all categories; each group focused on a particular theme, whether the environment, social policies or local development.

To see people participating in the focus groups was something really new. Because I was used to meetings between local government officers and politicians, between the *giunta* and public service CEOs and it was always the same chessboard. To see this chessboard widened with all the pieces mixed... The chancellor with the student to plan the future of the University... Different interests interacted and were not in opposition as we would have expected, but worked together to produce ideas that would improve this town. I think this was a very important result. [SS9 - *Assessore* for Local Development]

These events were open to everyone; however, as one of the local agencies involved (SS6) pointed out "simple citizens were not truly involved, also because there was no real interest in involving them." Some associations chose not to participate, as they felt they did not have the right instruments or space to have an incisive input. In theory, [the SP] was open to everyone, but it was only a formal opening, all openings can be useful, better than nothing... But if you try to discuss about something you don't know, you won't have much to say... I mean that I think there was no full awareness of what they [the organisers] were doing, what the SP was about and what kind of contribution we could have offered. [...] Perhaps it was also my fault, but I feel no one really understood what to do. [SS19 - Cultural Association]

Limited awareness was an issue within the local cabinet, as generally the political motivation for supporting SP was to access regional funds.

There was no much awareness; we did not know exactly what we were doing. We knew that this plan was important because we didn't want to miss the chance of accessing funds rather than because we felt we needed to have a strategic plan... Anyway, the plan was produced in the end, but the rationale behind it was not to lose these funds. [SS47 - Former *assessore* for the Environment]

Following the *strategic week*, the debate on each issue was taken forward through thematic roundtables that met regularly over a few months, chaired by experts and coordinated by facilitators from Demos and Policy. Although these meeting were open to all those that took part in the *strategic week*, some stakeholders were directly invited and there was a natural selection as the more technical nature of the debate assumed higher levels of competence. However, working groups on "hot" topics such as the environment (SS46) and the urban redevelopment of the town centre (SS45) attracted much attention from ordinary citizens. Participation was high particularly on the part of small shopkeepers and homeowners, but also associations of disabled people interested in voicing their ideas on architectural barriers (SS45). Their proposals were hardly acknowledged by politics, which after the planning phase was unable to capitalise on the new social capital and involve these new stakeholders in the process through stable channels.<sup>166</sup>

Smaller stakeholders initially participated with enthusiasm but they were not really listened to. [...] This administration was able to manage the *hot* phase, encouraging citizens to participate – and this is not an easy city to involve – but then they [the administrators] were not able to manage the following stage, the *cold* phase. [...] They didn't really care, if I can be honest about it. They understood the utility of this instrument and took from it what was useful to them, but did not understand that they had to ensure continuity of the process [SS45 – Academic Expert].

Generally there was a very high response from local stakeholders - also because the incentive of regional funds appealed to some trade and industry associations (SS45) - but involving actors such as private companies, banks, or the Chamber of Commerce proved particularly difficult. The president of the Chamber of Commerce, for instance, was always invited but he never participated. Also with the Bank of Sardinia (*Banco di Sardegna*) there was very little interaction. Banks generally, although they were all invited, did not participate much. [SS42 - Office of the General Director, officer]

Some *assessori* (SS9) also argued that the banks, which could have been interested in co-financing some development projects, proved difficult to engage. They were invited to take part in the process, but they did not appear to see any value in it and showed low levels of trust in the administrators.

I tell you, I don't trust politicians. [...] This was the usual set-up to sell some thin air. So much that the SP started at the local level, then out of jealousy and personal ambition, Giudici [the provincial president] also wanted her own SP. It was clear that it was all just for political visibility. [SS36 - *Banco di Sardegna*]

The administration made a special effort to engage the most deprived neighbourhoods, in Sassari's periphery, S. Maria di Pisa. During a one day workshop, which took place locally in December 2006, residents and administrators worked together on concrete strategies to reduce the socioeconomic gap between the area and the rest of the city. Simple citizens and associations actively engaged with the administrators, while the Church and the local schools in particular emerged as two important local players in the regeneration process.

In this case citizens and association representatives were very much involved and important problems concerning that neighbourhood emerged [during the forums]. We used EASW, because there were too many people to have just focus groups. EASW was better than other methodologies, also because we were discussing specific issues, about the neighbourhood and its development. [SS6 – Local Agency]

Important issues emerged during these neighbourhood meetings, such as the need to transfer the SERT (the centre for drug addiction treatment), which, at the heart of an already problematic area, such is S. Maria di Pisa, heightened the residents' perception of poor security. The daily difficulties and disservices experienced by the local population encouraged high participation in the forums. In fact the new participatory arena was initially perceived to be a place to complain about poor services, refuse collection, or a pavement to be repaired. Eventually the facilitators and the methodologies they employed proved useful in fostering a fruitful dialogue and encouraging the elaboration of innovative ideas and solutions. Projects in this case were much more concrete and easier to implement, which can help explain the more positive attitude on the part of participants.

We had a high response for the working groups where we debated... At my table there were citizens that asked me questions and discussed issues that we are now trying to address. And everything started with those forums. [...] The SERT has been transferred. The local administration will soon fund a project whereby the whole local square will be rebuilt and within 15 days we're going to have a special meeting with the executive which will be open to all citizens. And this new opened approach was encouraged by that initiative [the SP]. [SS20 – Ward President]

Overall the attempt at building a collective actor clashed against several obstacles, specifically the lack of trust of many stakeholders who grew disaffected with participatory experiences, following failure at the regional level, and limited conviction on the part of the political leadership, which only endorsed SP half-heartedly. These factors partly de-legitimised the process, which was left in the hands of the Local Development CEO and a few academic experts, and affected the inclusivity of the process, as the mayor preferred different, less horizontal, channels to communicate with civil society.

#### The Plan

The results of the strategic week and the subsequent focus groups and meetings were elaborated by Demos in a final document. The emphasis is on Sassari's will to reinforce its role as the main administrative and cultural centre of the area, "through the creation of an integrated urban system based on networks of complementarities and synergy with other cities in the North-West of the island." (Document of Sassari's Strategic Plan: 57).<sup>167</sup> According to the final document, Sassari perceives itself at the "heart" of the North-West's economic and cultural system. The city wants to look outside, to the market, and reinforce its internal and external accessibility, in order to access international scientific, touristic and cultural networks, also through urban regeneration and through offering new services (ibid.). The main macroobjectives show the omnivorous nature of a plan that, like the previous ones, expects to cover all policy areas: welfare, the environment, culture, education, governance, new technologies and communication, mobility and urban regeneration. Each project is briefly described and synergies with other projects are identified; an appendix provides more in depth description of all projects.<sup>168</sup>

Whereas the final plan broadly reflected the issues and the ideas that emerged during the process, several project ideas were long-standing proposals pre-dating the SP, or there was in any case a strong commitment on the part of the administration to finance such projects.<sup>169</sup> Here as in the previous three cases, SP became a useful mechanism to "popularise" certain projects, which were already on the political agenda. The inability to select few strategic objectives is apparent, in spite of the stated goal of the process to identify the territory's competitive advantage. This was perhaps inevitable given the pressure of having to match the plan with the dimensions and the requirements of structural funds, as well as having to please numerous stakeholders in order to guarantee high levels of consensus.

You need to identify something that you're the only one to offer, to create your competitiveness. Thus, if Cagliari is the capital and has got the regional opera organisation; if Nuoro has got the ethnographic institute and is investing in local culture and traditions, Sassari has the University, it can count on an important associational fabric – there are several cultural and voluntary organisations. It has got the commuters that can represent a resource. [...] If Sassari wants to rebrand itself as a tourist city, it has to make a choice and make it clear in its SP that its vision is that of a tourist city [...]. Choosing a strategy does not mean that you stop dealing with waste recycling or improving your welfare system, or abandon the protection of the environment. But by choosing a strategy you're giving the city an identity that will always be its own. [SS22 – Local Development Officer]

The final document recommends the need to set up a control room (*cabina di regia*) that will coordinate and monitor the implementation of the plan, a permanent structure consisting of institutional and private representatives. The importance of a control room was also reaffirmed by the mayor in his presentation of the plan to the council. This control room was conceived to be an agile and highly representative structure that would meet perhaps twice a year to monitor implementation and identify financial opportunities. The Local Development office would have offered technical support. However, the control room was never established and the main coordinator of the process – the CEO of the Local Development office – left for another position within the local health trust; the implementation phase stalled and the plan quickly disappeared from the political spotlight.

At the same time, other plans were being elaborated, at different tiers of government. In 2007 the area-based SP at inter-municipal level (*Piano strategico d'area vasta*) was launched and it involved 6 municipalities. The process was also coordinated by Demos and by a committee of academic experts, who employed the same methodologies that were used for the urban SP to facilitate the focus groups. The main thematic areas were the environment, mobility, productive chains, training and culture, welfare, governance and transports, somehow overlapping the urban SP.<sup>170</sup> Although all meetings were open to the public, this process mostly involved administrators and a few private stakeholders, perhaps because identity incentives at a higher administrative level are more difficult to communicate to, and be understood by, the wider community, or because this plan appeared to simply overlap the urban SP.

The elaboration of the new Town Plan, 20 years after the last one, proceeded simultaneously. Being a much stronger and well known government tool, it inevitably catalysed the attention of the community. Experts and environmental associations (SS4, SS45, SS46) that took part in the SP complained about poor synergy between the SP and the Town Plan, since it was clear that the latter, where stronger and more conflicting interests were at stake requiring several compromises, followed its own path. The executive also acknowledged the greater importance of the Town Plan vis-à-vis the SP.

The Town Plan was generally perceived to be more important than the SP. The SP does not interfere with citizens' life in the short term, while the Town Plan has immediate repercussions as well as medium-to long-term effects. Citizens are more familiar with the Town Plan, they understand what it entails. [SS47 – Former *assessore* Environment]

Here as in Trento and Prato, the most symbolic project of the SP, its flagship project, was also part of the new Town Plan, creating at least one clear link between the two plans. This was a redevelopment project of the area of Eba Giara and S.Donato, to create an urban park, with a cycle lane, pedestrian areas and served by public transports. In his 2007 programmatic document,<sup>171</sup> the mayor emphasised the link between the Town Plan and the SP by describing this very project: "It's no accident that this project is among the priorities of the urban SP, showing that this objective reflects people's expectations." The intention was to further legitimise the Town Plan by highlighting the collective endorsement of the project through the SP. Overall as the elaboration of the Town Plan developed, SP soon disappeared from the political agenda, while deep conflicts between property developers, politicians and environmental associations were unleashed.<sup>172</sup>

These things [strong interests, property developers and speculators] have won with this Town Plan. [They didn't feel the need to participate in the SP] because they work at other levels. [...] There was a councillor who said, "I won't vote for the [Town] Plan unless I'm allowed planning permission to build 64 villas". [SS46 – Environmental Association]

Town planning was a more political and technical affair and did not undergo a formal participatory process, although there was a consultative process and by law residents can submit amendments to the final plan.

# **The Implementation Gap**

An office within the Local Development office – which at the time of the SP was part of the Department for Culture and Tourism – has inherited the functions of the *ad hoc* SP office. It has developed an internal database and an information system that serve to monitor SP and help every department to work towards the implementation of the plan through available financial opportunities. "We always have the SP document under our eyes", said a local government officer from that department (SS22). Nevertheless, the plan has not been entirely incorporated by the public administration and local government officers often struggle to understand that their work should be an integral part of a strategy; they cannot necessarily perceive the direct link between projects that should be part of an integrated action. The fact that no evaluation system was in place represents an important weakness which further hampered the operational phase, since there was no mechanism that would help to regularly monitor the process through ex-ante, mid-term and ex-post evaluations. A local government officer (SS22) suggested that cyclical evaluations, perhaps every year, could have helped to have a clearer picture of the process, but such a system, only vaguely considered and never planned in detail, never materialised. The Local Development Department has elaborated a database that includes all SP projects that have been implemented, but this is not enough to give a

consistent and exhaustive picture, also due to the lack of collaboration from other departments. Furthermore, evaluations should ideally be carried out by an independent body, perhaps the control room that was never established.

A few minor and scarcely strategic projects were completed at the time of fieldwork, mainly involving the Youth and Education Policies department, where a very committed *assessore*, who also had a delegation for Citizen Participation, encouraged a strong participatory and integrated approach within her department, assisted by a supportive CEO. These were small projects that would have most likely been implemented even without the SP. However, the participatory forums served to reinforce the *assessore*'s intention to pursue certain projects, since similar issues were in fact raised within the deliberative arenas, thus giving greater legitimacy to her own programme.

In terms of youth policies, the public-private partnership for nurseries went ahead, but it would have happened anyway. It was one of the objectives of the SP, but there was no need of an SP to do this. The project Central Peripheries [a series of participatory initiatives targeting poor children in the most degraded areas and involving teachers, pupils, and their parents] went ahead. We also had a youth forum which involved students and young people in planning youth activities, but it was a disaster. [...] There was participation, but participatory planning needs concrete and quick results. They [the young people involved] produced a nice project for a youth centre and we also had the funds [ $\pounds$ 1 million]. We've been waiting two years now and we still don't know if we can go ahead. Because building regulations in Italy... We're not in China. [...] We also implemented *Ludobus*<sup>173</sup> which engages kids in open air activities... But these were small things... [SS14 – *Assessore* for Youth and Education Policies]

After the elaboration phase political commitment started to fade away. Since the very beginning the process had been for the most part an administrative affair, with only a few political figures – the mayor and a few *assessori* who were directly involved – fully endorsing it, while the rest of the executive and the council kept at the margins. Councillors from both sides stated that, although they were invited to participate in the meetings and roundtables, there was no formal involvement of the council; it was up to each councillor whether to participate or not. They felt the process reinforced the position of the mayor to the detriment of the council, while their initial scepticism was vindicated by the slow progress of the implementation phase. Generally, the importance of a participatory approach to planning was not fully understood by councillors, and SP was perceived, at best, as a tool to access regional funds.

The council voted on the final plan, because those documents represent guiding acts that are the responsibility of the council, but the elaboration of these documents took place elsewhere within the working groups. [...] I thought it was a good experience, albeit limited, [...] exactly because in the end, politically, it's all managed by the mayor and there are precise mechanisms that bypass the council a bit. [...] Overall the council perceived it as something of little importance; they didn't feel as they owned it. [...] Let's say that beyond the usual political dynamics the council didn't understand the concrete usefulness of the process, because it does not appear to affect every day life. It was perceived to be the book of "What I will do in the future, but who knows when". [SS12 – President of the Local Council]

The mayor (SS41) stressed how perhaps the greatest limit of SP in Sassari was the limited political awareness with regard to these instruments, particularly within the council, which tended to have a dismissive attitude. Councillors interviewed pointed out that, as "the true representatives" of the people, they were still the best interpreters of citizens' will, since participatory mechanisms, no matter how open, can never be representative. "My choices are the citizens' choices" (SS7). This attitude can help explain why, with few exceptions (SS12), they tended to focus on the limits of informal participatory mechanisms, which they believed demand institutionalised mechanisms allowing for a more defining role for the council.

The mayor, although he supported the process, had to be regularly prompted by local government officers or by a particularly zealous *assessore* and be reminded about what they were doing and why they were doing it, as politicians tend to focus on more urgent issues, on how politically marketable their actions are. Politicians' lack of familiarity with, and diffidence towards, these instruments also affect the political will to embrace and support collaborative arrangements. Participatory mechanisms can easily turn into political boomerangs and politicians can feel threatened by the challenge of sharing their decision-making power.

I'm not saying that the mayor didn't believe in it. He did believe in the process, at least partly. He's very interested in these novelties, although he might not understand these instruments entirely. But he was intrigued, I think. [...] But then there are many different pressures from different sides... And who is in power is often afraid of these processes, they fear these things might get out of hand and thus they seem dangerous. He [the mayor] feels he cannot decide enough, that it seems that he's not the one who takes decisions, but someone

else does. And this inhibits the will to fully embrace these things. [SS14 - *Assessore* for Youth and Education Policies]

Thus, limited political awareness of participatory instruments and some scepticism on the part of administrators also help to explain the lack of political commitment, which inevitably affected the legitimacy of the process. The mayor already enjoyed high levels of support and legitimacy among the local civil society, following a centre-right leadership that had refused dialogue. He opened other, vertical channels with several local associations; these were easier to control politically than open participatory mechanisms and reduced the political pressure for a strong endorsement of the SP. Politicians struggle to focus on long term projects, as they need quick results and visibility in order to build political stock.

At the political level, there is great focus on ordinary activities, on individual programmes. Often politicians lack a unitary vision. [...] One should also consider that every *assessore* has her own programme, the programme agreed with the rest of the *giunta* and the mayor. She has her own objectives and wants to give her own mark, her own style to her department. The *assessori* can't be mere executors of the SP and they often don't remember, it's not always on their mind. [SS22– Local Development Officer]

It should be emphasised that SP in Sassari as in Lecce was not an entirely voluntary process, since the regional government promoted these instruments which became a means to access regional and European funds. In Sassari, this affected the degree of awareness and commitment on the part of political elites, as they did not have to invest local financial resources to run the process.

The fact that the SP was bound to deadlines imposed by the Region meant that the whole process had to be "compressed" within a few months, leaving limited time for communication and awareness building. However, tight deadlines also encouraged a more innovative approach.

[The tight deadlines] paradoxically gave us – well, we chose to do that – the most innovative element of Sassari's SP, this *strategic week*. We had these time constraints, particularly for the collective process of elaboration of ideas – since all the desk analysis and diagnostic documents had already been produced. [...] But the most original part was this horizontal debate employing all these different methodologies to foster... [these new ideas]. And the fact that we had to squeeze everything within this week, which we called *strategic*, actually worked out, because in a context where people are not used to [this sort of involvement] something like that is more effective, it's like when you launch a big festival... So there was a very high response. [SS4 – Academic Expert]

A very efficient mayor's press office, a dedicated website and the opening of a forum that would encourage and sustain the debate after the *strategic week* 

were all effective tools that tried to offset the negative impact of tight deadlines. However, the local media soon lost interest, after the first enthusiasms fuelled by the impressive work of the mayor's press office, which networked closely with the main newspaper and TV stations. The analyses of La Nuova Sardegna (the most widely read newspaper in Sassari) became increasingly sceptical, particularly when reporting on the area-based plan, which, as argued by a journalist (SS37), was far removed from the local community.

They talk of bottom-up planning and involving stakeholders, but I think the level is too high. These [themes] are hard to understand. This is the feeling. I tried to explain what was going on in the simplest words, also because if one reads the documentation produced by Demos... It's thin air. If you give that stuff to the average reader, he looks at you... This is a dream book! [...] The title [of one of the articles on the area-based SP] was "Technical rehearsals of an improbable future". [...] I have to try to put myself in the reader's shoes. I imagine aunt *Peppina* reading my article on the area-based SP – the name itself is puzzling, frankly. In the end she says, "But if there's no money, what are these people thinking of doing exactly?" [SS37 – Journalist for local newspaper]

With regard to private actors, their focus was rather on individual projects and measures and the SP was perceived to be an arena to push through projects already in the pipeline and that could be financed through regional funds, rather than a space of public deliberation and elaboration of new, collective projects. Among stakeholders, particularly trade and industry associations, there was undoubtedly some scepticism due to previous participatory mechanisms at regional level that failed to produce tangible results.

The problem is that this new [participatory] drive was already hampered from the start, because of previous experiences, and in particular the Region's integrated planning, which progressively lost momentum. If you put people together around a table - especially here in Sardinia where it's always a struggle to involve people - once you have involved them and these people work together and eventually even feel motivated, in the end if they don't see any results people won't get together again to discuss the same issues. There was a learning process and the networking was important, because people get to know each other and they exchanged ideas, opinions, contacts – and later it will be easier to talk to them. But clearly, if you don't see results, next time politicians talk about bottom-up planning, we might keep going [because we are institutionalised associations and it's part of our job], but most people will have stopped believing in it. [SS5 – Industry Association]

The third sector and cultural associations, which naturally have fewer direct channels with the administration, tried to capitalise on the process and participated actively, albeit with some exceptions, as we saw above (SS19). Some associations complained about limited access to the required information, which they believed hampered their clout on the process. The innovative methodologies employed were generally very successful in facilitating a horizontal dialogue among very different actors and the *strategic week* was an event for the community. Pretty soon the general perception was that the plan had just been a way to access funds and that there was not enough political awareness or commitment to implement it.<sup>174</sup> Participation appeared to be more effective where it had a more restricted scope, at the neighbourhood level, in S. Maria di Pisa.

After the approval of the urban SP by the council, the director of the Local Development Department, who had been the committed champion of the whole process, moved to another position within the national health trust. The new director, albeit an expert in planning, had a very different approach and there was a lesser effort in sustaining coordination mechanisms among all the actors. Continuity, once again, is thus crucial for success, but really difficult to secure. The absence of a permanent dedicated SP office and a control room, which could have facilitate the formation of a collective actor, undermined the operational phase. The then CEO of the Local Development Department recently returned to the City Council as CEO for Social Policies, and she is determined to use the SP as a framework for ordinary administration within her department.

My reasoning, now that I'm back is that those ideas, those projects [from the SP], where are they? What are we going to do? [...] I've only been back a few months and, perhaps because they [local government officers from the Social Policies Department] know how important [the SP] was for me, people here at the Social Policies department, although this department did not participate that actively in the SP process... They are already asking me whether we will go back to working on those projects now. [SS40 – Former Local Development CEO]

Since the SP process was initially encouraged through regional and European funds, the administration was reliant on the regional government to implement projects and, unlike other Sardinian cities, Sassari did not perceive its SP as something that could be integral to ordinary administration and financed also through local resources.

For instance, Oristano [another Sardinian city] had the clever idea to say, "No, wait a minute, this SP is not just for the PISU [regional funds for urban development]. I can actually use the PEG [local resources] from each department that can be relevant to the SP." Today Oristano can say that its SP has produced investments for €100 millions. [SS24 – Officer, Regional Evaluation Centre]

As the calls for bids for the EU programme period are being published, some bigger and more strategic projects, requiring partnerships and greater inter-institutional cooperation, might now come back on the political agenda (SS10, SS11). At this point, however, it is yet unclear if and how the stakeholders initially involved in the elaboration of these projects will participate in the implementation phase, since no coordination mechanisms were kept in place (SS11, SS22). The new centre-right administration's regional development plan does contemplate new funds to finance collective and integrated projects elaborated through SP and to enhance the planning efforts carried out so far.<sup>175</sup> The PISU (Integrated Plans for Urban Development) are the new mechanism to fund SP projects under the regional Operational Programme for Objective 2 structural funds. Sassari's flagship project (the redevelopment of Eba Giara and S. Donato – see the previous section) was awarded €25 millions by the regional government, and Sassari recently became a member of the national coordination committee of strategic cities (La Nuova Sardegna 19 February 2011).

Before writing our regional development plan we organised a series of meetings in all provinces. We have examined all plans already elaborated, including the various Strategic Plans. [...] There has been a great planning effort during the past programme period, from the PIT to the new generation of integrated planning and area contracts, and SP should represent the framework of all the previous efforts. The idea is now to stop planning and instead enhance what we already have. [...] The stakeholders' involvement in monitoring and contributing to the implementation of these plans is one of the requirements that underline the rationale behind the regional development programme. [...] We have already opened a blog and we're planning to start an online forum. [SS25 – Regional Planning Centre CEO]

Some worry (SS9, SS14) that, by financing individual projects, the regional government might compromise the overall strategic idea of the SP and thus hamper the integrated approach. To date, most of the projects that Sassari has submitted for funding under the PISU are small projects of the Youth and Education department, with limited strategic impact (SS14).

# **Too Many Plans Too Little Coordination**

The input from other institutional levels was fairly limited if not of outright ostracism. There were severe clashes with the Provincial government - although a centre-left coalition was in power at both levels. The Province, in order to reaffirm its planning functions, decided to launch its own SP, Il Patto per il Nord Ovest (The Pact for the North-West) when Sassari had already started its area-based plan (which already covers most of the province). The two plans were somehow in conflict, also due to a very different understanding of SP as a planning and participatory instrument, and the Province was scarcely involved in Sassari's plan, though it could and should have played an important steering role. An inflation of plans at different institutional levels inevitably caused the familiar planning fatigue among stakeholders, who lamented that having to attend dozens of meetings for different plans that lacked synergy proved time-consuming and unconstructive. The rich season of governance processes that started in the early 2000s was perceived by stakeholders as lacking overall strategy and coordination, while taking part in meetings entails a big investment in terms of human resources, which some actors cannot afford, especially in the face of few tangible results.

