

The Role of Regulatory Modes in Regional Governance: Insights from the Delrio Reform in Italy

Il Ruolo dei Modi di Regolazione nella Governance Regionale: Prospettive dalla Riforma Delrio in Italia

ALBERTO GANIS

DOI: 10.25430/pupj-RSLD-2025-1-1

Abstract. This study tests Patrizia Messina's regulatory modes theory to explain the uneven implementation of top-down reforms at the regional level, using Italy's Delrio reform (National Law 56/2014) as a case study. The reform, intended to streamline administrative layers by eliminating provinces, resulted in uneven governance systems across regions due to the failure of a constitutional referendum. The Delrio reform provides a unique opportunity to test Messina's theory in the context of top-down reform under fiscal stress and regional diversity conditions. This paper compares reform implementation in Emilia-Romagna and Veneto, demonstrating how distinct regional institutional cultures influenced the application of the reform. The time frame under analysis formally includes the institutional status of the regions from 2014 to 2021, which includes five territorial reforms. This research analyzes 41 expert interviews to highlight the theory's explanatory power in understanding the complexities of regional governance and the challenges of implementing institutional innovation in diverse political contexts.

Abstract. *Questo studio mette alla prova la teoria dei modi di regolazione di Patrizia Messina per spiegare l'implementazione disomogenea delle riforme dall'alto a livello regionale, utilizzando la riforma Delrio (Legge Nazionale 56/2014) come caso di studio. La riforma, intesa a semplificare i livelli amministrativi eliminando le province, ha portato a sistemi di governance disomogenei tra le regioni a causa del fallimento di un referendum costituzionale. La riforma Delrio offre un'opportunità unica per testare la teoria di Messina nel contesto di una riforma dall'alto in condizioni di stress fiscale e diversità regionale. Questo articolo confronta l'implementazione della riforma in Emilia-Romagna e Veneto, dimostrando come le distinte culture istituzionali regionali abbiano influenzato l'applicazione della riforma. Il periodo di tempo in analisi include formalmente lo status istituzionale delle regioni dal 2014 al 2021, che comprende cinque riforme territoriali. Questa ricerca analizza 41 interviste a esperti per evidenziare il potere esplicativo della teoria nel comprendere le complessità della governance regionale e le sfide dell'implementazione dell'innovazione istituzionale in contesti politici diversi.*

Keywords: Regulatory Modes, Regional Governance, Italy, Rescaling, Top-Down Reforms

1. Introduction

Following the 2008 economic crisis, the European Central Bank communicated to Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi the “need for a strong commitment to abolish or consolidate some intermediary administrative layers (such as the provinces). Actions exploiting economies of scale in local public services should be strengthened” (Trichet and Draghi, 2011). The pressure to “restore the confidence of investors” in Italian bonds and the rising influence of anti-establishment rhetoric, fueled by the growing populist Five Star Movement, pushed the center-left government (formed in 2013) to design and pass the Delrio reform, named after Minister Graziano Delrio, the main proponent of the reform (law 56/2014). Its goal was to increase institutional efficiency¹ in the Italian regions by abolishing the provinces, the territorial institution between the Municipality (Enti Locali) and the Region, and strengthening the municipalities and regions²(Mazzoleni, 2016). Yet, in December 2016, this law failed to pass the necessary popular constitutional referendum. Without the constitutional change, each of Italy’s 15 Ordinary Regions could interpret the Delrio reform with significant discretion. With the principles of the law open to interpretation, each region had the flexibility to rescale its governance, in other words, to reassign the institutional functions (road maintenance, police, permits, tourism, etc.) to different levels of government (Region, Province, Municipal Unions, and Municipalities). The situation created uneven institutional dynamics within the various regions, further complicating the already administratively cumbersome and financially inefficient Italian governmental landscape, leading the National Association of Italian Municipalities to call it a “state of institutional calamity” (Orlando, 2021).

The uneven rescaling significantly impacts democratic representation and resource allocation, affecting governance effectiveness by addressing (or ignoring) citizens’ needs in different regions. For example, the “botched”³ Delrio reform had profound consequences on the daily lives of Italian citizens. Some Regions decided to absorb the majority of the functions of their Provinces, causing an exodus of public employees to the region’s capital city. This decision centralized several services, placing them beyond citizens’ physical access or functional reach, like building permits and registry

¹ Throughout this manuscript, there are no arguments based on measured efficiency and its relationship to the different forms of territorial governance. Efficiency is discussed in terms of political and administrative goals (perceived vs actual).

² Waiting for the formal abolition of the Provinces through the constitutional referendum, the reform replaced provincial direct elections with indirect ones.

