

ITALIAN POLITICS & SOCIETY

***THE REVIEW OF THE CONFERENCE
GROUP ON ITALIAN POLITICS AND
SOCIETY***

No.64 Spring/Summer 2007



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Italian Politics and Society is published twice yearly, in the spring and fall. Proposed contributions should be sent to Jonathan Hopkin at the above address.

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produce on Italy's democracy. This book will be of considerable interest not only to students of Italy's 1943-45 "civil war", but also to the wider audience of democratization and social memory scholars.

Paola Cesarini

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Donatella della Porta (a cura di),
Comitati di Cittadini e Democrazia Urbana

Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004, pp. 270, ISBN: 88-498-1087-3.

This book follows a research about "Social Movements and Deliberative Democracy", partially funded by the Italian Minister of University, and partly inserted in an EU Commission-funded transnational project. It analyzes the panorama of local-based Italian "citizens committees" in the framework of what the authors describe as "unconventional participation".

Its richness is due to the deep experience of the organiser, and to the original effort to promote collaboration between scholars investigating social movements and scholars focused on policy-making. That explains why the book starts by framing the Italian panorama of innovative changes in the decentralised administration structure, which reinforced the power of Executive Councils whilst cities were facing huge budget cuts and a widespread welfare state shrinking. This frame led to an increasing competition between territories for attracting development opportunities. At the same time, urban conflicts grew to oppose development, whose pivotal axes are entrepreneurial interests and market support, often producing gentrification and 'white expulsion' in the central areas already emptied by shrinkage in residency.

The first chapter is an opportunity for a retrospective glance, going back to the 1970s, whose movements have widely been used by sociologists to elaborate a formal

definition of 'social movement' as an actor based on networks of informal relations (multiple links between autonomous knots), based on shared beliefs and solidarity, involved into conflict-actions (usually protests in the public space, seen as a resource for "powerless groups" to indirectly influence institutional decisions) and capable of creating new "collective identities" throughout "emotive support" and "the sharing of sacrifices".

Compared to those paradigms, the following decades have seen movements evolving and splitting in - at least - 4 different directions:

- 1) That of "public interest groups" marked by universalistic but single-issue identities, using lobbying strategies, formal structures and formal membership;
- 2) That of "new volunteerism associations" marked by universalistic identities, with a permanent/reticular structure and using strategies based on service delivery;
- 3) That of "self-managed social centres" marked by universalistic identities, participatory and collectivist structure, strategies of countercultural production and radical protesting;
- 4) That of "citizens committees", identified by local-based identities, strategies centred on protests and participatory structures, often personalised and with low level of coordination.

According to this perspective, the subsequent book chapters analyse "citizens committees". The account is framed around the crisis of parties as filtering structures between citizens needs and the "state machine", with the result that local demands are now visible on the territory without any mediation or canalisation through institutional politics.

Donatella della Porta and her group argue that "local committees" already existed before the 1990s, but their visibility undoubtedly grew subsequent to the increased relevance of media. The explosion

in number of “local committees” is explained through shifts in the social urban conflict structure, where “weakly structured coalitions” try to set themselves as a counter-voice to “urban regimes” (what Logan and Molotch called *growth machine*, consisting of networks of formal and informal agreements and partnerships between public actors and private stakeholders, mainly aimed to economic investment growth).

Among these “weakly structured coalitions” that see the economic competitiveness as a source of inequalities *between* cities and *within* cities, citizens’ committees play an important role. The main questions the authors face seem to be: could they contribute to point out a different model of urban development? Could they contribute to reinforce new leaderships based on new political culture (environmentalism, rights of minorities, more participation in decision making, educational role about collective interests and public goods)?

The authors’ answer is an outright no, and is supported by comparative case analysis. The authors describe how citizens’ committees have been criticized for their links with the NIMBY syndrome, common in contexts facing decisions over a concentrated redistribution of cost (public bads) and a widespread distribution of benefits to the whole territory. Spontaneous committees have been accused of opposing social change in the name of an egoistic cost/benefit evaluation; they have been seen as champions of free-riderism based on the mere “homo economicus” perspective (i.e. refusing to pay the costs that public good provision for a community implies for some of its members).

The narrative examples given along the main seven chapters of the book indicate how many committees’ battles reproduce ignorance and prejudices about immigrants or other urban weak groups. But - Donatella della Porta underlines - the often negative image of spontaneous citizens’ committees was guided by an epistemological mistake: they were judged with a pretension of

“disinterested action” that never was demanded of other collective actors.