In the end all these SPs, PIT and GAL, without a real direction... One can't even target one's resources, focus... We tried to follow some of them, the urban SP and the area-based one. [...] However, these processes mean meetings, whole mornings, whole days, and in the end you can't get the overall idea. So, this phase of governance is very welcome, but if everything happens at the same time and is badly organised, in the end one ends up running from place to place for nothing. [SS5 – Industry Association]

The city generally failed to understand the rationale behind the provincial SP, the Pact for the North-West, as this was perceived by many (SS3, SS4, SS5, SS9, SS11, SS12, SS22, SS24, SS35, SS36, SS40, SS41, SS43) as a vehicle for the provincial president's visibility needs vis-à-vis Sassari, which besides being the provincial capital is also much bigger as a local authority (about 1000 employees vis-à-vis 300 in the provincial administration). The director of the provincial Local Development Department explained how the Pact was conceived as an instrument that would coordinate the various governance processes in the province. It aimed at offering a framework to help integrate all other plans and EU programmes.

[This process] was also self-financed through our own budget and still it has suffered from this pseudo-competition with Sassari's area-based plan. No one understood that the provincial SP aimed to represent a strong link for the inner towns, since the 7 cities which took part in the area-based plan were all coastal cities. [SS33 – Provincial Local Development Department CEO] There were some important failings in terms of communication on the part of the Province, if not only Sassari's local administration but also most private and social stakeholders were not aware of how the Pact related to the areabased SP. Perhaps the new responsibilities devolved to provinces and local authorities over territorial planning have not been fully understood by either tier of government.<sup>176</sup>

There was need for visibility [at both levels]. [...] If the President of the Province has just included this great idea of SP, of a Pact for the North-West, in her programme and at the same time all the major cities in the Province get together and choose Sassari as their main coordinator for this idea of metropolitan city... Well, in theory this is not in conflict with the Province's idea. But you try and make politicians understand this. The idea of "us together" clashes with the political assertion of the *ego*. [SS23 – Director of Local Development Agency]

The Sardinian regional government did not offer either guidelines or support, weakening the level of integration among the plans produced by cities within the same territory and increasing the risk of fragmentation.

At the beginning the idea was to give complete freedom over this instrument that, also at the national level, was new. And more important it was introduced in Sardinia at a point in time where the EU guidelines for the new programme period were not in place. This generated a few weaknesses, since what happened was that each local authority planned in isolation, as if it were a universe in itself, not linked to the rest of the world, based on a self-centred idea of development. [SS25 – Regional Planning Centre CEO]

On the one hand the Region disbursed funds to promote SP and, at least initially, invested in integrated planning at the regional level. On the other hand, the centralising vocation of the Region, both at the political and administrative levels, meant that, once the SPs had already been elaborated – with limited guidance from the regional level – there was no attempt to incorporate local SPs into regional planning. Instead communication between local and regional government proceeded through more "traditional" political channels, through bargaining between the President of the Region and individual mayors.

After that [the conclusion of the SP process] neither the European Community nor the Region kept their promises. From neither side you had something like: "OK, only those who carried out a good SP process will have access to funds". There has been no attempt to incorporate projects [from local SPs] within the regional development programmes... Even in terms of timetable they [the two levels] were completely disconnected and only by chance certain ideas were synergic. [...] You would have expected that the Region's president would come and say: "OK, if there are projects that were elaborated collectively or through the SP they should have priority." No, it wasn't like that, there was one man in power who would bargain directly with each mayor. This was another reason for frustration for those who took part in the SP process. [SS4 – Academic Expert]

Other interviewees also emphasised the responsibilities of the regional level which would send mixed signals, by initially encouraging participation but later reinforcing centralisation and a vertical decision-making process.

Soru [former governor of Sardinia – centre-left administration] made some big mistakes in this respect. He came here with our SP and he expected to decide over what was good or bad in it. That's the negation of the idea of SP. And it's a signal. Because if you do it and you're at the top, then why shouldn't a mayor act the same way, and if the mayor does that and everyone wants to decide on their own small things, then the SP ends in tatters, obviously. [SS14 – *Assessore* for Youth and Education Policies]

# Conclusion

For Sassari the SP represented a consciousness raising process as the city finally confronted a 20 years long crisis. The local context, not used to participation or to being involved in policy-making, responded with mild enthusiasm, following the disappointing results of a regional initiative of participatory planning. Although the city enjoyed the buzz surrounding those months of frenetic planning, most participants were structured stakeholders rather than small businesses and simple citizens. Furthermore, not all trade and industry associations actively took part, overwhelmed by a planning fatigue, since too many participatory mechanisms started simultaneously and at different levels of government. There was never a clear political intention or awareness to create a collective actor around a clear vision of the city, but the SP was rather interpreted as the newly elected mayor's programmatic document.

Tight deadlines imposed from above to access funds meant the plan had to be prepared and approved within less than one year. This had some unexpected positive effects, since it forced the administrators to organise very innovative events within a short period of time. The *settimana strategica* facilitated the awareness-raising process in a context not used to this type of participation. In general, voluntary and civic associations were eager to capitalise on these arenas and on a more open approach on the part of the new centre-left administration, whereas more institutionalised bodies such as the Chamber of Commerce did not feel the need to participate actively. In this respect limited interdependence of actors clearly hampered the leverage and the impact of the process. Contrary to what happened in Lecce, where the availability of regional funds created strong expectations and encouraged active participation of structured actors, in Sassari low levels of trust in the regional government and the absence of clear regional guidelines determined more sceptical attitudes. By the same token, limited political commitment to the process also signalled to stakeholders that substantive decision-making was happening in other venues, for instance where the Town Plan was being discussed. The mayor, who came from the voluntary sector, already enjoyed high levels of legitimacy among civil society and opened new direct channels with several associations, which were easier to control politically than an open participatory process.

If here, as in the other cases, political parties and councillors did not understand the process and remained at the margins, local government officers, notwithstanding some initial resistance, are slowly absorbing this new working culture, particularly within the departments that were directly involved in the SP process, Local Development and Youth and Education Policies, which could count on the commitment of their respective CEOs and the political sponsorship of the two *assessori*.<sup>177</sup>

We now have a well defined SP and we are now at the beginning of the implementation phase, except for two or three small projects that we managed to implement. For everything else we are expecting calls for bids. [The SP] is still an instrument that we are using, since every time we prepare a little project or initiative we verify whether it's linked to the priorities identified by the citizens through the SP – it's like the ultimate test. The civil service now uses a monitoring document (MOF) which, for every call for bids, for every new financial opportunity that comes up, tells us, the politicians, that that particular call for bids fits a particular strategic direction within the SP. But also for the smallest things, the ordinary administration, I personally tend to verify whether it corresponds to the SP. Of course we need to understand that this is not a closed document but that it has to adapt to changes in the context. [SS9 – Assessore for Local Development]

The presence of internal leaders committed to the process, such as the Local Development CEO, was pivotal to ensure coordination and motivate staff. At every level, successful participatory initiatives or implementation of collectively elaborated projects often depend on the coordinated initiative of an innovative public service CEO and a political sponsor. This is why ensuring continuity at both political and administrative levels is crucial for sustaining coordination mechanisms and securing success, and yet difficult to guarantee. Thus, the lack of political awareness and genuine interest in the process, the choice of the mayor to open vertical channels with local associations (which had long been excluded from local policy), thus reducing civil society's pressure for participation, and scepticism on the part of more structured actors jeopardised the attempt at building a collective actor and diminished the legitimacy of the participatory process.

The implementation phase also suffered from lack of inter-level coordination. These processes require a framework of multilevel governance that can ensure consistency at all administrative levels. One of the main constraints, here as in Trento and Lecce, was certainly the different *modus operandi* between tiers of government, which can cause fragmentation of local initiatives and hinder the credibility of a local authority vis-à-vis its community. As Sardinia's regional administration changed, safeguarding the SP process has proved increasingly difficult. Although the emphasis is now on the new PISU as the mechanism through which to implement SP projects, the risk is that every new administration will continue to have its own new acronyms, engendering confusion and exacerbating policy fragmentation.

# PART THREE: COMPARING AND EXPLAINING RESULTS

# **CHAPTER**<sub>7</sub>

# The Politics of Strategic Planning The Case For Renewing Local Democracy

SP has been promoted by practitioners and policy makers across Europe as a new mode of planning that would encourage a strategic approach to local development and offer new tools to foster partnerships, with the underlying assumption that a city, a place, could and should become a collective actor to face the new local and global challenges. These four case studies represent a good test for the efficacy of SP, as they are diverse cases characterised by different socio-economic and political contexts and present different types of political leadership. Comparative analysis can thus provide answers to a set of questions: what is the impact of SP on the local polity? How, if at all, does it affect the decision-making process? Does it facilitate inter-sectoral cooperation, also across different tiers of government, and can it influence working practises? Does it encourage the involvement of new actors in local policy making? Does it foster new networking among associations or help to open new channels between less structured actors and local institutions? Inevitably, expectations were so high that they were bound to be partly disappointed, while the faith placed on the new deliberative methodologies often clashed with political dynamics, inexperience, and weak local planning and administrative capacity. Political interests can hinder or facilitate outcomes, as the latter are often explained by forms and resources of leadership.

Evaluating the degree of success or failure of an SP is certainly challenging since it can have a multi-faceted impact on local politics and the local polity. The observations collected through the comparative case-study allow for some reflections on the value-added of these plans. Notwithstanding strong differences in terms of the socio-economic context and social fabric, in all cases similar dynamics developed. While the process represented an important collective reflection on the state of the local economy and society, limited political awareness and long-term commitment, poor coordination between tiers of government, and the inheritance of traditional administrative and political practices that do not encourage flexibility hindered the outcomes. Nevertheless, SP was still able, at least in patches, to open new channels between different local actors and between associations and the administration. In all cases it represented a learning process for those involved, despite the understandable disappointment with the outcomes (or lack thereof).

Trento is a rich city where the public sector represents the dominant actor; it is characterised by highly efficient public services and a strong political majority, with the centre-left in power at both the local and provincial levels. The economy is based on strong cooperatives and the rich social fabric counts numerous associations. Here SP served to renew the vision of local development, which has been excessively reliant on the public sector, in view of diminishing central transfers. Trento appeared to have the most conducive context to successful SP and, indeed, several measures were implemented within the first few years from the approval of the final plan. However, the plan became a governmental tool, in line with more traditional planning, with scarce involvement of the other stakeholders, while a committed political leadership assisted by technical experts maintained a strong, though exclusive grip on the process. The SP was unable to facilitate cooperation between the local authority and the autonomous Province, which undermined the plan by boycotting the flagship project, hence jeopardising the plan's overall vision.

In Prato, on the contrary, SP was a collective reflection to look for solutions to urgent economic and social challenges, as the textile district is undergoing its deepest crisis yet. The growing immigrant community meanwhile struggles to integrate but is building a successful economy, though outside the legal framework. The Left wing coalition, in power for 63 years, was unable to resolve internal feuds and was increasingly distant from the local community, convinced that they would never lose in what had traditionally been considered a stronghold of the Communist Party. A weak political leadership struggled to communicate effectively with the local community, compromising the legitimacy of the process. Although the SP disappeared from the political limelight, here it facilitated networking between environmental and agriculture associations that created a new association of associations with the aim of protecting and redeveloping the *Parco Agricolo*. The failure of little-inclusive participatory mechanisms spurred bottom-up initiatives, as well organised neighbourhood associations questioned top-down participatory venues and invented their own space for policy-making.

In Lecce SP was not a voluntary process, like in the previous two cases; here there were regional funds available for its financing and the rationale was to use this instrument to invest EU structural funds. Lecce was selected as a representative case of the southern context, which, following Putnam's thesis (1993), suffers from a weak associational fabric and opportunistic behaviours that hinder local institutions. However, the fieldwork unveiled several dynamic associations which took advantage of the new institutional openings and actively participated in the SP. Here, with all the limits of Puglia's proceduralisation of SP, the political leadership teamed up with the expert leadership of the SP office's CEO to facilitate the inclusion of other actors, such as the centre-left-ruled Province, which played an important role in the process, notwithstanding the different political colour.

Finally in Sassari, although there were regional incentives, SP still involved some degree of local initiative. Like in Trento, a new mayor here wanted to emphasise that his mandate represented a break with the past and he opened up to the local civil society. Sardinia's associational dynamics differ from the rest of the South, with high levels of volunteering, although associations are often small and self-referential. The political structure is far more fragmented than in Lecce or Trento, although the current mayor has displayed important mediation skills. However, the process developed into a technocratic affair, coordinated by the CEO of the Local Development Department, who, assisted by academic experts and local development agencies, was the sole committed champion. When she left her job and as regional funds were delayed, the political and administrative focus shifted elsewhere, towards the Town Plan, which attracted stronger interests.

All the plans, albeit to different degrees, stumbled over the operational phase. The pathological implementation gap was often the result of insufficient political awareness of these processes and weak coordination among tiers of government. Short-term political interests inevitably won over long-term strategies. Local leadership was unable to sustain the momentum of the SP and its commitment inevitably faded away, signalling to private and social stakeholders that decision-making would happen in other venues. Weak coordination across tiers, particularly in the two Southern cases where the process relied almost entirely on regional transfers, condemned these experiments to fragmented initiatives, as the new role of the (medium-sized) city is still dependent upon, and often constrained by, higher tiers, since increased responsibilities were not matched by sufficient financial authority or local political entrepreneurial capacity.

Table 7.1 summarises and scores outcomes in each case.

	EFFECTIVE- NESS OF STRATEGIES	PROJECT IMPLEMENT- ATION	INSTITUTIONAL LEARNING	INTER- SECTORAL COOPERATION	INTER- LEVEL COOPERA-	INCREASED ASSOCIATIO- NAL	INFLUENCE ON WORKING
	STRATEGIES	MION		COOLEMIION	TION	NETWORKING	PRACTICES
TRENTO	0	1	1	1	0	0	1
PRATO	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
LECCE	0	0.5	1	0	1	0.5	0.5
SASSARI	0	0.5	1	0	0	0	0.5

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#### TABLE 7.1 IMPACT OF SP

Scores range from 0 to 1

A lack of *strategies* that identify and enhance the city's competitive advantage dented the effectiveness of all plans. Scores on *institutional learning* were determined by whether the administration has established a permanent SP office, as in the case of Trento and Lecce, or a dedicated sector, as in Sassari, to monitor the implementation of SP and to facilitate cooperation among all departments. *Inter-sectoral cooperation* was evaluated in terms of greater integration between sectors.<sup>178</sup> Scores on *interlevel cooperation* were based on the degree of cooperation across government tiers during the planning phase and the extent of collaborative involvement of the provincial and regional levels in the process. *Increased associational networking* was measured by considering whether, and to what degree, associations that participated in the plan later collaborated more intensely with other stakeholders and/or the administration. Finally the *influence on working practices* is strictly linked to *institutional learning* and *inter-sectoral cooperation* and was measured in terms of awareness of the SP within public services and whether the plan has completely been abandoned or has incentivised and strengthened the commitment to governance.<sup>179</sup> The comparative approach also unveiled the effects of the *proceduralisation* of SP in the two southern cities, as it altered the voluntary nature of the process that characterised the other two cases.

This chapter will assess the impact of SP, its direct and unintended effects, by focusing on the three dimensions of the dependent variable: the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, and the operational phase. The hypothesis set out in Chapter 2 was that different forms and resources of local leadership (independent variable) will affect SP outcomes, but such an impact can be constrained or enhanced by two intervening variables: the local culture (pre-existing associational dynamics) and the institutional and political constraints and opportunities that come from other tiers of government (multilevel governance). The case of Trento shows how highly structured associations can in fact exclude weaker or non-organised interests. Furthermore, local associations can be more or less collaborative (the cases of Lecce and Prato are quite indicative in this respect), though this will often depend on how facilitative and inclusive the leadership is perceived to be. The leadership's commitment will send an unequivocal signal that the process is a substantive decision-making arena, and this can foster greater participation.

Institutional constraints and the dynamics of multilevel governance strongly affect outcomes, at times beyond the control of the local leadership. On the one hand, the regional level tends to encourage the new governance arrangements. On the other hand, competition for political visibility between regional, provincial, and local government affects coherence in terms of planning strategies across levels, while a lack of administrative coordination and a different *modus operandi* can determine fragmentation of local initiatives. The section on *Explaining Results* will discuss the empirical effects of variables in order to identify typologies.

The four main dimensions of Le Galès' definition of modes of governance have guided the analysis of each case study which, in order to contextualise the emergence and development of SP, focused on the structure of local society and political institutions (i.e. the degree of the strength of the local government and its links to other levels of government, the economic situation and the influence of the associative sector); the institutionalisation of collective action (the SP and other governance mechanisms that were implemented at the same time, which stakeholders were invited etc.); the political orientation of the local government; and finally the outcomes (the capacity to extract resources from the EU, the state, the region, the market; the type of policies carried out – or not – and their coherence). The emphasis has been on the role of local leadership that can facilitate or hinder two main aspects of urban governance: internal integration and external integration (Le Galès 2002). The first aspect refers to the leadership's ability to integrate different interests, while the second aspect entails the political capacity to situate the local community within the larger context of inter-institutional interaction, in order to present collective local strategies to the outside world and extract resources from higher tiers of government and the private sector. Although the new mayors enjoy more channels, beyond the traditional political party routes, in these four cases they still seem to fall short of the required entrepreneurial skills and often lack the political ability to manage complex local dynamics.

# Assessing the Impact The Formation Of The Collective Actor: Institutional Learning And civic Networking

In the current shaky political and economic climate, coming to terms with a plan that attempts to address uncertainties and identifies a clear focus or vision of the future (see Mintzberg's category of *thinking about the future*)<sup>180</sup> is undoubtedly challenging (Donolo 2003). SP becomes a "self conscious collective effort to re-imagine a city, an urban region or wider territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land use regulation" (Healey 2004: 46). Chapter 1 examines the emergence of and the rationale behind the city as a collective actor. When Pichierri (1997) indentified the five elements that characterise the city as a collective actor (collective decision-making; a strong local identity; integration mechanisms; internal and external representation; a capacity for innovation), he does not assume the city should be viewed as a priori collective actor. In fact, integration of interests becomes a response to new challenges and the collective reflection and ensuing strategies might well serve to legitimise a certain political order and certain interests, while others might be excluded (Le Galès 2002; Pinson 2005). In all four cities there was a more or less convincing effort to create a local identity and the collective reflection on the state of the local society and economy fostered new awareness, but also reinforced in all cases pre-existing ideas of the city and its future development. This might be caused by the fact the weaker interests (immigrants, the poor, neighbourhood associations) were not invited or excluded themselves from a process that they perceived as lacking legitimacy. Within politically charged environments like in Prato, conflicts were further exacerbated; these processes, as often highlighted by the literature, can turn into deadly political boomerangs.

The space offered to new actors was often very limited and collective decision-making was mostly forgone come the implementation phase, but a new form of dialogue was nevertheless opened that should not be taken for granted (Mintzberg's *inclusivity and integrating decision-making*). Some new stakeholders, cultural and social actors, were involved (particularly in Lecce), they brought with them new ideas, but also an all new set of expectations, and fostered new awareness. As these expectations were often disappointed, unintended dynamics were set in motion, often as a reaction to the constraints of the new *invited* spaces (Cornwall 2002). Social capital was, à la Coleman (1988), linked to, and fostered by, action, as the SP - together with other governance mechanisms - acted as a new window of opportunities, which contributed to creating the space where to "invent" participatory alternatives, often from the bottom up. As actors met at the SP meetings they sometimes began to network and this led to collaboration and/or the creation of new associations, thus new social capital.

In Prato, although the SP was eventually put aside, citizen associations met and organised around common objectives such as the Parco Agricolo. Later, during the USP process, as an effective "institutional" leadership was missing, the *critical* action of neighbourhood associations gave way to an alternative participatory platform in opposition to top-down initiatives. In Lecce, local associations such a LUA and Manifatture Knos were able to capitalise on the new openings of the SP to strengthen communication channels with local institutions, and later they started their own highly inclusive participatory workshops of urban planning for the redevelopment of via Leuca with the support of the local administration. Here, invited and invented spaces mutually reinforced each other. In Trento, on the contrary, a structured and collaborative civil society, which although rich and variegate never felt the need to be critical and is sometimes too comfortably close to institutions, partly marginalised weaker and less structured stakeholders. In Sassari, where civil society is less organised than in Trento or Prato and where some smaller stakeholders, such as cultural and environmental associations, were sceptical about the opportunities offered by SP, things are nevertheless changing as a more open administration has renewed the institutional dialogue with citizens.

The attempt at creating a strong local identity, however, failed to convince trade associations and private actors. They initially responded to the call of local administrators, but in most cases they were soon disappointed by lack of leadership's clarity and coherence. In Trento, as examined later, the local administration was not able to involve the Province in the process. The Province is perceived by private stakeholders as their main institutional interlocutor; thus they felt it would not be cost-effective to invest human and financial resources in a process in which the most important institutional actor in local development was not actively taking part. In Prato it became soon apparent that the mayor was politically isolated and for that, as well as because of previous disappointing governance initiatives, SP soon lost legitimacy. In Sassari private stakeholders approached SP with a sceptical attitude, disaffected after participatory planning at the regional level, which had involved hundreds of people, had not produce the expected outputs; lack of coordination between the local and the provincial level exacerbated distrust as too many, non-synergic plans, were launched, causing planning fatigue. Lecce was most successful in involving private stakeholders, who were offered an active role in coordinating working groups, while the process acquired greater legitimacy through the involvement of the provincial level, which worked in a coordinated manner with the local administration. The rationale behind this type of "open" and facilitative leadership will be examined in the section on leadership.

Administrations, perhaps naively, failed to recognise the presence of different and very conflictual interests. These do not necessarily manifest themselves during the elaboration phase, when stakeholders carry out the SWOT analysis and debate on alternative visions, but they emerge strongly at the time when choices must be made and resources have to be distributed (i.e. Lecce's highly politicised control room/ *cabina di regia*). The capacity to aggregate different interests crucially depends on the availability of resources and feasible projects around which to organise networks of actors. In this respect all these processes showed weak coherence between visions and the actual projects. The endless list of projects became a hinder on cooperation dynamics.

The strive to create a collective actor also concerned the public administration, where internal leaders were often able to communicate new values with direct and indirect effects in terms of institutional learning (Selznick 1957).<sup>181</sup> Several new methodologies of governance, management and evaluation of public policies were introduced, sometimes for the first time. While they might not have changed working practices for good, they have come to be part of the professional background of local administrators and have certainly contributed to skill development. Staff that were directly involved in SP (including public employees on temporary contracts and young researchers and scholarship holders – i.e. TR11, SS1, SS42) were later hired in various departments and, as their commitment to the process remains strong, they have formed a community of practice to encourage and diffuse innovative modes of governance and are likely to drive some degree of organisational learning.

Although in all cases the champions of the process came from within the public administration, these internal leaders were often isolated and unable to overcome strong resistance from within other sectors. Nevertheless, Trento and Lecce set up a permanent SP office or Ufficio di Piano (although in Lecce the office was downsized soon after the planning phase),<sup>182</sup> and Sassari established a coordination team within the Local Development Department to increase cross-sectoral collaboration in view of calls for bids at the regional, national, and European levels. In these new offices most employees actively took part in SP and are now committed to a collaborative approach (TR2, TR4, TR11, LE1, LE2, LE5, SS22, SS42). However, the SP offices and their successors are still perceived to be separate bodies within public services, and the SP, like the several innovative programmes of local integrated planning of the past 15 to 20 years, is viewed "exceptional", hence incapable of deeply influencing ordinary as administration (Palermo 2001).

We have not reached that routine incorporation of the SP, it has not been absorbed. There is a lot to do, but I think it mostly concerns the culture of people, because not everyone has the immediate perception that what they're doing is part of a strategy, there is not a direct link. It happened that some sectors presented projects to the *giunta* without even thinking that our department was working on similar things, which were included in the SP, and that we had carried out specific work on that same issue. [...] One has to remember that there is much ordinary administration work which distracts people. They just execute things, so from their point of view this is not their problem – perhaps rightly so. [SS23 – Local Development Office]

Ordinary administrative models can hardly be permeated by the radical change of working practices and roles experimented with during the SP process. Particularly in Sassari and Lecce, where the SP was fed by external financial incentives, there was the perception within public services that it would only continue as long as the "extraordinary" funds were available (LE4, SS23).

However, local administrations are increasingly versed at intercepting funding opportunities from higher tiers of government, and in this respect governance mechanisms such as SP, which encourage large structural planning in a multilevel governance perspective, represent invaluable experience to build new skills upon (TR2, LE2, PR34, SS22, SS42). Where the provincial level was fully involved in, and committed to, the process, as in the case of Lecce, greater cooperation between services across tiers developed, as public service officials met their counterparts at other levels; greater collaboration has continued also after the planning phase (LE2; LE10). Of course, whether these results are enough to justify the large public resources invested in these processes should be a matter of debate; however, since these plans have already been elaborated recognising the positive spillovers can be a fruitful exercise.

With regard to Le Galès' dimension of *external integration*, all four cities struggled to defend and present their strategies to the outside world. Although there has been important institutional and political learning in this respect, all cases displayed limited capacity to extract resources from higher tiers and the private sector in order to implement their strategies. Trento, as it tried to integrate the SP into its ordinary administration and partly involved the private sector in financing the redevelopment of the ex-Michelin area, was perhaps the most effective in this respect. However, failing to involve the Province cost the local administration its most important project, Busquet's redevelopment of the train station and the surrounding area.