³ Several interviewees defined it as “halfway across the river crossing” or “an abomination.”

services. A citizen needing a building permit might have to travel to the regional capital, often several hours away from their residence. With the rescaling of governance, many provinces were hollowed of all their functions, and their fiscal transfers from the central government were severely reduced. However, in some regions, provincial road and school responsibilities remained at the provincial level, causing a considerable gap between *de jure* responsibilities and the *de facto* execution of services due to limited provincial budgets. On the ground, this translates into old, perilous roads with crumbling asphalt and no guardrails, leaving entire communities isolated. Compounding these issues, a 2023 study from the Italian Union of Provinces found that the Delrio reform produced only 26 cents of savings per citizen, equal to 0.001% of the total public expenditure—highlighting a paradox between the intended and actual outcomes of the reform.

This paper addresses the following research question: How can we explain the diverse regional responses to the Delrio reform, given its profound impact and uneven implementation? Building on the comparative analysis of Veneto and Emilia-Romagna, this study utilizes the Delrio reform to further explore the impact of distinct regional institutional cultures on policy implementation, providing a valuable comparative perspective. This essay argues that the implementation of top-down governance reforms can be explained by the regulatory modes of local development at play in each region (Messina, 2012). Following this introduction, the paper proceeds with a review of relevant theoretical perspectives on regional governance, establishing the framework for the analysis. Subsequently, the “Cases and Methods” section outlines the comparative methodology employed and details the selection of Emilia-Romagna and Veneto. The empirical analysis then unfolds in two dedicated sections: “Emilia-Romagna - Integrative Governance” and “Veneto - Aggregative Governance,” each exploring the distinct regional responses to the Delrio reform. Finally, the “Conclusion” synthesizes the findings, discussing their theoretical implications and offering insights into the broader dynamics of regional governance in Italy.

2. Regional Governance: Theoretical Perspectives

The changing European and state structures have created uncertainty around political, economic, and cultural boundaries, leading to new opportunities for political strategy and a shift in the governance of the territory (Keating, 2021). The literature on regional governance approaches the study of regional decision-making from three theoretical perspectives: economic, political partisanship, and institutionalist. These approaches offer distinct

lenses through which to understand the dynamics of territorial change and shed light on what can explain variation in territorial rescaling among regions.

The economic approach to institutional change focuses on efficiency, aiming to provide public goods at the lowest cost across jurisdictions (Marks, Hooghe, and Schakel, 2008; Longo and Mobilio, 2016). It also considers the role of regional authority in accessing European funds, as large regions often lobby for favorable financial transfers in the EU (Chalmers, 2013, citing Wallace, 1977; Blom-Hansen, 2005). However, this research shows financial foresight has little impact on territorial rescaling for better EU fund access, with interviewees confirming that reforms did not primarily address funding mechanisms. The political perspective emphasizes parties as rational agents seeking votes, office, or policy influence (Strom, 1990). Rational choice scholars highlight political design's role in reform oversight (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). Evidence from the interviews shows that partisanship and political goals do not explain particular implementations of the reform, suggesting other factors drive uneven outcomes.

The literature on institutionalism highlights the importance of contextual effects such as the polity's pre-existing institutional and power arrangements (Gerring et al., 2011). According to this approach, preferences and decisions are not simply individualistic or exogenous but are products of institutional context (Immergut, 1998). Institutionalism emphasizes the significance of contextual factors, such as preexisting institutional arrangements and power dynamics, which shape the development and reform of institutions. In the Italian context, the politically and territorially significant identities, known in the Italian political science literature as territorial political subcultures (Diamanti, 1992; Trigilia and Ewing, 1991; Messina, 2012; Almagisti and Zanellato, 2021), are intricately tied to the neo-institutionalist perspective focusing on how local political structures shape policy outcomes. It highlights key factors: the management of local resources, the interplay between administrative style and institutional development, citizen trust in regional authorities, and the influence of political culture on policy making. Essentially, this perspective emphasizes how regional political systems, through their policies and established practices, reproduce and reinforce existing political authority and institutional norms (March and Olsen, 1989).

The concept of territorial political subculture is further refined by Carlo Trigilia (1991), who discusses how each institutional approach deeply connects to specific regions. His work suggests using the term subculture not just to describe a particular type of political culture but also to encompass the overall features of a local political system within the national context,

along with the kind of integration it establishes. The redefined concept of territorial political subculture refers to a distinct local political system marked by strong support for a specific entity and a considerable ability to bring together and mediate interests at the local level. Relying on this conceptualization of institutional legacies, the historical origins of the white and red territorial political subcultures are traced back to the late 1800s (Trigilia and Ewing, 1991; Diamanti, 1993). In white areas, characterized by small peasant ownership and the widespread presence of priests in rural areas, the crisis was addressed with the support of the Catholic Church. In red areas, characterized by agricultural labor and sharecropping, the crisis was tackled with the support of trade unions and the Socialist Party (Diamanti, 2009; Almagisti, 2015).