According to the need to re-establish an appropriate critical distance in evaluating their “thinking small” strategies, the authors provide key-elements for overturning some judgements. The authors provide at this point a more neutral re-definition of the committees as “organised, flexible but weakly structured groups, gathering on a local-based basis, privileging protest and reactive behaviour rather than proactive practices, and with a low level of coordination among themselves”. This allows a better evaluation of the trends over the last 15 years. For example, they analyze the NOPE (Not on the planet earth) discourse. This appears to be not only a new rhetoric able to remove accusations of dealing just with localistic interests, but also displays maturation on part of the membership, whose battles are more and more capable to interlink different issues into an overall wide discourse to defend “quality of life”.

The strengthening of collective identities, the privileged perspective on public space policies and the growing interest in science and knowledge as allies against unjustifiable policies support the idea of a “*a shift from protest to proposal*” that is slowly taking place, substituting a more rational approach to the “emotional move” that was the distinctive brand of spontaneous committees strategies.

The overturning of these prejudices, through the analysis of cases and trends, while not denying weaknesses and contradictions, makes this book particularly interesting. The result does not cancel the “hybrid nature” of the committees, which mix elements of lobbying-pressure groups with participatory approaches typical of social movements. However, it presents citizens’ committees as a hope and a “fruit of democracy”, with its promises of full citizenship and right to pursue happiness (as Luigi Bobbio once wrote). In fact, they seem to provide a “re-embedding of social capital” in society after the crisis of parties, as well as the crisis of religious and other associative structures.

The development of networking and coordinating structures between local committees allows moving beyond a “narrow vision”: it “re-semanticises” experiences that otherwise would die after having fulfilled their local objectives or after having been frustrated for too long.

A second reason that makes this book interesting is the fact that it is based on rigorous empirical fieldwork, examining six Italian cities (two in each of the “three Italy’s”: North, Centre and South) between 1991 and 2002. A research on local newspapers, supported by 86 interviews with militants and organisers (explained in a rigorous methodological chapter) produce a huge number of original and relevant context-related information, giving the book “concreteness” and analytic precision, condensed in several tables that bridge empirical and theoretical elements.

Last but not least, a third reason to read the book is the contagious enthusiasm of the authors, expressed by a narrative that reminds the description of a bacterium seen from a microscope’s perspective. A frenetic movement of cells, fluid energies, and adaptive, incremental and Darwinian strategies draws an “organic” representation of society and its pulsations, describing the ‘rizomatic’ process of possible nuclei of future social movements that root themselves in different territories. I would highly recommend a quick translation in other languages, not to dissipate what this charming book has to communicate outside Italy.

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Maurizio Ferrera, *The Boundaries of Welfare*

Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005, pp.ix+253, ISBN: 0-19-928467-9.

Maurizio Ferrera’s book explores the ways in which the process of European integration

has affected and “redrawn the boundaries of national welfare states.” (p. 205) Building upon the legacies of Hirschman and Rokkan, Ferrera develops the concept of “bounded structuring” in order to capture the dynamics of “system formation” in European welfare. In the current context, this process involves “destructuring of internal constellations”, attempts at restructuring at the European and sub-national levels, as well as “defensive restructuring” at the national level. (pp. 21-27) The argument seeks to demonstrate that although the national welfare state still provides the primary space for social sharing, it faces challenges and opportunities that “may provide a fertile ground for the ‘nesting’ of national sharing traditions within wider membership spaces” (p.252). Ferrera lays the foundation for his argument by providing a well-articulated structuralist account of the mutually reinforcing development of citizenship and the national welfare state in modern Europe. Arguing that “the time of the *patries de fraternité* (that is of self-contained islands of national social sovereignty) is long gone and cannot be resurrected”, while the creation of a ‘Social Union’ is unrealistic, the author outlines the challenges posed to the national welfare state by the integration process in conjuncture with domestic threats and broader economic changes that not only require but also facilitate sub-national and regional mobilization. Acknowledging that the gloomy scenario of “national destructuring with no supranational restructuring” is an undesirable possibility, Ferrera focuses on presenting empirical evidence that points to the plausibility of the other available alternative: the “nesting” of the national welfare state within the overlapping spaces of EU citizenship, the internal market and “shared European values and identity traits” (pp.250-252).

The argument relies on an examination of two main policy spheres: pensions and healthcare, with special attention paid to the effects of migration on both. It incorporates surveys of case law and policy developments primarily related to Italy, the UK, Sweden, the Netherlands, Belgium and