Prato, through capitalising on the experience and the networks of the mayor and the Local Development CEO (they both had prior careers in regional planning) was able to intercept European funds to fund the SP process and to involve some private actors in backing the redevelopment of the Ex-Banci area, which was also endorsed by the region. However, as examined above and in Chapter 4, a weak leadership with poor communication skills, internal conflicts, and the change of government jeopardised the initiative. Sassari and Lecce, as already discussed, suffered the limits of forcing the SP process into the strict regulations of the EU structural funds. As local government and local stakeholders relied on these funds to implement the SP, there was limited incentive for them to identify other financial sources.

However, in all cases, SP opened new space for dialogue with nearby cities to rethink local development in a metropolitan scale: the North-Sardinia project with Sassari at its centre; the Prato-Florence-Pistoia axis of manufacturing vocation; the integrated metropolitan system including Trento, Verona, Mantua, Brescia, and Vicenza, to invest in logistics and economic development, but also culture and research; and Lecce's area-based plan and the increasingly popular idea of the Salento Region, with the Lecce-Brindisi axis. It is difficult to foresee how such projects will develop and whether this grand vision will clash against traditional Italian parochialism (*campanilismo*). It should be noted that, in the early 2000s, as the discourse on metropolitan areas was starting to gain greater attention, new and smaller provinces were being created. However, there is certainly growing awareness of the need to team up to overcome the current crisis and optimise financial and human resources.

Finally, the last element of Pichierri's collective actor, the capacity for innovation, still struggled to come through and SP showed limited impact on influencing processes and producing innovative strategies, as examined later. Apart from the novelty of involving new actors and broadening the type of participants in the discourse on local development, SP tends to follow the path of traditional planning; thus the emphasis is still on producing piles of often redundant and wordy documents. This lack of methodological courage has partly constrained the potential of the process.

### The Process: The Democratic Dimension

The activation of structured forms of interaction and participation is a quintessential dimension of SP, and what distinguishes it from more traditional planning. In this respect SP is often a means of reinforcing networking and governance dynamics, and the content of the plan can represent an opportunity to build greater cooperation and social capital (Pasqui et al 2010). Following Fung and Wright's Empowered Deliberative Democracy Model (EDD) (2001), which was discussed in Chapter 1, a participation and deliberative solution generation in order to guarantee three objectives: effectiveness, equity, and sustained participation. Effectiveness will be a key to advancing public ends through effective problem solving and successful implementation, since if the performance falls short of expectations and forgo the *demonstration effect*, the participatory project

will lose legitimacy and jeopardise the credibility of future participatory mechanisms.

Notwithstanding the efforts placed on organising the forums and workshops and coordinating stakeholders in the elaboration phase, the implementation gap clearly hindered the overall impact, since democratic legitimacy cannot simply be about procedures but also demands some substantive elements (Estlund 1997). In all cases, there were important flaws in the organisation of these processes that fell short of the normative standards conceptualised by deliberative democrats and were, for the most part intentionally, scarcely inclusive. It should be emphasised that in all cases the local media, which could have played an important role in guarantying publicity and pressing for accountability of the process, after an initial but short-lived enthusiasm, remained at the margins between scepticism and outright ostracism. Communication was left entirely to the administration's press office. Journalists complained that the documents were "unreadable" (PR11; LE46; SS38) and that the lack of conceptual clarity made it difficult for them to convey the rationale of the process to their readership.

Generally, traditional stakeholders were invited as well as some new social actors; however, (and particularly in Trento and Prato) the process did not reach out to the wider community. Citizens had greater space within other initiatives, such as the Social Plan in Trento and Prato's USP and Town Meeting, notwithstanding, particularly in the case of Prato, the severe limitations in terms of the inclusivity and efficacy of these processes. Sassari and Lecce initially made a greater communication effort, through very active press offices, and attempted to reach non-organised citizens by hosting events such as "the box of ideas." Postcards were distributed in schools and to passers-by in public places to encourage residents to write down ideas and visions of the city's future. These were then collected by local government officers and later fed into the discussion on the plan during participatory meetings and forums. It was a non-rigorous attempt at including in the process the wider public, who was unlikely to participate directly.

In Lecce, the working groups involved several new actors, although they were not all fully aware of what the process entailed or equipped to participate in equal terms with stronger and more structured stakeholders (LE12, LE31, L34). In Sassari, the *strategic week* was devised as a series of public events to raise awareness among the population. Here some associations (SS19) chose not to participate as they felt that the process was not truly inclusive since, whether deliberately or unintentionally, no previous information was given to smaller associations. As they did not know what to expect, they felt they could not give any substantial input and did not want to legitimise the process by taking part.

Overall, the innovation of the deliberative forums and workshops, albeit with many shortcomings in terms of the effectiveness of the horizontal debate, was perhaps more incisive in the two southern cases, which employed novel methodologies to facilitate dialogue. Unlike Trento and Prato, which often relied on traditional assemblies (albeit facilitated by experts), Lecce and Sassari, having launched their process a few years later, could capitalise on the rich experience accumulated by other cities and, assisted by local professionals, employed more innovative, although perhaps formulaic, methods such as the EASW and the OST. Both cities carried out a detailed mapping of all local associations, and the press office's institutional communication was thorough and very effective. Albeit with all the limits examined, the process represented, initially at least, an event within the local community.<sup>183</sup> However in all cases, the focus was less on imagining a new vision collectively and rather on ensuring the "popularisation" of pre-existing planning ideas.<sup>184</sup>

In Sassari, after the strategic week, as stakeholders organised in working groups to elaborate the plan, there was a natural selection, and nonorganised citizens felt somewhat unwelcome.

I don't know to what degree these meetings were a real space of debate. I didn't perceive them as a place of horizontal discussion. There was a schedule of people that had to speak. But it wasn't a moment where people would say, "we have this project..." and where sitting next to the *assessore* and the businessman there was a resident of Santa Maria di Pisa [Sassari's very poor periphery] who could reply, "well, I think so and so." It was not like that and perhaps it was not meant to be. Perhaps it was already a higher level with experts, from academia or the private sector, to decide how feasible the project was, which resources to invest. [...] So I think that they expected the strategic week to be the participatory moment where there was the bulk of ideas. [SS2 - Student]

Working groups focusing on "hot" topics such as urban regeneration were nevertheless highly attended by less structured actors, such as homeowners and disabled people's associations with high stakes in the debate (Fung and Wright's *practical orientation*). They tried to capitalise on the new openings and organised to put forward feasible proposals. The administration, however, as examined later, was not able to (or interested in) enhance this new social capital.

Generally, there was some naivety in placing excessive faith on deliberative methodologies, sometimes following participatory manuals to the letter. They did help to facilitate dialogue, but on their own they fell short of ensuring a truly horizontal decisional environment. They were often formalised and only partly responded to the demands and the cooperation capacity of different contexts, as not enough thought was given to their objectives and repercussions. Furthermore, participatory mechanisms only characterised the elaboration phase, but in all cases the administration did not build upon these early efforts and much of the social capital created through the process was dispersed. Coordination mechanisms stopped in all four cities after the conclusion of the planning phase, as the SP offices were downsized (Lecce) or dismantled (Sassari and Prato). This inevitably dented the legitimacy of the SP as stakeholders, particularly those who had invested considerable amounts of human resources, were often unaware of any progress and felt excluded. If the operational phase in Sassari and Lecce slowed down while local government waited for regional funds to be disbursed, even in Trento, where the plan was integrated into ordinary administration and implementation proceeded rapidly, stakeholders were oblivious to such developments. Since the flagship project of the train station redevelopment was never implemented, stakeholders assumed that the process had stalled (TR7, TR15, TR16, TR17, TR18, TR19, TR26, TR33, TR34).

Trento and Prato invested in an Urban Centre, but were not able (or willing) to develop it into an effective structure that could channel participation on important planning issues. As both cities were undergoing the redefinition of their Town Plan, the Urban Centre could have represented a useful instrument to involve the community in the process. Instead, it came to be perceived by politicians as something to be tamed and was emptied of much of its potential (see Chapter 3).

Overall, there is still limited political awareness and widespread distrust of these instruments that can turn into political boomerangs, as in the case of Prato, and clash against politicians' need for quick returns to build political stock. This often means that a participatory process is enthusiastically opened to increase the initiator's visibility but without an adequate understanding of how it will be managed. As the process develops (sometimes too slowly by politicians' standards, sometimes delivering unpalatable results) political attention shifts elsewhere, generating discontent and disaffection among participants. As in the case of participatory budget in one of Trento's wards, politicians' impatience with procedural lengthiness and initial low levels of participation meant the process was not repeated. However, as explained by the ward president (see Chapter 3), these processes need time to prove their effectiveness; as results are delivered and there is a demonstration effect, more people will participate.

Trento's choice of institutionalising SP, amending its statute to guarantee constitutionally that planning is strategic and participatory, is significant and yet one might doubt its substantiveness, in light of the comments of the author of the Trento's plan (TR<sub>2</sub>), who recognised the difficulty of controlling participation and opted for a less participatory approach in view of the city's second plan. As noted by an officer working for the regional government of Sardinia:

The problem is that this process can be easily bureaucratised. What I mean is that it becomes a process that has to be done, but no one really believes in it. And this is the risk for all processes, especially at the regional level. Because at this level there is always greater intolerance towards dialogue and this generates bureaucratisation. Then partnerships can be perceived as something that has to be done, but with no expectations. This is why it is important to give these processes some structure, otherwise [...] governance turns into a ritual. [SS24 - Regional Evaluation Centre]

Undoubtedly, in all four cases the biggest obstacle to the participatory dimension of SP came from local councils and political parties, where the new governance mechanisms were perceived to bypass traditional representative channels. In fact councillors were scarcely involved in the SP process, whether out of scepticism or scarce awareness, thus missing an opportunity to reinforce their role, which admittedly was curtailed by the mayoral reform. Against such political scepticism a new phase of political turmoil has galvanised Italian social movements, and a new wave of civic lists and grassroots parties, which overcome the left-right dichotomy, is emerging to contest elections against mainstream political parties. They interpret a renewed demand for greater citizen involvement to ensure transparency and accountability, but also to tap into the resources that civil society can offer to a political and administrative system in the doldrums. The risk, as always in Italy, is that of populism or a just as dangerous post-ideological apolitical drift which exhausts itself into the inevitable limits of a technocratic government. This period of uncertainty however offers much more space for innovative solutions and to open new windows of opportunities, as analysed in the section on associational dynamics.

## Understanding (Non) Implementation

The implementation gap that affected all the plans to a different degree can be ascribed to several factors.<sup>185</sup> Certainly the political aspect played a decisive role since short-term political interests and a lack of continuity in terms of political approach and policy decisions compromised results. As the literature often finds (see Chapter 2), politicians' short attention span and the gap between their political interests and collective goods (or between electoral politics and substantive politics – Le Galès 1998) often explains the failure to translate the ambitions of the initial phase into tangible results in the operational phase. Even in the case of forward-looking administrators the short-term political interest is always privileged to augment political stock.

There was also some degree of naivety among political elites and stakeholders in thinking that planning would naturally happen, as the elaboration phase was completed. However, planning, as examined in Chapter 1, succeeds or fails at the point of implementation, and implementation is a moment of decision-making in itself, which also involves several political and administrative levels. In this respect, Trento's second SP, *Agenda 2020*, represents an interesting attempt at reflecting on the meaning of planning and controlling its dynamics by understanding all the clashes, uncertainties, and irrationalities of a decision-making process. SP should have been understood as an ongoing process, whereby the focus was on reinforcing governance structures to foster a collective actor around an overall vision of the city's development. Instead SP became the actual plan, a long list of projects eventually put aside, thus creating false expectations among stakeholders. Although this wishlist can continue to represent a point of reference for future administrations (TR2, LE2, SS22), this approach has constrained the potential of the process, engendering disaffection among stakeholders and perhaps even inhibiting further cooperation. A more open document capable of problematising the process and the vision a bit further would have perhaps required greater inclusiveness, but the participation dimension, as examined above, had many shortcomings. In this respect politics could mediate between two dimensions - wishlists on the one hand and opportunistic behaviour on the other - by containing both flights of fancy that cannot be translated into concrete projects and the risk of limited room of manoeuvre, as the process is hijacked by opportunistic interests or relies excessively on procedural and technical considerations (Pinson 2005).

In the absence of a genuine collective actor with long-term commitment, selectivity and inclusivity will inevitably become mutually exclusive: inclusivity will sacrifice selectivity, as stakeholders opt for suboptimal solutions that enjoy greater consensus; or selectivity will sacrifice inclusivity as the participatory space is reduced. Whereas in Trento the local leadership chose to constrain participation even further for the second SP, to ensure an effective role of the administration as the strongest actor that could guarantee selectivity and prompt decision-making, in Lecce the emphasis was on an inclusive process (also to augment the mayor's legitimacy), which eventually sacrificed selectivity.

Given the differences in terms of local contexts, the four plans and the official documents display surprising uniformity. There might thus be an imitation factor characterising all these processes. The models are often Barcelona's plan, the progenitor of the new wave of SPs, and Turin's plan, which was the very first Italian SP in 1998. Therefore, different contexts, different rationales, and yet very similar formats of the SP documents. The orthodox approach of these plans and their formulaic language reveal a deep standardisation process (also see Pasqui et al 2010), whereby the plan

becomes the crystallisation of the elaboration phase within a very rigid framework.

Sometimes such similarities are explained by the fact that the same development agencies, such as Formez, offer consultancies to local government. However, in these four cases the organisation of the process was for the most part an internal affair, and an SP office was set up to support the administration. Development agencies had a marginal role in Sassari (but Demos is owned by the local and provincial governments) and in Lecce, which briefly relied on an agency from Milan, Lattanzio, to support the SP office on procedural aspects (LE1, LE2). All four cities could count on internal expertise in planning and governance, but, as expected, they referred to previous plans, sometimes using them as blueprints. A public official in Sassari (SS22) confirmed that initially "the whole office was busy downloading the plans of other cities". This would appear as rational behaviour on the part of local administrations. "Organisations tend to model themselves after similar organisations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful" (Di Maggio and Powell 1983: 152). The popularity of certain reforms and arrangements can often be ascribed to such mimetic processes rather than to concrete evidence of their greater efficiency (ibid.). The risk is the transfer of general strategies which could apply to any context but are truly strategic for none.186

All plans include a presentation of preliminary documentation and the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis; the definition of a medium-to long-term vision of the territory's development; and a list of strategies and projects for each policy area. The binomial theme of tourism/environment and culture is present in all plans, even in the case of localities that do not have a tradition in that respect, like Sassari or Prato. Themes of governance, with a focus on strategies to reinforce interinstitutional and cross-sectoral cooperation and to encourage administrative decentralisation, are also recurrent. On the contrary, there is less emphasis on other thornier and more complex themes, such as poverty or social segregation of weaker sectors of the population (immigrants, the new poor). In Prato's plan, for instance, the presence of a growing Chinese community has generated political and social fractures; the issue is analysed in the preliminary documents, yet there are no projects that attempt to foster greater integration, neither were immigrant communities involved in the elaboration process.

There were inconsistencies between detailed SWOT analyses, which demonstrate great awareness of the local socio-cultural and economic challenges, and very ambitious visions that were inevitably perceived to be unrealistic by the community. These plans were somehow imprisoned in a seemingly irreconcilable split between a visionary elaboration phase contemplating grandiose projects, often entrusted to *starchitects* such a Renzo Piano and Joan Busquets in Trento or Alvaro Siza in Lecce, and an implementation phase which entailed a reality check and was often reduced to putting forward smaller projects of limited innovation and impact, disengaged from the high level of the overall framework (Pasqui et al 2010). Healey (2004) reaches similar conclusions in her essay on SP where she highlights the difficulties encountered when translating innovative visions into the reality of legal, regulatory and planning norms, and the constraints of a traditional planning culture.

The weakness of these plans also lies in an overestimation of local authorities' competencies and administrative capacity, as grandiose projects were presented as flagship projects but could not be implemented without the full endorsement of higher tiers of government. The case of Trento, with its project to move the train station underground, is particularly telling in this respect. As the competency pertained to other levels and the provincial government was more oriented towards a high speed rail, the project was never implemented. The two southern plans paid the price of having to rely on regional regulations, which lacked consistency and generated much confusion. Conversely, one of the reasons behind the success of Trento's Social Plan was precisely that the decision-making authority on social policies had been fully devolved to the local level.

In all cases, the *flagship projects* were infrastructural and represented the only link between the SP and the Town Plan (or the Urban Structural Plan in Prato), as in an attempt to legitimise two planning approaches that were otherwise scarcely synergic. Whereas Trento and Prato had to abandon their flagship project (because of obstructionism from higher tiers in the case of Trento, and a change of government in the case of Prato), hence compromising the entire vision of the plan, Sassari and Lecce, a few years on, might have succeeded in securing funding to implement their most important project. Whether this good result ensues from effective leadership or newfound multilevel coordination would be perhaps an optimistic conclusion. Rather these projects were long-standing ideas and the SP might have been in this case successful in putting them back on the political agenda.

Often, bureaucratic machine held responsible for the is implementation failure, because of low levels of specialisation and administrative capacity, but in all four cases the main obstacles were political in nature. Where there was political support and the local government enjoyed full authority over a specific policy, measures (albeit often small) were implemented (see the case of Sassari's Youth and Education Department or Trento's Social Plan). Although inevitably there was some degree of resistance from within public services, innovative proposals often emerged from the bureaucracy. If, as observed by Dente (1990), lack of capacity within the public administration explains the reliance of Italian local (and central) government on external academic experts, in all these cases the experts that drove the process were public service CEOs (albeit aided by academics). This can perhaps be interpreted as a positive sign of growing competence and confidence of local public services, following the Bassinini reforms which have facilitated the entry of experts in local administrations; by the same token, several years of European programmes have certainly encouraged the adoption of new methodologies and working practices based on governance.

# Explaining Results Leadership Resources And SP Outcomes

The SP cycle in Italy has developed during a phase of acute political and administrative crisis in local regulations. The reforms deeply affected local democracy, by altering the relations of power between the council and the *giunta*, and by changing the relationship between a highly visible mayor and the local community. Mayors are now the heads of the local community, and greater visibility and powers can help them to partly free their administrations from excessive interference from party politics (although weak and discredited parties contribute to this effect). Local government has been devolved greater decision-making authority and some tax raising powers; however, it still depends on central and regional transfers and this inevitably weakens local autonomy and problemitises the notion of local accountability. New mayors experience the dilemma of having to respond to several new responsibilities and being directly accountable, in a context of decreasing transfers from the centre, while local government tends to be most penalised by the stability pact enforced in Brussels and by the new cuts. The issue of decreasing financial capacity has been a dramatic one for medium-sized cities faced with the challenge of reinventing a development path in a post-Fordist scenario, like Prato, and in contexts of deep economic crises, like Sassari and Lecce. Local businesses here hardly have the human and financial resources to invest in projects and act as active participants within a governance model. Political parties, after seemingly re-emerging from the scandals of *Tangentopoli* and briefly recovering some strength and influence, have now plunged back into a corruption and competence crisis that has irrevocably dented their credibility and capacity of representativeness, amid growing support for populist and 'apolitical' formations and *civic lists*.

In an uncertain political context, local elected leaders are forced to seek continuous legitimation of policy decisions, which might seem perhaps counter-intuitive in the case of directly-elected mayors. Since political parties are unable to mediate the relationship between voters and elected politicians, the values and the political culture of the elected individual will strongly influence the relationship with the electorate.<sup>187</sup> The entrepreneurial mayors and their executive find themselves in a double role of administrators and gatekeepers, whereby involving the bureaucracy and civil society becomes pivotal in order to guarantee a responsive and legitimate leadership (Galanti 2011).<sup>188</sup> Governance and participatory arrangements, such as SP, can therefore appear as a convenient channel to renew leaders' public legitimation.

The SP process became strictly linked to the resilience of the political leadership, but political visibility was given priority over the formation of a collective actor around strategic actions and this approach jeopardised long-term results. When the leadership changed, even where there was political continuity as in Trento,<sup>189</sup> the SP stalled or was rejected altogether, as in the case of Prato. The political focus had already shifted away from the SP during the second term of Sassari's and Trento's mayors, as the *giunta* changed and the CEOs who had acted as champions of the process moved to a different role. Had SP been understood as a process rather than a list of projects, this might have facilitated its endorsement beyond political divides. Instead the SP often came to coincide with the mayor's political manifesto, which made it difficult for the opposition to endorse it.

All four mayors, apart from Lecce's,<sup>190</sup> launched SP at the very start of their mandate to mark a break from previous administrations in terms of method. This was particularly true in Sassari, where the previous two mayors suffered from Trigilia's *decisional illusion* and vehemently excluded any input from civil society and even trade associations, alienating much support. Conversely, the new mayor, a doctor, came from the voluntary sector and was already well known within cultural and voluntary circles. This undoubtedly served to build support from civil society, and once he was in office several of local associations found a new direct channel with the administration.

In Prato, on the contrary, the new mayor struggled to distance himself from the previous and much contested administration and was unable to resolve or even manage pre-existing conflicts with some sections of civil society, which were in fact exacerbated. Here infighting within the ruling and historically dominant centre-left party inhibited the emergence of an innovative leadership that could have driven change and attempts at building a collective actor were delegitimated *a priori*. By the same token, the ruling party was convinced that it could count on historical loyalty from the electorate and did not feel the need to invest resources in building new legitimacy.

In Trento and Lecce, where leadership developed within relatively cohesive local political structures, the formation of the local collective actor had very different outcomes for very political reasons. In all cases there were strong political incentives to launch the process, as SP represented primarily a way of rescaling (political and financial) power to the local level vis-à-vis higher tiers. This explains the trial of force between the local and the provincial level over development policy. Trento's process clashed against the dominant role of the Province and its governor who understood the local administration's initiative as an attempt to challenge the balance of power between the two levels. Without the endorsement of the provincial level, it was always going to be difficult to create a collective actor, as most structured stakeholders see the Province and the political power. Interdependence of stakeholders within collaborative arrangements is pivotal to produce meaningful cooperation, but it is hard to engender, as more powerful actors can either control the process or have the option of more effective and non collaborative channels (Ansell and Gash, 2007; Innes and Booher 2003).

Lecce's political leadership had the most to gain from building an inclusive process, which would also strategically involve the Province, as it needed to renew its own legitimacy more than the other cases. The current mayor succeeded a charismatic predecessor, who continued to overshadow his mandate, often taking a conflictual stance. By contrast in Trento an efficient local administration did not need to strengthen its legitimacy among citizens and was more interested in involving stronger interests that might have helped to increase its leverage vis-à-vis the Province. This however penalised smaller interests that thought they could capitalise on what they initially perceived as a new opening, but were instead sidelined. In Sassari the process was initially quite inclusive, as a new "civic" mayor wanted to mark a radical break with his predecessors. However, inexperience, fear of losing control over a process there was little familiarity with, as well as the fact that several other channels were being opened with the local civil society, deflated the enthusiasm about SP.

A second dimension of the leadership variable is represented by a technical expert - the public service CEO. In each city the CEO of the SP office or the Local Development Department, assisted by some local government officers, experts from academia and/or local think tanks, became the "champion" of the participatory process on the strength of the backing (at least initially) of the political "sponsor" (Bryson 2004; Hendriks and Tops, 2005). These CEOs played a challenging and decisive role in coordinating the process, often in solitude, as political legitimation faded away, and against the scepticism and reluctance of the bureaucratic machine to accept new working practices (PR34, SS40). They tried to convey new values in the bureaucracy's working practices, based on participatory governance (Selznick 1957). All these figures built their own professional career around themes of governance, through consultancies, publications, collaborations with the local university and other tiers of government. Therefore they also had an interest in furthering their career by enhancing their expertise in governance within the public services.

These chief executives were often supported by a committed staff of young employees, some of whom started their work experience within public services when the SP was launched and who have embraced the new working practices. The limit of the public service leadership, as well as the political one, lies in the difficulty to guarantee continuity. Although CEOs' commitment is less influenced by short-term interests, they often move to different departments or jobs, and the cases examined show how newcomers, who have not "lived" the process since its inception, tend to be less supportive of it, even when they share the underlying rationale and core principles (SS11).

The most difficult aspect for these figures is to act as a bridge between public services, politics and the stakeholders involved. In all cases, at least initially, it was these CEOs who appeared to contribute the most to the emergence of *facilitative leadership*. As examined in Chapter 2, in a local context that is increasingly fragmented, the type of leadership now required to create identity incentives within the new multilevel governance system could be defined as *facilitative leadership*. The case studies demonstrated how facilitative leadership can emerge from the coordinated work of a political sponsor of the process and a champion from public services and/or civil society. Thus, this type of leadership is about supporting and coordinating stakeholders' action, rather than simply being in charge and controlling the process (Denhardt and Denhardt 2003; Svara 2008).<sup>191</sup> A facilitative leadership will be pluralist, so that different people or organisations can lead different phases of the process. The more inclusive and heterogeneous the leadership is - opening up to all sectors of society and spanning across public services, politicians, the private sector, and civil society - the more effective it will be in building wider support around a certain project or vision.

As explained above, political leadership might have more or fewer (personal) incentives to open an inclusive process, but all four case studies show how politics and the bureaucracy have to work closely together to facilitate this type of collective planning. Some public service CEOs and officers provided politicians with innovative policy tools and ideas, even helping to put on the agenda solutions initially not considered by the local executive.

What one [public service officer] should always do is to remind politicians about why we are doing this, in a way showing them a clear goal. They are forced to focus on concrete issues, on conflictual problems, on how politically useful any action turns out to be. They need to be supported on these innovative actions. So, this support of the politician is also part of our responsibilities as the technical side of administration [...] Otherwise they [the politicians] tend to move towards ordinary administration, towards daily business. [SS40 – Former Local Development CEO]

Although collaboration between politicians and bureaucrats is developing and goes beyond decision-making, with the mayor or an *assessore* often closely following policy implementation (Regonini 1993), we are still far from overlapping of administrative and political responsibilities, or Aberbach, Putnam and Rockman's "pure hybrid" (1981). Notwithstanding the increasing presence of bureaucrat innovators that support the mayor or an *assessore*, from interviews with public service officials a widespread scepticism emerged towards politics and its dynamics (PR14), while politicians can at times feel frustrated with what they perceive as bureaucratic obstructionism (PR35).

There is a line beyond which politicians cannot go and the CEOs feel they have to stonewall, otherwise there would a commingling and this is not always understood. From the Town Planning Office the hostility was towards the mayor himself, because they felt the mayor wanted to interfere... [PR35 – Mayor]

Thus, in all cases innovative bureaucrats with previous experience in governance, and an interest in enhancing new working practices within public services, championed a process sponsored by the mayors and, in Trento, Prato and Sassari, one or two *assessori*. In most cases, the "designated" facilitative leadership struggled to emerge, often paying the price of local conflicts, politicians' short attention span and interests, and the difficulty in ensuring continuity (but also the naivety of academic experts and consultants living in a "universe of one" - see Wagenaar 2001 - and "showing excessive faith in the formal aspects of their participatory methods" but "unable to recognise and resolve unexpected conflicts" - see Bussu and Bartels 2013).<sup>192</sup> Table 7.2 defines typologies of leadership, in terms of strength (also determined by the degree of cohesiveness of the local political structure) and inclusiveness. Different forms of leadership determined variations in outcomes with regard to the formation of the collective actor, the democratic process, and implementation.

	Inclusive	Exclusive
Strong	Facilitative (Lecce)	Governmental (Trento)
Weak	Dispersed (Sassari)	<i>Ineffective</i> (Prato)

**Table 7.2 LEADERSHIP TYPOLOGIES** 

In Trento, a strong and fairly cohesive majority with a very popular mayor and very efficient public services – which at the time of the first SP were already undergoing a deep restructuring process through the Social Plan – maintained a strong grip on the process that intentionally restricted the platform of stakeholders involved, as explained above. The process thus combined strong leadership but an exclusive approach that transformed the SP into a *governmental tool*, effective in implementing (smaller) measures but unable to produce a shared vision of the city and form a collective actor. The second SP focuses on few strategic lines and gives even less emphasis to the participatory dimension, reinforcing the choice of a *governmental* approach. This, as mentioned above, might be explained with the fact that the local leadership did not need to increase its legitimacy with the city at large.

The case of Prato proved the most complex; here there was a strong incentive for both the local leadership and private and social stakeholders to form a collective actor in order to face the deepest crisis of the industrial district to date. Because of disagreements within his own party over the benefits of SP, the mayor felt pressured to withdraw his support, financially if not in rhetoric. Notwithstanding the work of the dedicated CEO and the local think tank IRIS, without any genuine political endorsement (and the required resources) the stakeholders could hardly commit to a process that was increasingly perceived to be redundant and ineffective. Pre-existing conflicts and disillusionment with previous governance efforts whose outcomes were disregarded by local elites also contributed to the general scepticism. The local leadership failed to foster and communicate a shared vision of the city, as conflicts with civil society became more intense. When the new centre-right administration gained power in 2009 the SP and its flagship project were put aside, even if this meant losing the regional funds. This happened without flinching from the community and the stakeholders that were involved in the SP, which is another testament to the failure of the leadership to create identity incentives. A coordinated and inclusive leadership struggled to emerge also because of the arrogance of political elites that failed to use this opportunity to renew their legitimacy, as they believed they would never lose an electoral contest in this stronghold of the Left. We could define this typology, weak and exclusive, as *ineffective* leadership.

Overall, leadership in the two southern cases proved more inclusive, for the reasons highlighted above. In Sassari, the mayor displayed important mediation skills within a fragmented party structure. He was thus open to dialogue with the opposition in the council and engaged with civil society, which had long been excluded from local policy-making. By the same token, a very committed public service chief executive closely followed the SP process, assisted by local experts, and was extremely effective at involving and coordinating stakeholders. Here there seemed to be the prerequisites for a facilitative leadership to emerge. However, the commitment of the mayor and the political focus quickly shifted to the Town Plan, where stronger interests and more immediate outcomes were at stake. In this case, the SP was not an entirely voluntary choice of the mayor/entrepreneur; it soon became clear that regional funds would be delayed and that the new regional centre-right administration had a different approach to participatory planning, which contributed to the fading emphasis on the process. The antagonistic attitude of the provincial government that started its own SP and the launch of the area-based plan almost simultaneously also created the perception of an inflation of plans, putting excessive pressure on stakeholders and exacerbating confusion. Without a control room able to coordinate what had initially tried to be an inclusive process, leadership was *dispersed*.

Finally, in Lecce, the centre-right administration vaunted a strong majority, serving its third term, with the new mayor Perrone elected in 2007 after being deputy mayor in the previous administration. Conflicts developed between Perrone and the faction gravitating around the previous mayor and this incentivised the mayor to renew his legitimacy through an inclusive SP which opened up to several new stakeholders.<sup>193</sup> Here, with all the limits of the local public services, a very experienced chief executive - an expert in planning who also collaborates with the regional centre-left coalition on governance programmes - was able to coordinate the process effectively, as he enjoyed the mayor's support. The leadership of the process was thus strong and inclusive, as it devolved the coordination of some working groups to external figures from trade associations and other tiers of government, specifically the Province. In this case, notwithstanding the different political colour of the provincial administration, there was full collaboration, which helped to strengthen the legitimacy of the process. In the end, weak coordination with the regional level, the political limits of a process involving several municipalities (in Lecce SP was area-based), and an excessively politicised control room (the decision-making body) partly jeopardised the implementation phase. Nevertheless SP facilitated the opening of new channels between the administration and cultural and civic associations, while cooperation with provincial offices was also strengthened. The leadership that emerged was thus *facilitative*.

To summarise, different forms of leadership (the independent variable) influence the outcomes of SP in terms of formation of the collective actor, democratic process, and implementation (the three dimensions of the dependent variable). In the two southern cases the leadership needed to reinforce its legitimacy with the city at large, hence the incentive to create broader constituencies of stakeholders and to open a more inclusive participatory process (particularly in Lecce), at least initially. For instance, in Lecce a stronger and coordinated leadership was more successful at the formation of a collective actor, which ensued from a facilitative approach. It was less successful at implementation mainly because of weak coordination mechanisms with the regional level (the multilevel governance intervening variable examined below) and a lack of local resources. By contrast, Trento needed to gain legitimacy vis-à-vis the Province. Here, a strong leadership and efficient public services were able to guarantee effective implementation of smaller measures (which were mostly already in the pipeline and were easily integrated into ordinary administration), but they failed to create that collective actor that could have backed a wider vision of development and helped to represent it externally to higher levels of government. The lack of communication capacity on the part of political elites and the fact that local stakeholders did not seem to understand fully the rationale of the process and the need for a different institutional interlocutor, other than the Province, jeopardised results.

#### **Re-Inventing The Political Space**

Although the participatory process had several shortcomings, as analysed above, it had important spillovers, which often depended on how associations interacted with the local leadership and the new participatory space, whether they perceived them to be inclusive or not, and whether they were willing or able to capitalise on the new openings. In the debate of leadership vs. pre-existing associational dynamics, these cases demonstrate that leadership, when facilitative, and governance mechanisms representing institutional openings can stimulate new social capital around specific actions. Empirical findings show how levels of participation in the process were determined more by the perceived inclusiveness of the leadership and the deliberative arenas than by historical associational dynamics. Table 7.3 identifies some typologies.

	Cooperative	Conflictual
Strong	Exclusive (of less	Critical
	structured interests)	(Prato)
	(Trento	
Weak	Collaborative (with state	Disorganised
	institutions)	(Sassari)
	(Lecce)	

**Table 7.3 ASSOCIATIONAL CONTEXT TYPOLOGIES** 

In Lecce, for instance, the cultural association Manifatture Knos and a group of young architects called LUA were able to open important collaborations with the local and provincial administration, through the SP and other mechanisms of urban governance, such the PIRP (see Chapter 5). Assisted by public services and funded by the local and regional government, these associations organised a series of participatory events for the redevelopment of a neighbourhood, which have so far proved inclusive and effective. However, as associations increasingly interact with government and they conform to and internalise rules, becoming more professionalised, their legitimacy and representation capacity might be weakened (Nicholls 2006).

In Prato, a disappointing SP process represented nevertheless an important arena where civic and environmental associations with similar goals could meet, work together, and increase bargaining power vis-à-vis institutions. Whether these initiatives would have developed without the SP it is difficult to establish, but opening up a collective process and encouraging a reflection on the territory might have triggered new awareness and curiosity among smaller associations or, at least, it might have inspired renewed enthusiasm to put forward certain ideas that were in the backburner. In Trento, the *poli sociali* (see Chapter 3) have become pivotal in involving (and controlling?) the rich social fabric of the city. In those wards characterised by deeper social conflicts and where associations struggle to

come forward, social and youth workers are helping to create meeting points and bring residents together through opening new spaces and encouraging bottom-up initiative. In the past few years, many cities like Sassari and Lecce, which had seen their cultural capital eroded, have witnessed the mushrooming of new cultural associations, despite and perhaps in reaction to the crisis, and whose main characteristic is eclecticism. More open administrations have facilitated this process, and a new wave of associations, albeit outside the logic of the market, seems to indicate the overcoming of the distinction between culture and counter-culture.<sup>194</sup>

However, the conflict between invited and invented spaces (Cornwall 2002) is still far from being redundant, particularly in a context where politics and its formal institutions are perceived to be lacking legitimacy. In Prato, the antithesis between critical and incumbent democracy (Blaug 2002) became very real through the struggle of neighbourhood associations against the USP top-down participatory process. These groups of residents felt the process was neither inclusive nor effective, and their opposition triggered a series of unexpected bottom-up initiatives, finally giving way to a new participatory forum organised by the associations themselves. They questioned the top-down setting of the rules and the agenda, and that "democratic engineering" that Habermas (1987) calls "colonisation", or cooptation of the participants. The leader of these associations gradually developed into a facilitative leader, who, through his own network of contacts and through capitalising on his legitimacy within the community (he is the local GP) and interpersonal skills, was able to develop an alternative participatory project. During the interview, he explained how the associations' practices developed from adversarial *critical campaigning* to pro-active *institutional networking* (Bussu and Bartels 2013):

The idea of the project we are now elaborating with the support of this new administration was actually born during the Town Meeting. There [after months of adversarial politics and boycotting of participatory meetings] we started talking about the structural plan [USP] as citizens, putting forward our vision of what the city should look like... When we started putting forward our considerations [to the left-wing administration] we only got one answer, "No." They would tell us, "You do your own participatory process then..." The new *assessore* [member of the centre-right executive] for Participation, when I proposed our projects to him, said, "I don't know much about this, but if you help me understand, I'll be happy to look into this." And I thought this was a very good beginning. So we kept putting forward new projects and requests, such as a venue where to organise our meetings, which would become the

Citizen's House, and which should have specific features so as to act as an interface between the city and the administration. [PR26]

When the new centre-right administration was elected, a political opportunity structure (POS) (Tarrow 1994) materialised. Tarrow defines the POS as "consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure." He identifies "the opening up of access to power, shifting alignments, the availability of influential allies, and cleavages within and among elites" as the main salient changes in the POS (Tarrow 1994:85-6).<sup>195</sup> Changes in the POS might then affect the capacity of associations to mobilise social capital.<sup>196</sup>

Most members of Prato's neighbourhood associations had strong ideological positions and were initially very suspicious of a right-wing administration. The leader (PR26) is also a left-wing voter but eventually, and through his intermediation with the new government, the project took off. The new administration, which had never been in power before, had an interest in opening up to civil society to widen its support base and compensate for its lack of administrative experience. Thus the neighbourhood associations were able to open the *Citizen House (La Casa del Cittadino)* and they collectively elaborated a series of proposals to amend the local statute regulating citizen participation. In this case facilitative leadership

emerged out of the neighbourhood associations' practices of (1) critical campaigning to find the space to organise pre-existing social pressure and antagonism against the old administration and top down participation that they perceived to be non inclusive; (2) taking advantage of the new window of opportunity opened by the change of government through institutional networking; and (3) structuring themselves into an umbrella association to interface with local institutions while formalising citizen participation by successfully pressing for changes to the local statute (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

In Trento, as in Prato, neighbourhood movements were able to quickly organise and effectively use the local media, attracting greater public attention than top-down participatory processes were ever able to do. These associations created their own space to exercise their voice, what Fraser terms "subaltern counterpublics" (1992), which, as highlighted by Mansbridge (2000), become "laboratories of self-interest" that can enable excluded groups to build a politics of engagement and voice their demands. It is interesting how Prato's counterpublics are now engaging with institutions. Whether the tension between formalism and procedures and the need for substantive outcomes is resolved will depend on whether and how this grassroots facilitative leadership continues to develop, but nevertheless the case of Prato is telling of the limits of sanitised participation, with rules and goals set from above, vis-à-vis the dynamism of bottom-up experiences, where mobilisation is around clear and urgent issues.

#### The Elusive Multilevel Governance

Multilevel governance, an integral part of the discourse on local development (see Chapter 1) continues to represent a major challenge. This intervening variable does significantly affect the role of local leadership in determining outcomes, as was particularly evident in the two southern cases and in Trento. Institutional constraints and weak multilevel governance will integrated determine inevitably compromise strategies and the fragmentation of local initiatives and projects. Although legislation in the past ten years has finally spelt out the division of administrative and legislative responsibilities between regional and local levels, regional government has often failed to resist the temptation to centralise resources and powers. In this respect, the dispute between local and regional tiers has not been fully resolved (Segatori 2003).197

Through the SP process local authorities recognise the need to confront the challenges identified at a scale bigger than just municipal level, requiring inter-municipal cooperation. SP, through agreements and specific protocols, forces local government to overcome a reductive interpretation of its role and its autonomy, as in isolation or in conflict vis-à-vis other local authorities and higher tiers, or private and social stakeholders. However, beyond good intentions, in most cases SP rather than facilitate dialogue exacerbated antagonism, fuelling competition over political visibility, particularly between local government and the provincial level, with the only exception of Lecce. Provincial administrations felt threatened in their precarious role as agenda setters in local development. For years the debate on the role of the provincial level has animated the discourse on Italian local government and there have been several, mostly demagogic proposals to abolish provinces, which generally had to be withdrawn in the face of local politicians' furore.<sup>198</sup> Many interests are at stake and discussing the need for a provincial level is beyond the scope of this study. In these four cases, however, the SP process highlighted overlapping and conflict between municipal and provincial administrations. In Trento, Sassari and Prato, the provincial level chose to launch its own governance mechanisms, sometimes, as in Sassari, in competition with the city's plan. As the approach and methods were different but the scope very similar, this inflation of plans created confusion among stakeholders, who struggled to invest human resources to take part in all the events and resented the lack of coherence between the plans.

A clear connection between regional/provincial policies and local SPs is paramount, and regional-level institutions could have their ideal interlocutors in existing local partnerships and networks (Gangemi and Gelli 2006). Instead Trento's provincial government, which did not feel the need to participate in the elaboration of the SP, had the political and financial authority to undermine it. In order to guarantee implementation and safeguard the credibility of the local administration, the latter should enjoy full administrative competency, decision-making and financial authority over the decisions at stake - as in the case of Trento's successful Social Plan - or be able to ensure the involvement of higher tiers in the process to ensure some degree of coordination, as happened in Lecce with regard to the provincial level.

Puglia and Sardinia's regional governments showed an inconsistent attitude, on the one hand encouraging strategic and bottom-up planning through financial incentives, on the other hand hindering it through a centralising approach, as governance aspirations conflicted with governmental practices and political interests. Here the naivety of the regional administrations, which initially, and perhaps ambitiously, intended to assign greater responsibilities to local government, clashed against its own lack of coordination capacity and local government's limited planning experience. When the regional administration realised that it was not able to coordinate the process in a coherent way through a governance approach, it withdrew into more traditional government practices and the logic of political bargaining.

As examined above, there is an intrinsic conflict in governance mechanisms between selectivity and inclusivity, whereby the latter better responds to the demand for political consensus, while the former might imply a too high political risk. This was particularly evident in Lecce: at the local level the control room became a bargaining game between the mayors of the area-based plan; at the regional level the *progetti stralcio* politicised the whole process reverting precisely into what, it was claimed, the administration wanted to avoid, or the distribution of resources irrespective of the quality of projects (*finanziamenti a pioggia*).

Tuscany is again a different case; here local government treasures its own autonomy. Unlike Sardinia and Trentino, special status Regions that enjoy greater powers vis-à-vis central state but also over their local authorities, in Tuscany local government is politically very strong and the Region has scarce influence over it. This, however, without the required policy coordination, can contribute to furthering the fragmentation of local SP processes and can jeopardise overall coherence. Prato's local government strongly resented regional interference in its USP and, within an already conflictual context, the Region, through the regional Authority (Ombudsman), was unable to act as a *super partes* referee, between the associations on war footing and the leadership torn apart by internal conflicts.

#### The Pros And Cons Of Proceduralisation

One main subdivision within the four cases concerns the aspect of incentives, which clearly affect multilevel governance relationships, and in particular between the local and the regional level, at times severely denting the clout of local leadership. As outlined in Chapter 1 and 2, SP is generally a voluntary process initiated by local government; since 2005 it has undergone "proceduralisation" and cities in the South of Italy were encouraged to link SP to the new EU programme period of structural funds. Whereas in Trento and Prato SP was an entirely voluntary experience, on the initiative of a new mayor interested in emphasising a shift from his predecessors' approach, in Sassari and in Lecce SP was also a response to regional calls to invest EU funds through participatory planning; thus, there was an external solicitation. In Sardinia the SP process was not compulsory and Sassari was one of the first cities to accept the challenge of launching this new governance mechanism, implying some degree of voluntary initiative. By contrast, in Puglia the regional government demanded that local authorities organised themselves into agglomerations of municipalities for area-based planning (*area vasta*). It should be emphasised, however, that Lecce voluntarily launched its own municipal SP, which was incorporated into the area-based plan, and embraced several other governance mechanisms.

One of the problems that arise from linking the SP to structural funds is the pressure to meet EU deadlines. On the one hand, deadlines might be useful to focus the discussion and constrain what could turn into a rhetorical drift with no substantive conclusion; on the other hand imposing peremptory deadlines from above and bending the whole planning process to this effect betrays the rationale of the SP, which needs time to reach its maturity and build consensus over priorities and a large-scale vision. By enacting strict deadlines the risk is to force the process into a different level of planning of smaller impact, which can hardly have medium-to long-term effects. However, there might be some unexpected spillovers. In Sassari, for instance, tight deadlines forced the administrators to organise very innovative events within a short period of time to attract public and media attention - the socalled *strategic week*. This facilitated the awareness-raising process in a context not used to this type of participatory mechanisms and was perhaps the most successful aspect of Sassari's SP.

Camagni (2010) calls southern SPs "artificial" plans and highlights how they are often characterised by a *leadership deficit* deriving from limited awareness, on the part of political elites and other stakeholders, of the need for a plan, which becomes just another way of accessing funds. The plan, he argues, is no longer a means to respond to certain challenges but an aim in itself. The fact that local government in Sassari and Lecce did not need to invest its own resources in the elaboration process and that the implementation of SP was linked to EU funds might have in fact determined both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, since the resources to elaborate the plan could be easily accessed, administrations had nothing to lose in trying, with the risk of lower political awareness. On the other hand, the very presence of resources facilitated the opening of the process and increased participants' commitment, enhancing consensusbuilding over specific priorities. The existence of available resources can, in theory, increase implementation capacity and foster a virtuous process. However, in the case of Lecce and Sassari the strategic aspect was often penalised by the very nature of the European structural funds, which do not lend themselves easily to an integrated approach to planning.

An SP must be a voluntary process, which identifies opportunities around precise choices [or strategic lines], not the opposite, where if there is a call for bid then I will invent a project specifically for that. That's a very old way of planning. And if you consider that structural funds have very rigid regulations which do not bend to the process of integrated planning it is difficult to think that the two mechanisms can combine easily. The Region on the contrary had thought about the opposite mechanism, not a plan but rather a programme of projects. And this represented a fundamental step backward, where there was the expectation that you make the SP to have funds and not that you will eventually access funds to sustain the SP. So this was the distortion of the very idea of SP. [LE43 - Regional Evaluation Task Force, Officer]

In the end, it will prove difficult to fit this great planning effort within EU programming, not only because of insufficient investment in high quality integrated projects, but mostly because guaranteeing coherence between the SP and the EU programmes could be beyond the administrative capacity of Italian local government (Deidda 2010).

Furthermore, while participation in Lecce, for instance, was easier to sustain also because participants felt they could get a slice of the pie, this also fostered opportunistic behaviours as stakeholders were interested more in accessing funds for their own projects than in a collective vision of development. This can generate a *coherence deficit* (Camagni 2010), with plans characterised by high numbers of often self-referential projects that are not always integrated into a strategic vision.<sup>199</sup>

These are omnivorous plans that lose sight of strategy to emphasise instead a sectoral approach. In this respect, regional decisions have exacerbated these failings: the Sardinian regional government chose to finance individual projects through the PISU<sup>200</sup> and the Region of Puglia disbursed preliminary funding for projects ready for implementation, the socalled *progetti stralcio*.<sup>201</sup> This approach further dented attempts to pursue integrated planning. In Lecce, as only few projects could be submitted for the first batch of funds, the *cabina di regia's* (control room) selection was an exercise in compromise to please all the mayors of the area-based plan, once again sacrificing strategy. In Sassari, the first few projects submitted for funding under the PISU were small social policies projects, some of them already implemented or close to full implementation.

Sassari and Lecce's mayors denounced that regional decisions might have been partly dictated by the old logic of redistribution to accommodate all municipalities, particularly those of the same political colour, irrespective of whether they had completed their SP and of the overall quality of their plan. On the one hand, it is understandable that regional ministers were reluctant to distribute available resources only among the municipalities that had completed the SP, since these tended to be economically and socially stronger areas, whereas weaker territories would have been further penalised. On the other hand, changing guidelines and mixed signals from the regional tier generated confusion and resentment on the part of local government.

## Conclusion The Quality of Local Democracy

The literature on the local level (Bagnasco 1999; Magnaghi 2000) often looks at local society as the space most conducive to empowering citizens, by building planning capacity and local knowledge. The local level, as argued by both the literatures on urban governance and deliberative democracy, is believed to be the scale at which society can produce a virtuous relationship between the sense of "belonging to a territory and responsibility for and knowledge of local problems and issues of citizenship and participation" (Fedeli 2011:78). However, this virtuous cycle cannot be taken for granted. In Massey's words (1994:6), "the persistent identification of place with community" is a misidentification, since communities increasingly exist without being in the same place and one place can house many communities. Instead places should be understood as "points of intersection" or "moments in networks of social relations and understandings" so as to have "an extroverted sense of a place" (ibid.:7-8). In fact, as pointed out by Crosta (2003), belonging to a territory can no longer be taken for granted as

imposed upon the actor, as necessarily linked to his/her usage of it. On the contrary, belonging becomes a political choice linked to action. The mobilisation of actors inevitably depends on variable factors that can hardly be generalised. Czarniawska (2004) suggests referring to "action's networks" rather than actors' networks, since the actors ensue from the action, as evident in the case of Prato's neighbourhood associations. The SP could have represented that "action" around which to build a collective actor but in these four cases it fell short of it.

The quality of Italian local democracy and of its representative venues has been put to test by several political and socio-economic dynamics. The crisis of legitimacy for political parties means that these no longer act as vehicles of political participation and are unable to represent magmatic societies, whereby individuals have several different affiliations. Amid increasing dissatisfaction with traditional institutions, neighbourhood associations continue to mushroom fuelling antagonistic and conflictual politics. The latest crisis of national party politics is opening the way to several civic lists, which lack fully democratic internal organisation. Local societies then have anticipated the challenges that national democracies are now facing: the fragmentation of interests and its repercussions on democratic institutions.

The 1990s local reforms have strengthened the local executive and the role of mayors, who are now the heads of the local communities, with which they enjoy a privileged relationship. Conversely, councillors have been divested of much of their previous authority and weakened by recruitment practices which, combined with the evanescence of political parties as a space of political debate and training, affect their level of administrative competence and political awareness.<sup>202</sup> On the one hand, recent reforms have emphasised the "presidential" role of the mayor, who has acquired substantive powers and can now appoint *assessori* and public services CEOs. On the other hand, the practice of governance requires that decision and policy-making become a shared process involving all stakeholders and at different levels. This dual tendency within local politics, at least in the short term, will necessarily undermine the role of the councillors depleting it of substantial functions (Segatori 2003). The empirical research has confirmed

a destructuring process in terms of the organisational capacity of political parties at the local level and their weak leverage on local government through the council.<sup>203</sup> The latter appears unable to perform its functions of steering and scrutiny, the opposition is relegated to a toothless role, and local democracy has been deprived of political mechanisms of checks and balances;<sup>204</sup> one consequence is the worrying budget deficit that several cities, like Lecce, are now confronting. The political discourse on local government in Italy has long emphasised the importance of strengthening decision-making, which has also informed the mayoral reform, in a context that had been characterised by unstable governing coalitions and a weak decisional capacity. From this political context arises the need for renewed and continuous legitimation, beyond the electoral vote, of the mayor's mandate, as citizens demand greater transparency and accountability. However, governance mechanisms can represent at best a partial solution, at worse a further complication. Representative institutions are failing to guarantee local democracy, which cannot solely rely on the mayor and his good intentions to guarantee accountability and good governance; thus, it might now be time to shift the emphasis to the quality of local democracy.

These four case studies do not allow, in their complexities, for easy generalisations, and the findings cannot simply be applied to different types of localities (i.e. larger or metropolitan cities), but they do offer a valid example of the shortcomings and potential of SP in very different contexts. The governance processes investigated display some common traits which can facilitate a comparative understanding of these four stories: the size of the cities and the nature of the mechanisms implemented, also in relation with more general processes of change in terms of political reforms and administrative reorganisation. The comparative analysis has unveiled how different forms and resources of leadership explain varying results, as outcomes are influenced on three levels: the formation of a collective actor, the democratic process (and consequently how the local context responds to the new openings), and the implementation phase. The degree to which local leadership needed to reinforce its legitimacy explained variance in terms of the inclusivity of the process and the incentive for the formation of the collective actor. The SP was an ambitious attempt at reconciling fragmented

interests and creating a collective actor in order to infuse some legitimacy into the representative system, but it was also a means for mayors to capitalise on their newfound visibility and to strengthen their own programmatic document. The rationale was to create collective incentives and constituencies, to legitimise the local leadership and to redefine the scale of development.

There is still a deep chasm between the ideal of collective decisionmaking through deliberation and what political elites understand as participation. There is still much inexperience and unawareness among the local political class on how to manage participatory spaces and how to reconcile the latter with traditional mechanisms of representation. In a context where the directly-elected mayor can augment his/her visibility through these new instruments, which can reinforce his/her legitimacy, their political appeal is strong, but often there is poor understanding of how these spaces will develop and what impact they will have on the local polity. Politicians are now waking up to the realisation that participation is certainly not just a tool for consensus building and that it can in fact exacerbate conflicts, if it is not perceived to be inclusive enough. In fact, these new venues can even augment the distance between the community and the administration, if collective decisions are not followed through, as often happens, delegitimising the participatory exercise and its initiators.

By combining different paradigms - the literature on deliberative democracy, the literature on urban governance and the literature on planning - to carry out the analysis of the empirical phenomenon, this study has evidenced the expectations and the results, disclosing direct and indirect outcomes of the SP in each case and highlighting the positive effects of facilitative leadership. The literature on urban governance has helped to understand the dynamics that led to the emergence of SP and the effort to build a collective actor, as yet another planning instrument promised to help cities to face economic and political challenges, following several and not always fortunate experiments with integrated planning. Scholars of deliberative democracy offered a valid framework to analyse the process, based on criteria such as the effectiveness of communication and publicity, the degree of inclusivity, the role of methodologies, and the interdependence of stakeholders. Finally the literature on planning helped to unveil the intrinsic contradictions of SP, which struggles to move beyond, and might even be less effective than, traditional planning. Governance arrangements continue to clash against short-term political interests, central and local limits, a lack of local resources, as well as working practices and communication methods still much imbued with a traditional and governmental approach.

Overall, these cases would seem to question theories that overplay the role of associational dynamics. This study would seem to disprove Bryson's argument (2004) that SP is particularly necessary where it is unlikely to work, since it requires a rich social fabric that the process will further enhance (see Chapter 1). Leadership can more convincingly explain the success and inclusiveness of the participatory process, which can open new channels between associations and the local institutions, as in Lecce. Leadership, however, can no longer be solely identified with political institutions, as the new governance mechanisms require it to be *facilitative*. Facilitative leadership can emerge from the coordinated work of a political sponsor and a public service CEO or a civil society expert that act as the champions of the governance process and guarantee its inclusiveness and legitimacy; but then it needs to open to other key stakeholders - private, social and institutional. If an inclusive process is pivotal to ensure farreaching strategies, local efforts, even when concerted and fairly effective, can be undermined by weak inter-level coordination, which is a powerful intervening variable. As new social and economic challenges are increasingly on a metropolitan scale, there is growing awareness of the need to create networks across cities and institutional tiers, but multilevel governance continues to clash against the centralising tendencies of the regional level, particularistic interests, political visibility, and a parochial approach to local government.

### What future for Strategic Planning?

After a decade of SP, some questions need to be addressed: is this mode of planning useful, or has its time already passed? Theory and empirical data indicate that an effective plan would have to combine an open and experimental planning style with some degree of institutionalisation and formalisation to safeguard the process against the political cycle and secure some continuity. However, are Italian local planning capacity and multilevel governance too weak to be able to implement such sophisticated mechanisms? SP certainly strengthened administrators' commitment to certain projects and helped them to intercept and systematise long-standing project ideas. In cities like Trento, Sassari and Lecce internal offices continue to work on augmenting inter-sectoral cooperation and to monitor calls for bids and regional and European funds that could help to finance the implemention of the plan. Thus, SP, although now distant from the political limelight, is still present on some local government officers' desks. This does not translate into the success of the process, whose shortcomings have been clearly highlighted, but it should be acknowledged that all these governance programmes also serve to build important institutional learning.

In the cases examined SP was, unavoidably perhaps, deeply tied to, and dependent upon, mayors and their political cycle, which inevitably weakened its impact, since it is more difficult for the opposition to endorse the plan and for the process to continue to enjoy support through changes of government. By the same token, political sponsorship of the process is initially pivotal, and as responsibilities are dispersed the mayor remains the only bridge between traditional institutions and new participatory arenas, while guaranteeing that informal decisions can later translate into tangible outcomes. The solution to this dilemma might be an inclusive control room, not just of political representatives as in Lecce, but gathering representatives of private and social interests, of political institutions – including members of opposition parties - and public services, at different government levels, so as to create a genuine collective actor behind strategic actions. This structure should still be agile enough so as to guarantee final decision-making. So envisaged, the control room could represent an institutionalisation of facilitative leadership and would monitor the implementation of the SP, guaranteeing its inclusiveness also during the operational phase. This would solve the problem of excessive politicisation of the process and its identification with the mayor's mandate. Greater attention to facilitative leadership and to the conditions that can foster it is required in both research

and practice, as a process that can promote dialogue and collaboration on local affordances and constraints (Bussu and Bartels, forthcoming).

The novelty of the SP and the absence of adequate institutionalisation that could secure continuity clearly affected its incisiveness. Out of the four cases, only Trento effectively institutionalised SP, by amending the local statute so that planning now has to be strategic and participatory by law.<sup>205</sup> However, proceduralisation also poses some dilemmas, as on the one hand it could be excessively rigid and constrain the experimental nature of SP; on the other hand, it might not be enough to safeguard the process against the erratic developments of political cycles, as institutionalisation runs the risk of transforming governance processes into yet another layer of bureaucracy.

As invited spaces tend to set the agenda and the rules from above, the democratic intent of these participatory exercises is diminished and mobilisation will be harder to sustain. Opening up a more substantive dialogue with invented spaces could be more fruitful. Further research is therefore needed on how to capitalise on new bottom-up initiatives and open channels between them and local institutions.

Overall SP has not moved beyond traditional planning. In these four cases the few projects implemented were long-standing project ideas and would have most likely happened without the SP. Compared to traditional planning, SP would appear to be weaker in producing exhaustive and highly technical analyses. SP might actually prove to be an oxymoron; planning inherently tends to preserve categories rather than rearranging them and for this it works best when broad strategies already exist, rather than when strategic change is required (Mintzberg 1994). Change that is planned formally is hardly creative but rather incremental, generic, and oriented to the short term (ibid.). Furthermore the conflict intrinsic to SP between centralised synthesis and decentralised initiative risks turning participation into a mere gathering of inputs, discouraging stakeholders' commitment. Perhaps if the rationale is the formation of a collective actor and fostering commitment is crucial, planning should be put aside, while coalition building around either concrete actions or, more ambitiously, new values might be more beneficial.

The face of local democracy has greatly changed over the past few decades. The challenge raised by governance and the practice of deliberative democracy is certainly triggering a wider reflexion on the way we understand local government and on the role of traditional political institutions. New *interactive policymaking* (Hajer 2003) plays and will continue to play an ever important role in the network society, not merely to prevent conflict and build consensus but to renew and redefine democracy, by enhancing the capacity of actors to communicate and interact in an effective manner. However, the cases presented here are yet another testament to the fact that governance mechanisms are not inherently good or bad and their impact on the local polity cannot be taken for granted. They should be seen as structures generating a context of opportunities and constraints, where facilitative leadership will be instrumental in fostering dialogue and sustaining the community's focus on the collaborative process.

### NOTES

<sup>3</sup> Trento is an autonomous Province; Sardinia is a special status Region; Tuscany and Puglia are both ordinary status Regions, but in Tuscany local government has always enjoyed greater autonomy and bargaining power vis-à-vis the regional tier.

<sup>4</sup> The evidence on the effects of decentralisation, in terms of citizen satisfaction, democratic accountability or service delivery efficiency, remains highly contested (Devas and Delay 2006), yet most scholars and policy-makers agree that local policies and services that directly affect people's lives should be delivered at the lowest jurisdictional level, following the principle of subsidiarity. Conventionally scholars distinguish between deconcentration, or the administrative decentralisation of services to local authorities, and devolution, or political decentralisation to locally elected bodies with some degree of financial autonomy, through own revenue sources, and decision-making power on certain policies (Devas and Delay 2006). However decentralisation is hardly that clear-cut and often deconcentration and devolution processes coexist within the same country (i.e. the UK), sometimes leading to tensions between the two (ibid.).

<sup>5</sup> Some scholars understand Western European decentralisation reforms as a response to local demands for greater democratic control and autonomy and a recognition on the part of the central state of regional aspirations, such as in Belgium, Scotland, Spain and Italy (Devas and Delay 2006). However, Hooghe and Marks (2001) argue that at least part of the rationale behind decentralisation is central government's interest in diffusing responsibilities on particularly unpopular or difficult policies, such as the management of schools or the healthcare system. As power over several policy areas is diffused *upward* to supranational decision-making bodies, such as the EU, *downward*, through a decentralisation process, and *outward* to the private market and the third sector (Leonardi and Nanetti 2007), the need for new forms of governance represents a reaction to the challenge of an overall redefinition of the state and its functions.

<sup>6</sup> The "new regionalism" (Keating 1998), however, should not be understood as a homogenous phenomenon, since "[t]he effects of economic change are powerfully mediated by culture, by institutions, and by politics." (Keating 2001:375).

<sup>7</sup> URBAN aims at revitalising socially and economically depressed areas and at renewing decision-making processes by promoting the involvement of local communities; like other EU programmes, URBAN is fostering a network of cities through the dissemination of rules and norms to access funds, in a classic case of hybridisation of different urban policy traditions (Le Galès 2002; Atkinson 2001).

<sup>8</sup> On cross-national learning and institutional reform, specifically in relation to telecommunications, Thatcher (2004:774) argues that, "the analysis of internationalization should include not only economic globalization but also overseas reforms and supranational regulation. Not only can these different forms of internationalization influence domestic politics, but they may combine to produce powerful pressures for institutional reform."

<sup>9</sup> Under the principle of subsidiarity legislation and implementation of national and global policies should be devolved, wherever possible, to the local level (Scholte 2005). Article 5 of TEC refers to the exercise of shared competencies, whereby the European level will exert certain political and administrative functions only when they cannot be achieved by member states individually and when an action by the EU can guarantee greater efficiency (see D'Agnolo 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Already in the mid-1980s the Council of Europe had institutionalised local autonomy through the "European Charter on Local Autonomy", following which local autonomy has become a shared value among European states.

<sup>11</sup> Even a highly centralised state like the UK, having granted devolution to regions which traditionally displayed aspirations to autonomy, such as Scotland and Wales, has introduced regional ministers allegedly "to provide a clear sense of strategic direction for the nine English regions and to help strengthen their links with central government" (http://www.go-se.gov.uk/ournetwork/675481/), although their role has been questioned by many observers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The acronym SP will refer both to Strategic Planning (as a process) and the Strategic Plan; in case of the latter the article will be used (i.e. the SP).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> The need for more integrated understanding of local development, based on vertical and horizontal multilevel governance, is also reflected in the choice of many municipalities to link their Strategic Plan to an area-based plan that covers the entire metropolitan area.

<sup>14</sup> The EU has produced several papers that contribute to the debate on multilevel governance. Already by the late 1990s, a few papers, such as *Towards an urban agenda in the European Union* (EC 1997) and *Sustainable urban development in the European Union: a framework for action* (EC 1998), mentioned vertical integration of governmental actions and partnerships, and stated the need to encourage citizen participation. In 2001, the white paper on *European Governance* describes the levels of responsibilities and competences that will engender successful European governance, and it reiterates the need to make the European governance system more citizen-oriented.

<sup>15</sup> Hooghe and Marks (2003:241) identify two types (I and II) of governance: Type I "bundles competencies in jurisdictions at a limited number of territorial levels, [...] which are mutually exclusive at each territorial level, and the units at each level are perfectly nested within those at the next higher level". Type I thus reflects a simple design principle on which federalism is based. Type II splices "public good provision into a large number of functionally discrete jurisdictions [...] which are task-driven. Hence the same individual may be part of several overlapping and intersecting jurisdictions" (ibid.).

<sup>16</sup> As multilevel governance entails the participation of institutions at different jurisdictional levels and partners from civil society as equals, the literature asks whether the dispersion of power challenges the Westphalian state. While some scholars understand multilevel governance as an alternative to hierarchical government, others believe that policy networks are contained within governmental institutions (Peters and Pierre 2000; Rhodes 2000).

<sup>17</sup> The definition of "familistic regime" derives from the fact that in Southern European cities the lack of welfare arrangements, in a context of high unemployment, places considerable pressure on families, which act as safety nets (Morlicchio 2005). Within the familistic regime, weaker state initiatives and the legacy of clientelism, in a context of reduced transfers from the centre, give rise to a very fragmented landscape in terms of urban modes of governance, ranging from particularistic and clientelistic partnerships to highly empowering participatory experiments (Kazepov 2005).

<sup>18</sup> However, this literature often underplays "the importance of externally imposed structures that predispose local actors to particular forms of behaviour" and the influence of government and external investors (Harding 1997:294). Peterson (1981) argued that policy makers pursue their policy objectives and urban development top-down. His argument is an extension of public choice theory, whereby economic strength becomes the most important goal. As individuals are self-interested, they seek the best tax-to-service ratio and can move to more competitive cities/ regions that meet their preferences. Cities will thus discourage population mobility by strengthening the local economy. Peterson's analysis has been questioned by many scholars, since economic self-interest cannot explain urban politics by itself, as the latter is influenced by interest groups, regime structures and intergovernmental policies (Clark and Ferguson 1983; Stone 1989; Waste 1989; Wong 1990). Furthermore, as analysed in this chapter, devolution and globalization have opened economic development to include a wide variety of public, private, and third sector stakeholders (Basolo and Huang 2001).

<sup>19</sup> Europe is characterised by a dense network of medium-sized cities, which developed during the Middle Ages around a central place that still gathers the political and citizenry symbols (Bagnasco and Le Galès 2000), whereas US cities have a grid structure that develops around business districts, with a tendency towards suburbanisation (Kazepov 2005).

<sup>20</sup> This neo-localism is defined by Bagnasco and Trigilia (1993:95) as "a particular division of labour between the market, the social structures and, increasingly, the political structures, a division which allows a high degree of flexibility in the economy and rapid adjustment to market variations, but also a redistribution of social costs and real benefits from development within the local society".

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> The stated objectives of the EU cohesion policy are: to reduce the gap between poor and rich regions; to enhance employment and social inclusion, by reducing social inequalities. However, the broader goal might be to move towards higher forms of integration.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> When studying network governance in European networks of regulatory agencies, Cohen and Thatcher (2008:67) find that the impact on decision-making is much less incisive than expected, as these networks "do not bind together sectoral actors from private and public sectors: although ERNs are required to consult private actors, those actors are not full members. [...]There is little sign of a major shift in the allocation of formal powers in regulation."

<sup>22</sup> This framework will guide the analysis of each case study.

<sup>23</sup> The role of experts is still important, but rather than pre-empting citizen input, they act as facilitators during popular deliberative decision-making and they bridge the gap between professional and citizen insights.

<sup>24</sup> Tarrow's (1994) Political Opportunity Structure (POS) can offer a useful framework of analysis to explain different levels of associationism and social capacity, in a newinstitutionalist perspective that takes account of political and institutional factors for the formation of social capital, rather than relying on a culturalist, path-dependent explanatory framework (see Putnam 1993). For Putnam volunteer associations appear to be the main locus of social capital, while the role of employment, family or education, let alone institutional design and political agency, is entirely neglected (for a critical analysis of Putnam's work, see Pasquino 1994; Levi 1996; Tarrow 1996).

<sup>25</sup> Ostrom (1990) argued against conventional solutions that typically involve either centralised governmental regulation or privatization of resources. By contrast she found that resource users are best placed to manage their public goods. She suggests the design of durable cooperative institutions organized and governed by the resource users themselves.

<sup>26</sup> These function as spaces of regroupment or withdrawal, but also as training spaces to build political awareness and scale up the agitation to wider groups.

<sup>27</sup> The categories of *invited* and *invented* spaces will be helpful in analysing the case studies of this work, particularly Prato's participatory process.

<sup>28</sup> Crosta (2006) proposes the image of the everyday maker, or the citizens that take part in the policy process as it offers them the opportunity to put forward their own daily actions, whereby daily life can be treated as policies.

<sup>29</sup> The willingness to introduce market innovations in the public sector, following the neoliberal doctrine, has been perceived by many observers as the rationale underpinning the argument for a more opened policy-making process. However arguments against the neoliberal rolling back of the state and certain partnerships (generally where private interests are the dominant actors) do not preclude support for participatory democracy, when the latter is understood in terms of empowerment of stakeholders and marginalised sectors of society, rather than just as an instrument to augment administrative efficiency.

<sup>30</sup> According to Lipset (1984) a democratic electoral regime is legitimate when a large proportion of the population vote, thus as voting turnout and engagement in political parties continue to decline, liberal democracy also faces important legitimacy issues.

Arnstein's (1969) ladder of citizen participation identifies three main tiers of participation: nonparticipation includes processes that are deemed as informative, but give citizens no say over policies and are just a way for officials to advertise their policy decisions; tokenism refers to processes where participants have a voice, but decision-making is retained by the governing authority; finally *citizen participation* describes processes where citizens become partners in policy-making and have semi or fully delegated decision-making authority.

<sup>32</sup> The translation is mine.

33 Formez PA (Public Administration) is a centre offering training, consultancies, and services to promote innovation within public services. It works on a national level and is part of the Department of Public Function of the President of the Council of Ministers (Dipartimento della Funzione Pubblica della Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri). See http://www.formez.it/chi siamo.html

<sup>34</sup> The Contrat de Ville, similar to the Italian negotiated planning, is an instrument that uses contracts to speed up and coordinate transfers from several different ministries towards a particular urban area, in order to elaborate an agreed strategy of development with local authorities and based on local projects (Perulli 2010).

<sup>35</sup> Friedmann noted "The conventional concept of planning is so deeply linked to the Euclidean mode that it is tempting to argue that if the traditional model has to go, then the very idea of planning must be abandoned. The only way around this dilemma – either Euclid or nothing – would be to define planning independently and distinct from the engineering

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> "Key elements are [...] the scope and organisation of actors involved in the making of a mode of governance; the degree of institutionalisation of collective action and conflictresolution mechanism; the combination of political, social, and market forms of regulation; the strength and the stability of mechanisms to aggregate and represent interests" (Le Galès 2002:270). The degree of fragmentation or integration of groups is not stable and remains subject to issues of competition, control, power relations, conflict, and leadership (ibid.).

sciences, which were its original inspiration. Such a definition involves the linking of knowledge to action: planning is that professional practice that specifically seeks to connect forms of knowledge with form of action in the public domain. Although fairly abstract, this definition... allows us to think of a non-Euclidean model of planning." (Friedmann 1993).

<sup>36</sup> In January 1990 central government (Andreotti VII) proposed a motion of confidence to ensure that electoral rules were not included in the bill (Di Virgilio 2005).

<sup>37</sup> Since 1999 mayors can run for a third consecutive term, if one of the preceding two terms lasts less than two and a half years, for reasons other than voluntary resignation. Initially the law prescribed a term to be four years long, but in 2000 terms were extended to five years. Some scholars and practitioners argue that term limits should abolished, in order to guarantee greater continuity and accountability (see Agosta 1999; Bianco 2003; Caciagli 2005; Newell 2007).

<sup>38</sup> In municipalities with over 5000 people, the mayor is elected through runoff voting: if no candidate wins 50 percent of the votes in the first round, all but the two most voted candidates are eliminated and a runoff voting occurs, two weeks later. Every mayoral candidate is linked to one or more lists of council candidates. 60 percent of seats are linked to the winning mayor (unless a different list has won 50 percent of the votes, in which case there is no majority premium the mayor's lists). Citizens can express one preference for a council candidate. Since 2013 national elections for the first time voters in municipalities over 5000 people can express two preferences, provided the second preference is for a council candidate of different gender from the first preference.

<sup>39</sup> When a councillor is appointed *assessore*, she/he has to resign her/his council seat.

<sup>40</sup> In December 2005, central government (Berlusconi II) passed a highly controversial electoral law for national elections, which re-introduced a proportional system, but with a majority premium and closed party lists.

<sup>41</sup> The reforms interpret the 1990s renewed enthusiasm in institutions and the belief that they can shape political preferences, engendering interdependence between relatively autonomous social and political institutions (March and Olsen 1984).

<sup>42</sup> Notable examples of professional politicians who were capable of rebranding themselves as innovative mayors are Antonio Bassolino in Naples, Leoluca Orlando in Palermo or Francesco Rutelli in Rome. However, political newcomers such as Massimo Cacciari in Venice also enjoyed durable success.

<sup>43</sup> In his work on the relationship between central and local government, Tarrow (1977) compared the cases of Italy and France. In France, central transfers were allocated according to bureaucratic criteria, hence a communist mayor would received her share of subsidies from a conservative national administration, just through filling out the forms correctly. Conversely, prior to the reforms, Italian local government would only access central government funding through political influence.

<sup>44</sup> Several mayors, especially in the South, were actually nostalgic for direct transfers from the centre or against privatisation of utilities – since connected administrative appointments constituted political weapons and resources – while others, particularly in the North, showed a clear inclination towards federalism and fiscal autonomy (Pasotti 2007).

<sup>45</sup> Already law 59/1997 had designed the devolutionary process, by planning devolution of new functions and responsibilities to Regions and local authorities. It also aimed to reform public services. This was a *legge delega*, or delegated legislation, whereby the power to legislate on a particular matter is delegated by Parliament to the Executive.

<sup>46</sup> This process is proving fairly slow. The autonomous province of Trentino's electoral law for the provincial council was passed in 2003, whereby both the council and the President are directly elected with a proportional system and a premium for the winning coalition. Puglia finally approved its regional electoral law in 2005. The regional council of Sardinia approved a new statutory law in March 2007 and a confirmative referendum was held in October 2007.

<sup>47</sup> Special statute regions are expected to *adjust* their statute to the new constitutional reforms, but this process is proving painfully slow. However, in the meantime, there exists a clause of "greater favour" (*maggior favore*), under art 10, which preserves special statute regions' specificities and ensures they are automatically recognised the same level of autonomy now granted to ordinary regions, where this is greater than what provided for by their special statute. Furthermore, in view of federalist plans, many argue that special statute regions might become redundant, as attested to by a recent dispute between the autonomous

province of Trento and the regional government of Sardinia and central government regarding financial transfers currently on hold (Tessari 2009).

<sup>48</sup> However, to date only Lombardy and Veneto have discussed a bill and no law has been promulgated.

<sup>49</sup> This is a *legge delega* on fiscal federalism, which will enact art.119 of the Constitution. The main element of the new bill is the levelling of local taxes and transfers to regions based on standard costs of services (the most virtuous regions will be used as a frame of reference), rather than historical levels of regional expenditure, which would tend to foster waste and corruption. However implementation presents several difficulties, as the Senate of the Regions has not been established yet. Furthermore, as noted by the Court of Auditors (*Corte dei Conti*) the financial situation of local authorities and their effective requirements are yet to be examined; there is the issue of central government interference on several key elements, such as the nature of services and the definition of new taxes, which conflicts with Title V. The implementation of *leggi delega* is generally long and confused. Most problematic is the issue of public debt, which has grown steadily to finance local authorities; as resources are devolved to local authorities the burden of the debt is off-loaded on regional government (Uckmar 2009).

<sup>50</sup> ICI (property tax) used to represent the main income for many Italian municipalities; in April 2008 the newly elected right-wing government (Berlusconi III) cancelled ICI on first properties. This severely penalised local authorities, as the promised central funds to offset the steep reduction in local resources following the new bill were not disbursed. Moreover, substituting a tax with central transfers clearly contradicts the devolutionary aims of previous reforms. The Monti government recently introduced a new tax, called IMU (*Imposta Municipale Unica* – One Municipal Tax), which replaces both the tax on land for the second home and the old ICI. Each local authority can apply its own IMU's tax rate, by increasing or lowering the standard rate.

<sup>51</sup> The intervention by the central government on fiscal issues undermines local autonomy. The reduction of the tax on labour, for instance, has affected IRAP, the regional business tax (Bordignon and Turati 2008). The 2007 Internal Stability Pact and Health Pact often simply off-loads the burden of financial adjustment on local authorities, resulting in an increase in local taxes rather than a reduction of expenditures (ibid.). However, there are signs of progress, as virtuous local government can now use surplus to finance investment, introducing greater dynamism in local revenue regimes.

 $^{52}$  In the first round of local elections following the reform, political parties represented only  $^{2/5}$  of all the lists (Di Virgilio 2005).

<sup>53</sup> The biggest challenge to mayors will mostly come from their own majority, as the reform ensures the predominance of the *giunta* over the council.

<sup>54</sup> On how parties operate at one or more sub-national levels, see Hopkin (2008) and Hopkin and Pieter van Houten (2009).

<sup>55</sup> The councillors' loose relationship with their party could reinforce their responsiveness to their constituency, what Newton (1976) defined as the *parochial* councillor, whose main concerns are the problems of his/her ward level electorate; or what Copus (2004) terms the councillor's 'pastoral role'. (Newton (1976) identifies four other types of councillors: the *people's agent*, who perceives herself as a representative of the whole council area, as well as her ward; the *policy advocate*; the *policy broker*, who sees herself as an arbitrator of policy matters; and the *policy spokesman*, who keeps a broader perspective in her relationship with her constituents.) Since day-to-day administration now rests with managers and the cabinet, whereas the reforms push the council towards a role of "scrutiniser" (Berg and Rao 2005), it might be difficult for councillors to cultivate a direct relationship with their ward, beyond personal favours.

<sup>56</sup> It should be emphasised that Italian local political elites, even in the previous system, never showed good planning capacity. However, councillors interviewed generally felt that previous political elites had access to some degree of training through party schools, while the multiple preference system would foster more selective candidate lists. Interviewees often stressed that the absence of structured political parties and the type of political recruitment encouraged by the single preference are at the origin of what many perceive as a deterioration of local political elites.

<sup>57</sup> PR stands for Prato, TR for Trento, SS for Sassari, and LE for Lecce.

<sup>58</sup> As examined in Chapter 7, empirical findings demonstrate the fallacy of the separation between politics and the bureaucracy, as coordinated work between political leaders and

public service CEOs is pivotal to ensure inclusive and effective governance mechanisms.

<sup>59</sup> In several cities, particularly in the South of the country, the real estate and the building sector, the so-called *blocco edilizio*, colluded with local political actors and exerted great influence, also because they were the only actors capable of addressing the problem of lack of housing and infrastructure , albeit operating outside the legal framework (Pinson 2007)

<sup>60</sup> These governance policies have been encouraged by the EU through the 2000-2006 structural funds, with programmes such as Interreg and URBAN I and II, and they represent an integral part of the guidelines for the 2007-2013 structural funds.

<sup>61</sup> Clearly many factors contributed to the rise of successful industrial districts, such as local political subcultures and local actors (Burroni 2005; Trigilia 1989).

<sup>62</sup> Although contemplated by the 1948 Constitution ordinary statute regions were only introduced during the early 1070s. The five special statute regions had already been established in 1948.

<sup>63</sup> Area contracts have the objective to create local development and employment through implementing innovative business strategies, in a context of greater flexibility, through favourable credit terms (Salis et al 2006).

<sup>64</sup> In 1990, a law (142/1990) was passed which established programme agreements (*accordi di programma*); although it only contemplated a role for public administrations, and not for all stakeholders, it acknowledged the need for inter-institutional integration (Bobbio 2004). Since then things have evolved rapidly with new bills on local development (i.e. territorial pacts), urban policies (i.e. neighbourhood contracts, law 662/1996 and 21/2001) and the environment. Law 22/1997 on waste management, for instance, is based on seven types of "programme agreements". Interestingly, the most important inclusive process for environmental policies, Agenda 21, is based on European and international laws, but is not reinforced by national laws.

<sup>65</sup> The translation is mine. This Act is linked to the 1997 Budget law, n. 663, of 23rd December 1996.

<sup>66</sup> Putnam fails to explain why civic cooperation appears to be strongest in the Po Valley region, where mass parties, Socialist and Catholic, rooted themselves during the late nineteenth century. This was a deliberate strategy on the part of Socialist and Catholic parties and helped to create "just the kind of secondary associations that make up Putnam's measures of civic capacity" (Tarrow 1996:394). The difference in performance between North and South seem to depend on political rather than cultural or associational explanations (see Pasquino 1994).

<sup>67</sup> Real estate interests are notoriously strong in Italy, often linked to local elites through clientelistic channels (see Chubb 1982). Political leaders may also build clientelistic ties with citizen associations and social movements, although alliances based on clientelism are unlikely to produce empowerment.

<sup>68</sup> Selznick introduces a distinction between *organization* and *institution*. Institutions are presented as the evolution of organizations, as the latter become less instrumental and more infused with values.

<sup>69</sup> "The collusive lie in all of this is the pretense that the normative pattern is the reality, and the pragmatic departures are temporary deviations" (Bayley 2001).

<sup>70</sup> In public administration and public management, facilitative leadership is a common variable in models that aim at explaining collaborative behaviour within public organisations, cross-sector partnerships, and network governance (Luke 1998; Linden 2010; Sullivan and Skelcher 2002; McGuire 2006; Ansell and Gash 2007).

<sup>71</sup> "Empirical research has identified several best practices by which facilitative leadership can engage people in constructive participatory processes (see Crosby and Bryson, 2005; Linden, 2010; and Williams, 2002 in table 1). By profiling successful facilitative leaders, a close connection has been established between their practices and personalities (see Morse, 2010 in table 1). Particular attention has also been given to the micro-politics and communicative acts through which planners, mediators, and facilitators resolve policy disputes (Susskind, 1999; Susskind and Crushank, 2006; Forester, 1999, 2009; Escobar, 2012)" (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

<sup>72</sup> "In this respect, facilitative leadership is closely linked to the interdependence of stakeholders (Ansell and Gash, 2007). Participants who have strong stakes in the issue at hand and perceive the participatory venue to be a substantive decision-making arena (or do not have access to alternative and more effective channels) will be more willing to commit to the process and take a lead. In turn, facilitative leadership will further strengthen

participants' commitment and (awareness of their) interdependence by sustaining an inclusive political space and fostering common objectives" (Bussu and Bartels 2013).

<sup>73</sup> In all cases new offices (the SP office or its successor) were established to foster greater cross-sector cooperation and coordinate applications to calls for bids at the regional, national and EU levels.

<sup>74</sup> As the number of interdependencies among different levels of government is growing, this second dimension becomes all the more important (Le Galès 2002).

<sup>75</sup> Associations are often used to engaging with institutions through pressure actions for short-term gains (Grindle 2007).

<sup>76</sup> This method has not received much attention, but it represents a mixture of the most similar and most different analysis, or J.S Mills's joint method of agreement and difference (Seawright and Gerring 2008).

77 This is an indicator of leadership strength vis-à-vis the party structure.

<sup>78</sup> Pragmatic and logistical issues also affected case selection (see Gerring 2007).

<sup>79</sup> Putnam's study was based on indicators such as low voting turnouts, participation in referenda, circulation of newspapers and number of sport and cultural associations; Cartocci used circulation of newspapers, electoral participation, blood donation rate, membership in sport associations. Sabatini prefers the indicators employed by ISTAT surveys (data collected between 1998 and 2002), based on five main dimensions: family bonds (bonding networks), informal relationships (friends and acquaintances) and volunteer organisations (bridging networks), active political participation and civic conscience.

<sup>80</sup> Trento, after adopting its first SP in 2000, has already launched its second one; Prato introduced SP in 2004, Lecce in 2005, and Sassari in 2006.

<sup>81</sup> A regional department on citizen participation has also been established.

<sup>82</sup> Although cases were selected so as to test specific theoretical hypotheses, other factors will appear that might show significant influence; thus new hypotheses might be generated (Gerring 2007; Seawright and Gerring 2008).

<sup>83</sup> A list of all participants in the SP process has been issued by each local administration and published on the dedicated website.

<sup>84</sup> Trento: city of opportunities. This title encapsulates the *vision* of Trento's SP which is interpreted by former mayor Pacher's words in December 2000, when the protocols of agreements had just been signed: "The city of Trento intends to look at its future with a strong anticipatory capacity [...], first and foremost with regard to the awareness that a development cycle based on a strong welfare model and public investment is coming to an end. But also with regard to the understanding that the capacity to develop strictly depends on [the capacity of] a city and a territory to generate value" (cited in Detassis and Penasa 2005;26; the translation is mine).

<sup>85</sup> In fact, under the terms of its special status, Trentino-Alto Adige enjoys a positive balance of transfers, as it receives from central state 1.719 euro per person more than what it pays in taxes (http://www.cgiamestre.com/).

<sup>86</sup> Fieldwork in Trento was carried out between January and February 2010.

<sup>87</sup> Trentino-Alto Adige's special status had been promulgated in 1948, following the 1946 agreement between Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi, originally from Trento, and the Austrian Home Secretary, Gruber.

<sup>88</sup> The 1992 Act 266 prevents national laws from having direct effect in the Region, allowing the two Provinces the time to enact them.

<sup>89</sup> It should be pointed out that the phenomenon of voluntary associationism has been subject to a deep transformation, from several social networks of catholic and secular associations to smaller groups where specific cultural identities and interest representation are prevalent (see also Losito 1997).

<sup>90</sup> Available at <u>http://www.laboratoriourbano.tn.it/pianostrategico/</u>

<sup>91</sup> A new plan on mobility and one on tourism policies were recently approved by council.
<sup>92</sup> See Trento's Strategic Plan, available at

http://www.laboratoriourbano.tn.it/pianostrategico/

<sup>93</sup> One *ad hoc* role as Head of Strategic Planning was created to ensure coordination of the whole process; this figure was supported by the director of the Local Development Department, which had already promoted the 1999 forum.

<sup>94</sup> Three scholarships were awarded by the City Council to postgraduate students from the local University to support the organisation of the SP and to carry out research and analysis of the outcomes.

<sup>97</sup> The old website *TrentoFutura* has recently been removed while the rich documentation on the SP published online can now be accessed through the dedicated website of the local urban centre *CasaCittà* <u>http://www.laboratoriourbano.tn.it/pianostrategico/</u>. This would seem to indicate less emphasis on the SP process, as the few channels that had been put in place to foster participation and communication with the community at large have now been closed.

<sup>98</sup> In 1998 the city council had approved the adoption of the change to the Town Plan (122/31 July 1998) and the redevelopment of the area. During those years the PRUSST (Programmes of Urban Regeneration and Sustainable Development) was also adopted and represented an important instrument to reflect on urban transformations. The PRUSST programme was introduced by ministerial decree in 1998. These are programmes of urban regeneration and sustainable development promoted by the Ministry of Public Works. These programmes are intended to fund infrastructural projects for the regeneration of the economic, productive and employment system of a locality, also through environmental redevelopment projects and the regeneration of the local social fabric.

<sup>99</sup> The ex-Michelin area is being transformed into a residential area with a series of cultural and touristic structures.

<sup>100</sup> Abstention under the council statute equates to voting against.

<sup>101</sup> The Province has however devolved several competencies to 16 new districts (the *Comunità di Valle*) instituted with the provincial bill of 16 June 2006 (n.3). The new competencies concern: Primary Education; Social Services; Public Housing; Urban Planning (except for planning at the provincial level and all national, regional and provincial competencies); Economic planning (<u>http://www.comunitavalle.provincia.tn.it/normativa/</u>).

<sup>102</sup> The leader of the association and her husband run their own studio of architecture.

<sup>103</sup> Key individuals only become "champions" of a participatory project if they have a "sponsor" who gives political backing to their often unconventional practices (Hendriks and Tops, 2005). How to obtain and keep such a sponsor is a matter of context-specific activities. <sup>104</sup> See Chapter 1 for a discussion on critical and incumbent democracy.

<sup>105</sup> Fieldwork in Prato was carried out between May and June 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Available at www.pratoagenda.it.

<sup>107</sup> Prato still produces 27 percent of all Italian textiles. However, according to *Unioncamere* (the Italian union of all chambers of commerce), in 2001 Prato was 16<sup>th</sup> in Italy in terms of per capita GDP, but in 2010 it was 44<sup>th</sup>, losing 28 positions within 9 years; by far the worst performance in the country (Trento is 12<sup>th</sup>; Sassari 76<sup>th</sup>, and Lecce 94<sup>th</sup>). (http://www.go.camcom.gov.it/allegati/pdf/statistica/valore-aggiunto.pdf).

<sup>108</sup> Out of 7000 enterprises, half are owned by Chinese. The rate of registration turnover at the Chamber of Commerce is 60 percent. This means that every year six out of ten businesses close and six new are opened, always the same ones but with a different name (Corriere della Sera 06-11-2010). This also explains the discovery that a money transfer company in *via Pistoiese* in 18 months transferred to China about €550 million through 60,000 operations of under €12, 500 (Pieraccini 2010).

<sup>109</sup> At the end of his mayoral term Romagnoli went back to his post at the regional government.

<sup>110</sup> It should be noted that the antagonism between Florence and Prato dates back several centuries, as the latter has long been trying to emancipate itself from the perception of being just a suburb of the former. Prato was in fact bought by Florence from Naples' Angioini six centuries ago, for 17,000 florins and long treated as a colony to exploit.

<sup>111</sup> Data from Prato's Chamber of Commerce confirm that the output of textile industry fell by 5.2 percent in 2009, whereas the clothing industry grew by +10.6 percent in the same year.

<sup>112</sup> Such ambitions, albeit laudable, are perhaps naive, since Prato would be competing with one of the world capitals of art, Florence, only a few kilometres away. In this respect the vision of the plan shows some weaknesses in framing the competitive advantage of the territory.

<sup>113</sup> The SP process' overall cost was €1m and 200,000 (La Nazione 4-11-2005).

<sup>114</sup> This was a project financed by the EU and involving Tuscany and three other European

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>95</sup> The Council of Trent (Latin: Concilium Tridentinum) was the 16th-century Ecumenical Council of the Roman Catholic Church. It is considered to be one of the Church's most important councils.

 $<sup>^{96}</sup>$  2/3 of the 73 measures listed in the final plan were implemented within a few years since ratification by the council.

regions, West Midlands, Vastra Gotaland, and Saxony. The project aimed at equipping traditional industrial districts with the technology and know-how to face de-industrialisation processes, investing in logistics and services to enterprises (<u>www.intoscana.it</u>; Il Tirreno 05-11-2005).

<sup>115</sup> The project's specific objectives are:

- to identify, share and exploit the partners' T&A knowledge-base of productive knowhow and creative heritage as a driver for innovation and inspiration source for the production of new high added-value and environmental friendly T&A products;
- to create a transnational cluster combining the partners economic, technological, and creative resources in order to integrate R&D, fashion and design know-how in the productive chain, to support the interaction between emerging designers, textile museums, training and research centres and T&A SMEs, and to facilitate the creation of new enterprises in the T&A sector." (http://www.texmedin.eu/)

<sup>116</sup> The first agreement protocol was signed in 2005

(http://www.regione.toscana.it/regione/multimedia/RT/documents/2011/02/24/212eac6f4 24c10493ae148a87c710085\_docprogterrparco21febbraio2011carteqcbassarisoluzione.pdf).

The rationale of the project is to develop a series of policies to enhance the cultural identity of the territory, protect the environment, and encourage its economic potential in a sustainable way (i.e. local small-scale farming and tourism)

(http://www.parcodellapiana.it/live/index.php?a=open&ids=4992b3f2e30cf&id=49a3bcbe 396cf&l=it).

 $^{117}$  SP was linked to the Local Development Department and the USP to the Town Planning Office.

<sup>118</sup> This figure was instituted with the law on participation 69/2007.

<sup>119</sup> That same evening, the associations organised the screening of the film "Hands over the city" (*Le Mani sulla città*), a famous Italian film on the interests and collusions behind planning decisions, followed by a public debate (La Nazione 26-03-2009).

<sup>120</sup> "A bridge towards economic, social and cultural development." This is the title of Lecce's SP, which encapsulates the vision of Lecce as driving the development of the area and bridging between the diverse 31 municipalities involved in the area-based plan.

<sup>121</sup> Fieldwork in Lecce was carried out between September and October 2010. At the time of fieldwork the councillors and *assessori* interviewed were still in office, but since May 2012 a new administration, headed however by the incumbent mayor, is in government.

<sup>122</sup> In the whole *Mezzogiorno*, small individual firms are prevalent compared to other arrangements, such as cooperatives or bigger enterprises: 55.7 percent of all registered enterprises, 62.6 percent of newly registered enterprises, and 71.7 percent of failed ones (Svimez 2011).

<sup>123</sup> In 2011 Puglia registered a + 0.3 percent growth (Svimez 2011).

<sup>124</sup> The agreement between the public and private sectors foresees the creation of three sites overall; the other two sites will be based in Bari and Foggia.

<sup>125</sup> In 2011 there were 25,000 fewer entrepreneurs than in 2010 (Ilvo Diamanti, cited in Linkiesta, 16 August 2012).

<sup>126</sup> 6 percent of all spinoffs in Italy, whereby Puglia is only second to Friuli, in the North-East.

<sup>127</sup> Puglia still benefits from convergence policies as an Objective 1 Region.

<sup>128</sup> Among Southern regions, Puglia is second for perceived risk of crime, with 34 percent, following Campania (54 percent) (Svimez 2008). The local mafia, Sacra Corona Unita, found its specificity in its connections with Eastern Europe's criminality. As it never had the same perverse ties with local institutions as those established by other mafias in Campania, Sicily or Calabria, it has always been a marginal phenomenon in Puglia. However, in Lecce a few *assessori* were charged with aiding and abetting local mafia organisations, within a criminal investigation on the last Poli Bortone's administration, which also involved the mayor and the deputy mayor at the time (current mayor Perrone), who were charged with abuse of authority (La Rebubblica 23-10-2003).

<sup>129</sup> OST (Open Space Technology) is used for citizen assemblies involving high numbers of people. Participants freely decide what to focus the debate on, within the thematic areas agreed; the assembly, coordinated by a facilitator, defines concrete actions. This methodology facilitates spontaneous collection of ideas and suggestions that would otherwise struggle to emerge (Bobbio 2007).

<sup>130</sup> His father, who had been the regional president, tragically died in a car crash in 1988.

This event contributed to increasing Raffaele's popularity and brought him to political limelight.

<sup>131</sup> This administration was not able to complete a full legislature and the council was dissolved in 1997.

<sup>132</sup> Fitto, former minister of Regional Affairs and Local Authorities in the last Berlusconi's Government (Berlusconi III), was indicted by Bari's Office of the Prosecutor for corruption and illicit party funding. This was a case of rigged calls for tender, as he contracted out the management of 11 hospitals to the entrepreneur Angelucci, whose Group donated €500,000 to Fitto's party list during the electoral campaign for the 2005 regional elections. On 12 February 2013 Fitto was sentenced in first instance to four years in prison and five years disqualification from public office. The Italian criminal justice system is articulated in three levels: *Primo Grado* (court of first instance), *Secondo Grado* or *Appello* (court of second instance or Appeal), and *Cassazione* (Court of Cassation). The first two judgements are independent from one another. The *Cassazione* is a judgment on the regularity of the first two judgements.

<sup>133</sup> Italian local government can borrow independently (art. 202 D.Lgs. 267/2000); local mechanisms of checks and balances are thus all the more important. Recently UK-based investment banks have been accused of mis-selling financial products to Italian cities and regions (swaps and derivatives) in deals worth €35bn, causing a debt crisis in several communes. "Although these Swap deals appeared to offer attractive interest rates, in reality the regions had unwittingly placed their own taxpayers on the hook for complex derivative bets which would end up costing them far more than expected." (http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-19545849).

<sup>134</sup> A PIT (*Pianificazione Intergrata Territoriale* - Integrated Territorial Planning) constitutes of several highly cohesive cross-sector initiatives involving several public and private actors to pursue local development. The activation of a PIT follows a long preliminary phase whereby the Regional Planning Centre involves the Provinces in an outreach action to define the themes of the projects.

<sup>135</sup> The thematic areas are: agriculture and rural development, environment and energy, sustainable urban development, social inclusion and wellbeing, infrastructure and transports, innovations and enterprises, legality and security, tourism, and information/ media.

<sup>136</sup> Measure 5.1 includes several government initiatives for urban regeneration and redevelopment: it promotes projects that improve the quality of life of provincial capital cities and the competitiveness of regional urban systems within a regional strategy aiming at coordinating and organising urban and metropolitan functions.

<sup>137</sup> Social Policies plan, see Chapter 2.

<sup>138</sup> According to interviewees (LE2, LE15, LE38) Via Leuca is a particularly interesting neighbourhood from a sociological perspective, since it is traditionally poor and over the years has attracted several immigrant communities and students. It is close to the town centre, but it did not benefit from the regeneration projects financed through the previous EU programme period. The process started in autumn 2008. The first phase consisted of theatrical performances and outreach activities taking place in the high street to capture the residents' attention. A week of workshops and events followed (11/17-10-2009): a cycling event was organised to explore the neighbourhood with the residents and collect initial reflections. A mobile information point was set up and it became an operative office to register for activities. An old bus was also used to move around the area reaching out to local residents directly. The groups and associations carried out several studies and surveys and all documents are displayed in the library of the local school. The second phase of the Laboratory started in March 2010, whereby, based on information and impressions collected in the autumn, associations and the citizens who took part in the process elaborated a few regeneration projects, which became part of Lecce's Strategic Plan and will be implemented involving local professionals and citizens. After a period of silence, in July 2011 an agreement was signed between the administration and the 13 associations involved to finally start the implementation phase. LUA and Manifatture Knos also applied for a new regional call to finance regeneration projects. The projects submitted are a prosecution of what already started in Via Leuca, including the conversion of an old manor house into a guest house, a site where to carry out several workshops and an audiovisual library where to store all the material and documentation produced.

<sup>139</sup> Overall the whole SP process for all the area-based plans of the Region cost €11.5 million,

also including extra funds to Lecce and Bari under Measure 5.1.

<sup>140</sup> These are: welfare, management and usage of cultural heritage, cultural events, strategic planning and urban development, public works, environment, urban mobility and transports, local development and internationalisation, rural development, local governance, knowledge society (*società della conoscenza*).

<sup>141</sup> Available at <u>http://www.areavastalecce.it/on-multi/Home.html</u>

<sup>142</sup> This tool includes a section dedicated to the selection of, and interaction with, stakeholders called "Stakeholder Engagement Standard", which considers general criteria to identify stakeholders, based on 6 main points: responsibility, influence, proximity, dependence (on the local authority for resources), representativeness and strategic and political influence (i.e. those stakeholders, such as the local university, which can provide information concerning specific problems and have the resources to address them).

<sup>143</sup> The project, however, had a troubled course and was marred by alleged irregularities in the bid, to the point that a few officials were sued (Il Quotidiano 11-05/ 09-06-2010).

<sup>144</sup> According to the last Svimez report (2011), Lecce is one the few consolidated strong areas in the region.

<sup>145</sup> Only two or three projects per area could be submitted.

<sup>146</sup> In fact individual mayors' need for visibility unleashed predictable dynamics. Even with much compromise to keep everyone happy, a municipality sued the city of Lecce before the Regional Administrative Court because its own projects were not submitted for the first batch of funds (the *progetti stralcio*). This further contributed to slowing down the process (LE44).

<sup>147</sup> Progetti Integrati Territoriali (Territorial Integrated Projects), a type of social pact.

<sup>148</sup> Lecce's SP office collected a few prizes for its work. The initial dossier of preliminary documents for the SP "A bridge towards socio-economic and cultural development" received a national acknowledgement by winning the Quality award within the programme *Sfide* 2007 (Challenges 2007) (<u>http://www.re-set.it/sfide2007/cdrom/home/home.html</u>) promoted by the Department of Development of Territorial Economies (DiSET), section "Good Ideas". Later Lecce's Area-Based SP received another prize at *Sfide* 2008 (http://expo.forumpa.it/page/37384/sfide-2008-scelte-strategiche-per-la-governance-

territoriale-dall-idea-alla-realizzazione) in the category "From idea to practice". Lecce was awarded these prizes because it showed that it could pursue a governance strategy capable of coordinating a plurality of actors and high-level professionals for an integrated action of growth and development (www.areavastalecce.it)

<sup>149</sup> See Chapter 2 and Chapter 7.

<sup>150</sup> This is the title of Sassari's Strategic Plan: Sassari beautiful, good and strong. The *vision* of the plan envisaged a city characterised by a coherent and harmonious development; a welcoming city that cares about all its citizens' needs, especially the weakest sectors of the population; and finally a city that can develop a strong and sustainable economy.

<sup>151</sup> Interviews were conducted in Sassari between November and December 2009. At the time of fieldwork the councillors and *assessori* interviewed were still in office, but since May 2010 a new administration is in government, headed by the incumbent mayor that was re-elected with 65 percent of votes.

<sup>152</sup> Like the rest of Sardinia, the city suffers from a vertiginous decline in population growth. Within less than four decades, Sardinia went from having one of the highest birth rates in Italy to the lowest. Low levels of immigration mean that Sassari, unlike other cities, especially in the North of Italy, cannot count on immigrants to reverse the trend towards rapid population aging. A recent study by the Department of Economics of the University of Sassari calculated that within the next 50 years Sassari's population size will decrease by 50,000, while the number of both immigrants and emigrants will grow (see http://www.istat.it/it/sardegna).

<sup>153</sup> At the regional level, the centre-left was in power between 2004 and 2009, with Tiscali tycoon Renato Soru as president. In 2009 the centre-right coalition won the regional elections, and Ugo Cappellacci is the new president. Voting turnouts continued to decline, with only 67.58 percent of voters against 71.2 percent at previous regional elections in 2004.

<sup>154</sup> Mayor Ganau's popularity also drove the re-election of the more controversial centre-left incumbent at the provincial level, Alessandra Giudici, who received most votes in the city of Sassari.

<sup>155</sup> These three phases correspond to three different approaches to planning and development. Between 1962 and 1974 with law 588/1962 and a new Extraordinary Plan of

Regeneration (Piano di Rinascita) central government aimed at financing Sardinia's economic and social rebirth by encouraging industrial development. A second plan in 1975 (law 268) amended the previous bill and encouraged an agrarian reform. Finally in 1991, the regional statute was amended and article 13 launched the so-called Third Plan of Regeneration (Mazzette 1991:133). This third phase (1990-2009) is characterized by greater decentralization and, at least in rhetoric, a more incisive bottom-up approach.

<sup>156</sup> See chapter 2 for a description of all these instruments.

<sup>157</sup> For a definition of PIT, see Chapter 5. A PIA (Area-based Integrated Plan) involves a series of strategic projects on policy areas such as productivity, infrastructure, environment and services. The regional government, together with the provincial governments, issues directives on how to organise a PIA, including the objectives, the methods and the priorities that should be considered when elaborating and implementing the projects. It also indicates funds and financial resources, as well as the total amount to be spent (Salis et al 2006). In Sardinia the PIT and the PIA, as they entailed a phase of top-down planning, responded to the Region's aspirations to regain that decision-making power which had been questioned during the 1990s.

<sup>158</sup> See Chapter 2 for a description of this bill.

<sup>159</sup> This was because of disillusionment and general lack of trust after a previous cycle of integrated planning launched back in 2001, when the regional administration had not been able to finance the participatory projects.

<sup>160</sup> The project cycle normally consists of five main stages: identification, preparation, appraisal and agreement by the supporting agency and Government, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. For participatory projects this cycle should be conceived as a flexible and fluid process, whereby one or more phases could be merged or even suppressed.

<sup>161</sup> This method was devised in the 1960s and was initially employed by USAID and some UN agencies. The German development agency GTZ has developed it into a more organic form and introduced the figure of the moderator, who helps the stakeholders to identify proposals. This method is now part of several EU programmes and tied to some funds, such as Europe Aid. It is structured in two phases: analysis and scoping.

<sup>162</sup> The award Sfide. Scelte Strategiche di sviluppo (Challenges. Strategic Developmental Choices) for the section Buone Idee (Good Ideas).

<sup>163</sup> Like in other Objective 1 Italian cities, Sassari's SP was financed through European and regional funds under Measure 5.1 for urban policies.

<sup>164</sup> In 2006 Sassari's local authority became a shareholder of DEMOS. The agency has been going through financial difficulties in the past few years and all the 9 employees were recently made redundant (La Nuova Sardegna 01-08-2012).

<sup>165</sup> Each day entailed lectures and forums on a particular aspect of Sassari, its cultural life, development potential, the local University, services, and quality of life; and each day had a different and symbolic title: A competitive Sassari, A caring Sassari, A sustainable Sassari, Sassari as a University city, A liveable Sassari.

<sup>166</sup> About a month after the end of the strategic week in October 2006 the "Forum of cultures" took place where all cultural associations operating in the area were invited to debate about how to enhance and promote cultural activities in Sassari. At the same time another forum, on Youth, coordinated by the Department for Youth and Education and the agency Policy, was launched. OST (Open Space Technology) and focus groups were among the methodologies employed to facilitate the debate (www.comune.sassari.it). 167 Available at

http://www.comune.sassari.it/sito piano strategico/piano strategico 28 giugno.htm.

<sup>168</sup> Most projects concern environmental issues – and in fact the focus groups on the environment were highly attended - from waste recycling to investments on renewables and a more sustainable management of the water cycle. (In terms of energy Mezzogiorno produces more than it consumes, and regions such as Puglia and Sardinia are at the forefront on renewables. For solar energy production, Puglia is first among southern regions, with 28 percent and Sardinia second with 22 percent. Puglia is also the strongest producer of wind energy (26 percent), 98 percent of which is produced in the South of Italy. (Svimez 2011)) A series of projects aimed to increase accessibility and mobility, whereas others concern the redevelopment of the town centre, being also linked to a previous PIT and to the new Town Plan. Most welfare projects targeted children and old people; only one project aimed at helping disabled people to lead more independent lives through new services. However, there were no projects to foster greater integration with new immigrant

communities. Projects for local development were generally oriented towards new technologies, such as a Wi-Fi network to cover the whole metropolitan area and the creation of an e-government model, as well as a new centre of engineering and ICT research. Finally a few projects intended to enhance the cultural offer, for instance through fostering a network of local museums and a creativity district to sustain and encourage local cinema, fashion and music.

<sup>169</sup> For instance, the Start-Cup to coordinate and encourage greater interaction and facilitate technological transfer between academic research, local businesses, and industries (SS1); projects regarding the urban regeneration of the town centre; projects for the redevelopment of the town centre, already contained in the Town Plan; the Local Produce Fair to increase competitiveness of local producers, to shorten the agricultural and food chain of production, and to promote local produce in international markets.

<sup>170</sup> The final plan of the urban SP was ratified by the council in June 2007 with 20 votes in favour, out of 28 councillors present. Eight councillors abstained. The area-based plan was approved in September 2008, with 18 votes in favour and 11 abstainers. <sup>171</sup>Available at

http://www.comune.sassari.it/comune/sindaco/sindaco\_relazione\_annuale\_o7.pdf)

<sup>172</sup> There were several controversies regarding the final Town Plan, which was initially rejected by the regional government for inconsistencies with the overall regional regulations, and later questioned by environmental associations and citizens for irregularities, which determined the indictment of the *giunta* and all the councillors that voted to approve the plan (i.e. the whole majority). The trial is ongoing.

<sup>173</sup> *Ludobus* consists of a van containing various entertainment tools and interactive games, driven by youth workers through deprived areas to engage local children.

<sup>174</sup> In this respect there were also timetable issues since the SP process was launched at the end of the past EU programme period (2000-6), while calls for bids for the new programme period (2007-13) had just been published (SS43).

<sup>175</sup> 34 Sardinian administrations now have an SP.

<sup>176</sup> Until the past administration the Province did not have an actual role in planning and local authorities only had a nominal local development office. Within the past 15 years, the idea of planning and the discourse on governance have enjoyed increasing popularity and there has been great emphasis, at least in rhetoric, on decentralising planning from regional to local offices. During the past administration, since the EU requires integrated planning and partnerships as a precondition to access funds, both the local and the provincial government started to invest in human resources to reinforce their planning capacity. Several experts were brought into the public administration both at the local and provincial level.

<sup>177</sup> After the 2010 election the *giunta* has changed, and the *assessori* who were directly involved in the SP process are no longer in the cabinet.

<sup>178</sup> Results are mainly based on accounts of CEOs and public officials interviewed.

<sup>179</sup> Since the other complementary plans were also considered, Trento scored highest in *influence on working practices* because the Social Plan radically changed the organisation of the Social Policies department, as discussed in Chapter 3. Trento is also the only city to have institutionalised SP, by amending the local statute, and it has launched its second SP.

<sup>180</sup> Chapter 1 outlines the three rationales underlying SP, according to Mintzberg (1994): *thinking about the future* of the city, or the construction of a vision; *integrating decision-making*, by creating a coalition of actors as governance tool; and *improving coordination mechanisms*, as a government instrument to increase inter-sectoral coordination.

<sup>181</sup> Dente (2007) also finds that these plans tend to deliver intangible rather than concrete results.

<sup>182</sup> This is because regional funds covered the costs of the new SP office only during the elaboration phase.

<sup>183</sup> However, it should be emphasised that here as elsewhere not all the stakeholders invited felt at ease within the workshops and less structured actors struggled to have their voice heard.

<sup>184</sup> To different degrees this is true of all four cases.

<sup>185</sup> As observed in Chapter 3, the fact that Trento implemented 2/3 of its SP projects within two or three years raises doubts about their strategic impact or whether they would have happened even without the SP, which might have simply served to systematise them.

<sup>186</sup> However, sometimes organisational modelling can trigger innovation, as imperfect

attempts to imitate unwittingly engender unique features (Alchian 1950). The idea of the *strategic week* in Sassari was a creative response to strict deadlines imposed from above.

<sup>187</sup> Weber (1949) first identified the pre-modern character of local power, as this is strongly influenced by physical proximity and personal relationships between administrators and citizens.

<sup>188</sup> Today scholars tend to believe that the innovative stance interpreted by the first directlyelected mayors has run out of steam, and there is now growing demand for forms of institutionalisation and consolidation of the innovations of the early to mid 2000s (Pasqui et al 2010).

<sup>189</sup> In Trento, the new mayor Andreatta had been *assessore* and deputy mayor under the previous administration. However, political continuity on its own was not enough to ensure a continuous emphasis on SP, which had already diminished during the second term of mayor Pacher, who launched the plan.

<sup>190</sup> As examined in Chapter 5, Lecce's mayor, Perrone, had already been part of the previous administration and was perceived as the heir apparent of the previous mayor, whose charisma and popularity helped to further Perrone's own political career.

<sup>191</sup> Conversely weak leadership is more vulnerable to party pressures and/or ties with strong interests (as happened in Prato).

<sup>192</sup> The case of Prato in this respect is particularly interesting, since here facilitative leadership did emerge, but from within neighbourhood associations, "as key individuals effectively became facilitative leaders without having deliberately planned to be" (Bussu and Bartels forthcoming).

<sup>193</sup> The executive maintained a strong grip on local power and Perrone was recently reelected for a second term.

<sup>194</sup> This is the phenomenon that Rodwin (1981) defined as *neo-bohème*, a cultural context where artistic expressions can no longer be interpreted as in opposition to mainstream culture and resistance against hegemonic culture, rather as market niches.

<sup>195</sup> Electoral instability or conflicts within the government structure may induce political elites to compete for support from associations (Tarrow 1994).

<sup>196</sup> Intuitively one might assume that inclusion and integration on the part of the institutions will generate potential for social capital, but Tarrow (1996) warns that fuller access to decision-making might discourage collective action or create closer ties among political elites and community leaders. This might inhibit or even prevent participation and inclusion of the wider community.

<sup>197</sup> An analogous problem concerns the local-central government relationship, whereby disputes often re-emerge when Central State takes it upon itself to intervene on infrastructure, social or economic policies that should be the responsibility of local and regional government following amendments to the Constitution (see for instance the repeal of the property tax, which represented the main income for local government during the last Berlusconi administration, or the controversy over the "Piano casa" on planning permission).

<sup>198</sup> In May 2012 Sardinian people chose to abolish all provinces in a referendum. In the meantime the Monti administration had initially proposed the abolition of all provincial councils as of the next round of local elections. However, more recently this proposal was also withdrawn and provincial councils will continue to exist, but only mayors and local councillors already elected at the local level within that same province can be elected to provincial councils. They will thus hold a dual mandate. The latest government budget (July 2012) halves the number of provinces by the end of 2012. Provinces will need to meet three requirements: 350,000 inhabitants, 50 municipalities, and 3000 square kilometres. This means that the number of provinces will be cut from 109 to 54. (La Repubblica 04-07-2012).

clear strategic lines and instead produced trickles of often small projects, in an attempt to cover all policy areas.

<sup>200</sup> The integrated plans for urban development - the new mechanism to fund SP projects under the regional Operational Programme for Objective 2 structural funds

<sup>201</sup> Regional government was under pressure to invest the first batch of European funds.

<sup>202</sup> Today the main function of political parties is to select candidates, not by following organisational rules or defined criteria, but simply based on who can bring more votes.

<sup>203</sup> However, when big interests are at stake, as during the elaboration of the Town Plan, local party secretariats' influence is more strongly felt.

<sup>205</sup> It should be emphasised that Trento was also the only city to implement a post-evaluation of the process, as an exercise conducive to the elaboration of its second plan.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>204</sup> Insofar the only mechanism of checks and balances is represented by the justice system, through the Court of Auditors and the regional administrative court of law, which can only intervene ex-post. This weakness inherent to the local political system could open the way to the predominance of the judicial power, which could translate into a power conflict between politics and the judicial, and which could transform the latter into an influential political actor and offer opportunities for judicial lawmaking (Shapiro 1981:145).

## **APPENDIX 1**

## Semi-structured interview

### Private interests/ associations/ citizens

- 1) How did you hear about the SP?
  - Degree of information/ publicity on the SP
- 2) Why did you choose to participate?Consensus building on the process
- 3) What did you expect?
- 4) How were/ are you involved in the SP?
  - Input on policy-making (Inclusiveness of the deliberative process/ Role of the facilitators/ methodologies to facilitate the debate)
  - Concrete responsibilities to ensure/ monitor implementation (subscription of the final document/ what input after the workshops?)
- 5) What mechanisms were employed to coordinate different actors and their interactions?
  - Creation of new partnerships following the workshops? How were they sustained?
  - Did any particular actors play a greater role in coordinating interactions?
  - What was the role of the local administration in coordinating the process?
  - How many/ which actors are still working on the project?
- 6) To what extent do you think the local system is naturally inclined towards cooperative and inclusive forms of governance (presence of associations/ cooperatives/ districts)?
  - What level of interest on the part of the population?
- 7) Do you think previous governance experiences (PIT, territorial pacts) helped to organize and conduct the SP process?

Building upon existing partnerships

- 8) What impact do you feel SP had on the type of policies produced? (and you/ your organization in particular?)
  - Do you think certain projects (those in which you were involved) would have been produced anyway?
  - Degree of innovation?
  - Input of new actors that were not previously involved
  - Impact of methodologies employed to facilitate the debate and the emergence of innovative ideas
- 9) What impact do you think SP had on the actors involved?
  - Cognitive effects
  - Governance networks
  - Relationship between the administration and civil society
- 10) How was consensus on the final document formalised? Were there any defections/ explicit criticism/ significant absences?
- 11) What *visions* do you feel were produced (weak, inertial, strong, inclusive)?

- 12) Limits of SP
  - Lack of financial resources?
  - Lack of cooperation between actors?
  - Lack of political will/ institutional capacity?
  - Lack of coordination with other jurisdictional tiers?
- 13) Potential of SP
  - Do you think that xxx will produce another plan? Why?
  - What input can civil society participation have in local governance? When? How?

### Executive (assessori/mayor)

- 1) How would you describe the SP process in xxx?
  - Consensus building
  - Methodologies employed to facilitate the deliberative processActors involved/ how were they involved?/Why?
- 2) What was/ is the degree of support/ interest among the *assessori*?
- 3) Do you feel there was/ is support from the Council/ political parties?Does the SP have a political colour?
  - •Was the council involved? How?
- 4) What did you expect from SP?
- 5) What do you think SP has achieved?
  - Expected and unexpected results (competitiveness vs. social cohesion)
  - Impact on policies (Do you think certain projects would have been produced anyway? Degree of innovation? Input of new actors that were not previously involved in policy-making)
  - Impact on governance networks
  - Impact on the PA (public administration)/ Coordination between departments
  - Coordination between jurisdictional levels
  - Relationship between administration and citizens
- 6) What mechanisms were employed to coordinate different actors and their interactions?
  - Creation of new partnerships? How they were sustained?
  - Did any particular actors play a greater role in coordinating interactions?
  - How many/ which actors are still working on the project?
- 7) Do you think previous governance experiences (PIT, territorial pact) helped to organize and conduct the SP process?
  - Building upon existing partnerships
- 8) What do you think was the level of synergy between SP measures and other programmes/ projects/ policies (i.e. urban plan (PUC)/ social policies (PLUS)/ area-based SP/ provincial SP)?
  - Strategic plan as a "container" of integrated measures or as a plethora of fragmented projects?
  - Level of coordination with other policies/ projects at other jurisdictional level
- 9) What was the role of the local administration in coordinating the process?
  - How much autonomy?

- •What level of influence from other tiers?
- •What level of influence from political parties?
- •What level of influence from strong local interests (which ones?)
- 10)What was the role of the region/ province in the process?
  - Support vs. ostracism
  - Coordination of strategic measures?
  - How much autonomy for local administrations vs other tiers
- 11) Based on individual measures/ projects, what is the degree of implementation of the plan to date?
- 12) Did objectives/ priorities change during the process? Why?
- **13**) What communication/ publicity strategies, if any, were adopted to communicate implementation or progress on implementation of projects?
- 14) Limits of SP
  - Lack of financial resources?
  - Lack of cooperation between actors?
  - Lack of political will/ institutional capacity?
  - Lack of coordination among jurisdictional tiers
- 15) Potential of SP
  - Do you think that xxx will produce another plan? Why?
  - What input can civil society participation have in local governance? When? How?

### Council

- 1) How would you describe the SP process in xxx?
- 2) How was the council involved? And you in particular?
- 3) Do you feel there was support for this participatory initiative among councillors?
  - Conflicts between councillors/ parties and the executive?
  - Councillors felt bypassed?
- 4) What degree of awareness/ interests?
  - Expectations
- 5) Do you think previous governance experiences (PIT, territorial pacts) helped to organize and conduct the SP process?
  - Building upon existing partnerships
- 6) What do you think was the level of synergy between SP measures and other programmes/ projects/ policies (i.e. urban plan (PUC)/ social policies (PLUS)/ area-based/ provincial SP)?
  - Strategic plan as a "container" of integrated measures or as a plethora of fragmented projects?
  - Level of coordination with other policies/ projects at other jurisdictional level
- 7) What do you feel was the role of the mayor/ executive (any particular *assessore*?) in coordinating the process?
  - Mayor's ownership of the process?
  - SP with/without political colour?
  - Autonomy of the mayor?
  - Role of/ interest from political parties
- 8) Any cognitive effects for the Council?
- 9) Limits of SP

- Lack of financial resources?
- Lack of cooperation between actors?
- Lack of political will/ institutional capacity?
- Lack of coordination among jurisdictional tiers
- 10)Potential of SP
  - Do you think that xxx will produce another plan? Why?
  - What input can civil society participation have in local governance? When? How?

# Public Administration

- 1) How was your department involved in SP (and you in particular)?
  - Role of CEOs in the SP process vis-à-vis politicians (particularly active actors among PA that coordinated the technical aspect of the plan?)
  - Degree of awareness
  - Level of interests/ support from PA
- 2) What do you feel was the degree of awareness and support on the part of political elites (executive and council)?
- 3) Did you refer to other cities's SP in order to organize the process?
- 4) What did you expect from SP?
- 5) What were the effects of SP on public administration?
  - Policy innovation vs. process institutionalization
  - Level coordination among different departments? With other actors (private, social)?
  - Level of coordination among different policies (i.e. strategic plan and urban plan/ strategic plan and social policies under PLUS/ urban SP and area-based SP).
- 6) Do you think SP has encouraged greater coordination with other tiers of government (regional/ provincial departments)? How?
  - Coordination between SP and regional/ provincial strategic actions/ planning
- 7) What type of evaluation (ex-ante/ ex-post) has been carried out? If not, why? If yes, was it effective?
  - Diagnostic documents: how useful?
  - Do you think the final measures were coherent with the issues identified by the diagnostic documents?
  - Main evaluation mistakes
- 8) Based on individual measures/ projects, what is the degree of implementation of the plan to date?
- 9) Did objectives/ priorities change during the process? Why? What actors were involved?
- 10) Limits of SP
  - Lack of financial resources?
  - Lack of cooperation between actors?
  - Lack of political will/ institutional capacity?
  - Lack of coordination among jurisdictional tiers
- 11) Potential of SP
  - Do you think that xxx will produce another plan? Why?

• What input can civil society participation have in local governance? When? How?

### Development Agencies/ experts/ academics

- 1) How would you describe the SP process in xxx?
- 2) Did you refer to other cities's SP in order to organize the process?
- 3) How did you advertise the process and inform the population?
- 4) What actors were involved? How?
- 5) To what extent do you think the local system is naturally inclined towards cooperative and inclusive forms of governance (presence of associations/ cooperatives/ districts)?
- 6) How helpful do you feel the methodologies employed were in encouraging an inclusive debate? How do you feel the deliberative forums/ workshops worked/ did not work?
- 7) How was consensus on the final document formalised? Were there any defections/ explicit criticism/ significant absences?
- 8) What visions were produced (weak, inertial, strong, inclusive)?
- 9) How were political elites involved?
- 10)Based on individual measures/ projects, what is the degree of implementation of the plan to date? (Only for development agencies.)
- 11) Did objectives/ priorities change during the process? Why? What actors were involved?
- 12) Did you carry out an evaluation of the process? (Only for development agencies.)
- 13) What do you think has really worked/ not worked?
- 14) Limits of SP
  - Lack of financial resources?
  - Lack of cooperation between actors?
  - Lack of political will/ institutional capacity?
  - Lack of coordination among jurisdictional tiers
- 15) Potential of SP
  - Do you think that xxx will produce another plan? Why?
  - What input can civil society participation have in local governance? When? How?

### **Regional and provincial actors**

- 1) What is the state of SP in the region/ province?
- 2) How did you evaluate xxxx's SP? (Only for regional evaluation task forces)
- 3) What were the main limits and potential?
- 4) Was there a particularly successful SP in the region/ province?
  - •Why do you think it was more successful than xxx's?
- 5) What was the role of the region/ province in the process?
  - Support vs. ostracism
  - Coordination of strategic measures?
  - How much autonomy for local administrations?
- 6) What do you think is the future of SP in this region?
- 7) What input can civil society participation have in local governance? When? How?

# **APPENDIX 2**

# List of Interviewees

### Sassari

- 1. Coordinator Industrial Liaison Office (SP project), 24-09-09
- 2. Student (participant in the SP workshops), 30-09-09
- 3. President of Farmers' Association, 09-11-09
- 4. Economist, University of Sassari, coordinator of the SP, 10-11-09
- 5. Director of Industry Association (Confindustria), 11-11-09
- Director of local development agency (expert in deliberative policies), 12-11-09
- 7. Councillor, Democratic Party, 13-11-09
- 8. Regional President of ANCI (Communes' Association), 13-11-09
- 9. Assessore for Local Development, 16-11-09
- 10. Director of Local Development Agency, 16-11-09
- 11. CEO Local Development Department, 17-11-09
- 12. President of the Council, 17-11-09
- 13. Councillor, Partito della Libertà, 17-11-09
- 14. *Assessore* for Education Policies (also in charge of citizen participation), 17-11-09
- 15. Councillor, centre-right civic list (also local government officer), 18-11-09
- 16. President of trade association (Confcommercio), 18-11-09
- 17. Councillor, party for Sardinia's independence (majority), 18-11-09
- 18. Councillor, Democratic Party, 19-11-09
- 19. President of cultural association (Arci), 19-11-09
- 20. Ward president (circoscrizione 2), 19-11-2009
- 21. President of voluntary organisation (Auser), 20-11-09
- 22. Local government officer (Local Development), 20-11-09
- 23. President of local development agency, 20-11-2009
- 24. Regional government officer, Regional Evaluation Centre, (Cagliari) 23-11-09
- 25. CEO of Regional Planning Centre, (Cagliari) 23-11-09
- 26. Provincial president of sport association (UISP), 24-11-09
- 27. Local government officer, Social Policies, 24-11-09

28. Director of education policies, Local Prison (San Sebastiano), 24-11-09

29. War president (circoscrizione 3), 24-11-09

30. Local government officer, Social Policies, 24-11-09

31. Employee, local development agencies (facilitator in deliberative forums),24-11-09

32. President of association of voluntary associations (*consulta del volontariato*), 25-11-09

33. Provincial CEO, Provincial Development Office (in charge of provincial SP, *Il Patto per il Nord Ovest*), 25-11-09

34. Local government officer, Education policies, 25-11-09

35. Mayoral office: Mayor's spokeswoman and press agent (group interview with 2 people), 25-09-11

- 36. Senior Banker (Banco di Sardegna), 26-11-09
- 37. Journalist (La Nuova Sardegna), 26-11-09

38. Councillor Democratic Party (Margherita), 27-11-09

39. Former president of sport association (UISP), 27-11-09

40. Former CEO of Local Development Department (champion of the SP process), now CEO of Social Policies, 28-11-09

41. Mayor, 28-11-09

42. Local government officer, office of the general director

43. General director, 30-11-09

44. President of the Province, 30-11-09

45. Sociologist, University of Sassari, coordinator of SP, 30-11-09

46. President of environmental association (Legambiente), 05-11-09

47. Former assessore for Environmental Policies, 07-12-09

### Trento

1. Consultant for the re-organisation of the Social Policies Department, 18-01-10

2. CEO Strategic Planning Office, 19-01-10

3. Former *assessore* for Local Development, now president of the Artisans' Association (*CNA*), 19-01-10

5. General Director of the City Hall, 20-01-10 6. Economis, University of Trento, coordinator (coordinatore scientifico) of the SP process, 21-01-10 7. Director of the Science Museum, 21-01-10 8. Director of the Urban Centre, architect, University of Trento, 22-01-10 9. President of the council, 25-01-10 10. Former CEO of the Town Planning Office, now CEO of the Mobility Sector, 25-01-10 11. Local government officer, office of the General Director, 25-01-10 12. War president (circoscrizione 12), 26-01-10 13. Former mayor, now provincial vice-president, 26-01-10 14. Head of neighbourhood movement, 27-01-10 15. President of the Architects' association, 27-01-10 16. President of trade association (Confesercenti), 28-01-10 17. Member of Farmers' Association (CIA), 28-01-10, 28-01-10 18. President of Disabled People's Association, 28-01-10 19. President of trade association (Confcommercio), 28-01-10 20. Local government officer (Social Services), 29-01-10 21. Sociologist, University of Trento, coordinator of the Social Plan, 29-01-10 22. President of environmental association (Legambiente), 29-01-10 23. Architect, University of Trento, coordinator of the Strategic Plan and several other participatory processes, 01-02-10 24. Councillor, Democratic Party, 01-02-10

4. Former CEO of the Local Development Department, now CEO of Tourism

25. Councillor, Forza Italia (now Popolo della Libertà), 01-02-10

26. Former president of the Architects' Association, 02-02-10

27. Local government officers (group interview with 2 people), decentralised social policies office, 02-02-10

28. Mayor, 02-02-10

and Culture, 20-01-10

29. *Assessore* for Tourism and Culture, former majority councillor (at the time when the SP process was launched), 02-02-10

30. Ward president (*circoscrizione 11*) and educator working for decentralised social policies office in that ward (group interview with 2 people), 03-02-10

31. Sport association president and member (*UISP* - group interview with 2 people), 03-02-10

32. Councillor, right wing civic list, 03-02-10

33. President of the Hotelkeepers' Association, 04-02-10

34. President of the Industry Association (Confindustria), 04-02-10

35. *Assessore* for Social Policies, former majority councillor (at the time when the SP process was launched), 04-02-10

36. Hotelkeeper, 04-02-10

37. President of Cooperatives' Association (Consolida), 04-02-10

### Prato

1. Architect, University of Forence, coordinator of SP and head of the association of associations *Parco Agricolo*, (Firenze) 10-05-10

2. Regional officer, Planning, (Firenze) 10-05-10

3. Local Development Agencies (Regional level), experts of deliberative practices (groups interview with 2 people), (Firenze) 11-05-10

4. Director of local development think tank and coordinator of SP, 12-05-10

5. Director of local development think tank, 12-05-10

 Former assessore for Local Development (when SP was launched), 12-05-10

7. President of the Artisans' Association (CNA), 13-05-10

8. Director of local research institute (specialising on textiles), 13-05-10

9. Architect, director of Urban the agency in charge of the ex-Banci redevelopment, 14-05-10

10. Editor of local newspaper, Il Tirreno, 15-05-10

11. Journalist, Il Tirreno, 15-05-10

12. President of Farmers' Association (CIA), 17-05-10

13. President of environmental association (SlowFood), 17-05-10

14. CEO of Planning Office, 18-05-10

15. Secretary of local trade unions (CGIL), 18-05-10

- 16. President of the Council, 18-05-10
- 17. Former assessore for Town Planning, 19-05-10
- 18. Director of textiles museum (Museo dei Tessuti), 19-05-10
- 19. Director of industry association (Confindustria), 19-05-10
- 20. President of Farmers' Association (Coldiretti), 19-05-10
- 21. Member of environmental association (*Legambiente*) and architect, 19-05-10
- 22. President of the Chamber of Commerce, 20-05-10
- 23. Coordinator of the Urban Structural Plan (USP) and architect, University
- of Florence, (Firenze) 20-05-10
- 24. Provincial assessore for Culture and Tourism, 21-05-10
- 25. Councillor, Popolo della Libertà, 21-05-10
- 26. President of neighbourhood association Piazza Mercatale, 22-05-10

27. Former regional *assessore* for Local Development (he wrote the bill on citizen participation 69/2007), (Pistoia) 24-05-10

28. Coordinator of fair trade consumer group (Gruppo di Acquisto Sostenibile – GAS), 24-05-10

- 29. Former president of the Province, 24-05-10
- 30. President of trade association (Confcommercio), 25-05-10
- 31. Assessore for Town Planning, 25-05-10
- 32. Assessore for Immigration and Participation, 25-05-10
- 33. Mayor, 25-05-10
- 34. Former CEO of the Local Development Department (in charge at the time

of SP), (Firenze) 26-05-10

- 35. Former mayor, (Firenze) 26-05-10
- 36. Councillor, Democratic Party, 26-05-10
- 37. President of cultural association (Arci), 27-05-10
- 38. Councillor, Democratic Party, 27-05-10
- 39. Ward President (circoscrizione centro), 27-05-10
- 40. Journalist of local newspaper La Nazione, 27-05-10
- 41. President of the Province, 27-05-10
- 42. Councillor, Popolo della Libertà, 27-05-10

43. Regional president of the Communes' Association (*Anci*), (Firenze) 28-05-10

- 44. Ward President (circoscrizione Sud), 28-05-10
- 45. President of voluntary association, 28-05-10
- 46. Former president of the council (at the time of the SP), 28-05-10

### Lecce

1 Local government officer, SP office, 08-09-2010

- 2. CEO of the SP office, 08-09-10
- 3. President of Governmental Agency for Environmental Research (*ARPA* Regional Agency for Prevention and Protection of the Environment), 09-09-10

4. Former CEO of the Social Policies Department, now head of the cabinet, 09-09-10

5. Local government officer, SP office, 09-09-10

6. President and former president of environmental association (*Cicloamici*), 09-09-10

7. Director of voluntary association (Aurora), 10-09-10

8. Ward president (circoscrizione 2), 13-09-10

9. Councillor, Democratic Party, 13-09-10

- 10. Provincial CEO of the Local Development Deapartment, 13-09-10
- 11. President of Voluntary Association (Cittadinanza Attiva), 13-09-10
- 12. President of cooperative of artists (Artemisia), 14-09-10
- 13. Former general director, 14-09-10

14. President of Artisans' Association (CNA), 14-09-10

15. President of cultural association (Manifatture Knos), 15-09-10

16. President of CUIS (Consorzio Universitario Interprovinciale, Salentino),

former councillor, Io Sud (centre-right party headed by senator and former mayor Poli-Bortone), 15-09-10

17. Councillor, Popolo della Libertà, 16-09-10

- 18. Councillor, Io Sud, 16-09-10
- 19. City Hall's press agent, 16-09-10
- 20. President of local trade unions (CISL), 17-09-10

- 21. President of Voluntary cooperative (Immanuel), 17-09-10
- 22. Former provincial assessore for Local Development, 18-09-10
- 23. Councillor, Democratic Party, 18-09-10
- 24. Expert, Regional Evaluation Centre (professor at the University of Bari),

(Bari) 20-09-10

- 25. Regional assessore for Finances (Bari) 20-09-10
- 26. Former regional assessore for Local Development (Bari) 20-09-10
- 27. Former secretary of provincial trade unions (CGIL), 20-09-10
- 28. President of Industry Association (Confindustria), 21-09-10
- 29. Councillor, Democratic Party, 21-09-10
- 30. Regional level consultant on planning, architect, 21-09-10
- 31. Researcher CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche), 22-09-10
- 32. Professor of Political Geography, University of Salento and expert of SP, 22-09-10
- 33. Former president of the Architects' Association, 22-09-10
- 34. President of environmental association (KRONS), 22-09-10
- 35. Provincial head of cabinet, 23-09-10
- 36. Councillor, La Puglia Prima di Tutto (centre-right party), 23-09-10
- 37. President of voluntary association dedicated to immigrants (INTEGRA),23-09-10

38. Independent association of architects expert of deliberative and participatory planning (LUA), 23-09-10

- 39. Councillor, independent, 24-09-10
- 40. President of trade association (Confesercenti), 27-09-10
- 41. President of the Province, 27-09-10
- 42. President of the council, 27-09-10
- 43. Regional officer, Task Force for the area-based plan (Bari) 29-09-10
- 44. Mayor, 29-09-10
- 45. Journalist for local newspaper Il Quotidiano, 30-09-10

### **APPENDIX 3**

# List of Main Stakeholders (according to SP documents in each city)

### Trento

Accademia di Commercio e Turismo ACI - Automobile Club Trento ACLI del Trentino ADOC Agenzia delle Entrate - Trento Agenzia del Lavoro - Trento ALFID - Trento APPA - Agenzia provinciale per la protezione dell'ambiente APT di Trento APT del Trentino **ASIS** Trento Associazione Albergatori della provincia di Trento Associazione Artigiani e delle piccole imprese del Trentino Associazione "Bilanci di giustizia" Associazione "De Gasperi" Associazione Ecomuseo Argentario Associazione Industriali della provincia di Trento Associazione titolari di farmacie ATAS - Trento Azienda forestale Trento - Sopramonte Azienda provinciale per i servizi sanitari Banca commerciale italiana Banca di Roma - filiale di Trento Banca di Trento e Bolzano Camera di Comm. Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura di Trento Casa della Giovane Cassa centrale delle Casse rurali Cassa rurale di Sopramonte Cassa rurale di Trento Centro di ecologia alpina Centro servizi culturali S. Chiara CESCOT CFP "Canossa" CFP Universita popolare trentina Club Armoni **CNR - Consiglio Nazionale Ricerche** Codacons Trentino - Alto Adige Collegio Arcivescovile - Trento Collegio dei geometri della provincia di Trento Collegio guide alpine - Trento Collegio notarile - Trento Collegio provinciale dei periti industriali Comando militare regionale Comitato interprofessionale degli Ordini e dei Collegi Comune di Aldeno Comune di Bolzano Comune di Borgo Valsugana Comune di Trento Comune di Verona Comunità di lavoro "Citta delle Alpi" Comunità solidale Confederazione italiana agricoltori

Confesercenti del Trentino procedure per la certificazione della qualità dell'ambiente e dei servizi turistici CONI - Comitato provinciale di Trento Consorzio Trento Iniziative Consorzio vini del Trentino Consulta comunale per il verde **Cooperativa ALPI** Cooperativa posatori e selciatori Cooperativa Samuele Cooperativa taxi Trento Diocesi tridentina Direzione didattica Trento 2 Direzione didattica Trento 6 **ENAIP** - Trento **ENEL** produzione FAI - Fondo per l'Ambiente Italiano, sezione provinciale FAITA - Trentino Farmacie comunali Federazione provinciale delle scuole materne Federazione trentina delle cooperative Ferrovie dello Stato **FIAVET - Trentino** Associazione culturale "Festival Internazionale Film della Montagna e dell'Esplorazione Città di Trento" Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Trento e Rovereto Fondazione trentina per il volontariato sociale FORMAT - Formazione Assindustria Trento GAD sperimentale "Città di Trento" Galleria civica d'arte contemporanea INAIL - Direzione regionale IN/Arch - Istituto nazionale di architettura, Trentino INPDAP **INPS** Trento Iniziative Urbane Interbrennero **IPRASE** ISA - Istituto atesino per lo sviluppo Istituto agrario di S. Michele all'Adige Istituto comprensivo Aldeno - Mattarello Istituto comprensivo Trento 1 Istituto comprensivo Trento 2 Istituto comprensivo Trento 3 Istituto comprensivo Trento 4 Istituto comprensivo Trento 5 Istituto comprensivo Trento 6 Istituto comprensivo Trento 7 Istituto Euram Istituto magistrale "Rosmini" IPC "L. Battisti" Istituto Regionale di Studi e Ricerca Sociale Istituto "S. Cuore" - Trento Istituto salesiano - Trento Istituto sperimentale per l'assestamento forestale Istituto statale d'arte "A. Vittoria" Istituto tecnico commerciale "Tambosi" Istituto tecnico per geometri "A. Pozzo" Istituto tecnico industriale "Buonarroti" Istituto Trentino di Cultura Italia Nostra - sezione provinciale ITEA - Istituto trentino per l'edilizia abitativa

Liceo ginnasio "G. Prati" Liceo scientifico "Galilei" Liceo scientifico "L. da Vinci" MART - Museo d'arte moderna e contemporanea di Trento e Rovereto Mediocredito Trentino - Alto Adige Monte dei Paschi di Siena - Trento Movimento azzurro Museo Castello del Buonconsiglio Museo storico in Trento Museo tridentino di scienze naturali Museo degli usi e costumi della gente trentina - S. Michele a.A. Opera universitaria - Trento Ordine degli architetti della provincia di Trento Ordine degli assistenti sociali della provincia di Trento Ordine dei dottori agronomi e forestali della provincia di Trento Ordine dei dottori commercialisti della provincia di Trento Ordine dei geologi della provincia di Trento Ordine degli ingegneri della provincia di Trento Ordine dei medici della provincia di Trento Ordine degli psicologi della provincia di Trento PAN - EPAA Patto territoriale del Monte Bondone Poste Italiane Progetto Velaverde Provincia Autonoma di Trento Rete Ferroviaria Italiana - Direzione compartimentale SAT - Societa alpinisti tridentini SATEF - Trento Scuola media "Pedrolli" - Gardolo Associazione Servizi organizzativi ed immagine "Città di Trento" Sindacato CGIL del Trentino Sindacato CISL del Trentino Sindacato UIL del Trentino Societa Filarmonica - Trento SODALIA SOSAT S & P - Sistema & Progetto TM Hotels **Trentino Parcheggi** Trentino Servizi Trentino Trasporti Trento Expo Trento Fiere Trento School of Management **UNAT - Trentino** Unicredit - Caritro Unione agricoltori del Trentino Unione contadini della provincia di Trento Universita degli Studi di Trento Unione commercio turismo e attivita di servizio Villa S. Ignazio Whirlpool WWF del Trentino

### Prato

(the SP document did not include a complete list of participants) ARCI ASM Spa Associazione Il Panda

Biblioteca comunale "A .Lazzerini" Camera di Commercio CCIAA CESVOT - Centro Servizi Volontariato Toscana CGIL - CISL - UIL (Sindacati) CIA (Confederazione Italiana Ágricoltura) CNA (Confederazione Nazionale Artigiani) Coldiretti Collegio dei Geometri Confartigianato Confcooperative Confesercenti CONSIAG Consorzio ASTIR GIDA Spa HERA IRIS Think Tank Laboratorio Spazi e Tempi LegaCoop Legambiente Museo dei Tessuti Museo Pecci Ordine degli Architetti Ordine degli Ingegneri PIN – Polo Universitario di Prato Polizia Municipale Pratofutura Fabia Slow Food Società partecipate dal Comune Technology Tecnotessile Unione Agricoltori Pratesi Unione Commercianti **Unione Industriale Pratese** 

### Lecce

Accademia Kronos Onlus Aeroporti Alba Service Provincia di Lecce Agenda 21 Agenzia dei Beni Culturali ANAS (Azienda Nazionale Autonoma delle Strade) ANCI (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani) Antheus SRL API (Associazione piccole medie industrie della Provincia di Lecce) APT (Azienda di Promozione Turistica) AQP (Acquedotto Pugliese) ARPA (Agenzia Regionale per la Protezione Ambientale) Area Marina Protetta Porto Cesareo ASL (Azienda Sanitaria Locale) Associazione Aforisma Associazione Cicloamici Associazione Città Fertile Associazione Comunità Emmanuel Associazione Cuochi Salentini Associazione Disteba Associazione Donne Insieme Associazione Fluxus Open Associazione Ionico Salentina Amici Ferrovie AISAF Onlus

Associazione Italiana Contro Epilessia Accademia Kronos Associazione LUA Associazione Piccole Industrie Associazione RES – Programmi di residenza Associazione Sud Est ATO (Ambiti territoriali ottimali) Azienda Speciale per i servizi reali alle imprese S.r.l. Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura di Lecce Cantieri teatrali Koreja Certiquality CF&M Consulting CIA (Confederazione Italiana Agricoltura) CGIL-CISL-UIL- UGL (Sindacati) CNA (Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato) CNR (Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche) CNR IMM (Istituto per la Microelettronica e Microsistemi) Co.I.S.S. Consorzio Împrese Sociali Salento Coldiretti Commedia SRL Compagnia delle Opere Lecce 31 Comuni Area Vasta Comunità Diotima Comunità Speranza Ass Carcerario Onlus Confagricoltura Confartigianato di Lecce Confcooperative Lecce Confcommercio Confesercenti Confindustria Lecce Consorzio Azi Terra D'Arneo Consorzio CRISA Consorzio Nazionale Artigianato e Piccola e Media Impresa Consorzio Negro Amaro Consorzio Produttori Vini Consorzio Valle della Cupa Cooperativa Artemisia **CRSA** Basile Caramia CUIS (Consorzio Universitario Interprovinciale Salentino) Curia Arcivescovile Diocesi EDITA Elios Tours ESAS - ONLUS Consultorio "La Famiglia" Ergho **Evolvit SRL** Federazione Autotrasportatori Italiana Lecce Federcommercio Ferrovie Fitrading/ Associazione Istruttori Sportivi Salento Focus Management Fondazione Rico Semeraro GAL (Gruppo di Azione Locale) dei Messapi GAL Terra d'Arneo GAL Terre del Primitivo Gruppo di lavoro interstituzionale IACP Lecce IntegraOnlus **IPAB** ISBEM S.C.p.a. (Istituto Scientifico Biomedico Euromediterraneo) Istituzioni socio-sanitarie Knowledge Management Agency Casarano Laboratorio di architettura del paesaggio Lavoro & Sport Soc. Coop. Sociale Manifatture Knos Ordine degli Avvocati Ordine degli Architetti, paesaggisti e pianificatori Ordine dei Farmacisti Ordine degli Ingegneri Ordine dei Geologi Ordine dei Geometri Ordine Psicologi Puglia Osservatorio permanente urbanistico Osservatorio Torre di Belloluogo Plan.Tour. (Planning Tourism)/ Federalberghi Piano Sociale di Zona PIS PIT **Polaris Consulting** Politecnico di Milano Polo Tecnologico (KMAC) Punto a Sud-Est Proget SRL Provincia Lecce Qualitek Lecce Ref. Servizi Informativi Referenti Istituzionali di area vasta e Segretari Comunali Regione Ricrearci Sansò SGM spa Società Land Planning SRL Solidarietà Salento soc. coop onlus Soprintendenze Top Consulting Unione Agricoltori Lecce Unione dei Comuni del Nord Salento Università del Salento Urban Centre WWF

#### Sassari

Abbanoa Accademia delle Belle arti ACLI ADECCO AFARP ANMIC Antenna 1 Apisarda ARCI Arcidiocesi - Caritas Area Marina Protetta Capo Caccia ASI - Sassari Ass. Assonhor Ass. Blue note orchestra Ass. Centro Storico Ass. Città di Ar Ass. Contro la droga Ass. CTS Ass. Culturale "Piccino Picciò"

Ass. Danza Estemporada Ass. Dissimili -Lisena Ass. Forum Bambini e Ad. Ass. Il ramo d'oro Ass. Italiana Esposti all'Amianto Ass. La sorgente-LISM Ass. Le ragazze terribili Ass. Marco Magnani Ass. Mondo X Ass. Ogros Ass. Sarda Paraplegici Ass. S. Dessy Ass. Taribari Ass. Tiro con l'arco Associati archivio storico Athena Azienda Agricola Arghittu Azienda Fratelli Rossi Azienda Trasporti Pubblici Azienda USL 1 Sassari Banca del Tempo Banca Popolare Etica Banca di Sassaro Banco di Sardegna Bencasì Bioarchitettura Sardegna Carcere Sassari **CEEA Baratz** Centro Amico Centro nascita serena - librati dal nido - NPL - Nati per leggere CGIL credito CIA - Sassari Cineclub Sassari Circoli didattici Circolo artistico CISL Sassari **CNR** - Ibimet Comitato Provinciale Anziani Compagnia Teatro Sassari Confagricoltura Confartigianato Confcommercio Confesercenti Confidi Commercio Confindustria CONI – Sassari Conservatorio Stat. di musica Consorzio di bonifica della Nurra Consorzio TIR.SO Consulta Vol. Sassari Coop. A. S. Coop. Il Libro Coop. Soc. "Il Sogno" Coop. Teatro e musica Corpo Forestale **CPD** Sassari CPO Com. Sassari Croce Rossa Diocesi di Sassari/Ist. Sup. di Scienze relig. Dissimili - Lisena

Ditta Container - Ass. Menestrello - Manifesto sassarese **ENDAS** Ente Concerti "De Carolis" ERSU Ferrovie della Sardegna FILCEM CGIL FISM - CIF Fondazione Banco di Sardegna Forum Bambini e Ad. Forum Terzo settore/consorzio SIS **GRECAM** Sassari Guardia di Finanza **HC** Tangrom I.A.C.P Sassari II VV CRI Il Sardegna Il Sassarese **INBAR Sassari** Iniziative culturali INPS Istituto d'arte Italia Nostra Krenesiel La Nuova Sardegna Laborintus Legambiente Sardegna Libero professionista Libertas Liceo ginnasio statale "Azuni" Love Afflema associazioni nigeriana MAB Ass.Teatro Magnum Edizioni Manifesto Sassarese Mediterranea SRL Museo della scienza e della tecnica - Università di Sassari Mutuo Soccorso Ordine Architetti Ospedale Parco dell'Asinara Parco Regionale Porto Conte Polindustria Privati cittadini Promocamera Provincia di Sassari Punto Energia Provincia di Sassari Regione Autonoma della Sardegna Rete delle Associazioni disabili Sardaleasing Sceno.sist Servizio Agrometereologico Regionale Soccorso Sardo SOMEAANS Soprintendenza Archeologica Soprintendenza B. A. P. P. S. A. E Soroptimist Studio Daphne Studio Giaccardi associati Studio Sis **SUNIA** Sviluppo Italia

Teatro e/o Musica Teatro S'Arza Teatro Stabile di Sardegna Theatre en vol U. F. Ha. Ufficio Scolastico Provinciale - Sassari UISP UNICEF Università degli Studi di Sassari Videolina Volontariato Vincenziano WWF

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