The in-depth research by Messina (2012) establishes a relationship between cultural types and institutional legacies, specifically in Veneto and Emilia-Romagna. Through a comparative contextual analysis of the two regions, the “red” areas, characterized by integrative institutions, and the “white” areas, with aggregative institutions, exhibit profoundly different local administrative styles and governance strategies. In the zones of municipal socialism, interventionist approaches are prominent, while the white areas adopt a non-interventionist stance. This diversity has contributed to two distinct types of local communities. Messina develops March and Olsen’s typologies of institutions: integrative institutions aim for widespread support for shared preferences, while aggregative institutions strive to secure support for specific groups (March and Olsen, 1989; Messina, 2012). These can be described as different approaches to institutional collaboration and public management that, over time, have become ingrained in their respective regional historical paths and current political developments. Regions characterized by integrative modes demonstrate a strong “public intervention” vocation, with political actors exercising administrative faculties based on coordination and collaboration. In such cases, we can expect a functional consolidation of governance. Instead, regions with aggregative modes promote ad hoc initiatives and spontaneous solutions to the grievances of the various subregional communities. Rooted in parochialism, the administrative and entrepreneurial sectors resist agreements for intergovernmental cooperation. They, therefore, favor fragmented governmental entities (characterized by minor redistribution and complex institutional arrangements) better suited to respond to local grievances (Messina, 2012).

This study builds on Messina’s work, testing its theory to demonstrate that the development of significantly different regulatory modes has affected the implementation of the Delrio reform, highlighting how local legacies affect projects initiated at the national and European levels. The comparison

emphasizes the distinctiveness in the evolution of the two models of institutional legacies (aggregative and integrative), without aiming to declare the superiority of one over another.

3. Cases and Methods

Law 56/2014 (Delrio reform) was part of a broader effort to make territorial governance simpler, cheaper, and more effective. The principles of the law apply as “principles of great economic and social reform” (Art. 1, paragraph 5, of Law no. 56/2014). This top-down reform of a new institutional asset planned the annulment of the intermediary local government, the relative reinforcement of the municipalities and/or the regions, and the change from direct to indirect elections of the representatives of the intermediary units (Mazzoleni, 2016). The law institutionalized the Metropolitan cities (Città Metropolitana), a wide-area territorial entity. Compared to the Province, Metropolitan Cities have direct oversight of the strategic development of the metropolitan territory, managing services, infrastructure, and communication networks within the area. Significantly, they manage institutional relations with European cities and other metropolitan areas. They were planned in metropolitan areas, like Turin, Milan, Venice, Bologna, and others, and were formally established in 2014 after years of legislative delay (Fucito and Frati, 2017). Yet, the 2016 constitutional referendum, intended to codify the reform within the constitution, failed to garner the necessary support⁴ consequently leaving the interpretation of the principles of the reform in the hands of each regional government.

The work of Bolgherini and Messina (2014), Lippi, and Maset (2015) offers a holistic appraisal of the Delrio reform in the Italian territorial context, highlighting three main characteristics of its regional implementations. Firstly, despite a largely top-down approach, the process saw contradictions and opportunities for resistance, often mirroring multilevel and inter-party conflicts. Regions that implemented reforms on schedule typically had clear strategies, whereas those that delayed often lacked defined models or faced strong local opposition. Secondly, the variety of regional strategies and their scope pointed to a diverse range of potential outcomes (Bolgherini, Lippi, and Maset, 2015). Finally, the success or failure of regional implementation ultimately rested on local political factors and intra-regional characteristics related to local identities and preferences (Bolgherini and Messina, 2014), indicating that the top-down appearance of the process was

⁴ 59.1% No vote and 40.9% Yes vote.

superficial, with local political-institutional factors and strategies driving the actual results.

This study advances the understanding of the relationship between reform implementation and regulatory modes (highlighted by Bolgherini and Messina) through a rigorous small-n comparative approach. While case studies excel in providing rich, contextualized insights, they often fall short in identifying broader patterns across cases. This small-n analysis retains the deep contextual sensitivity of case studies while systematically comparing cases to uncover emerging trends. The bases of the case selection start with Article 117 of the Italian Constitution, limiting the decision-making power of the 15 Ordinary Regions to institutional functions assigned to their levels of governance (excluding the five special-status regions that possess greater autonomy). Of the 15 Ordinary Regions impacted by Law 56/2014, this project comparatively studies Veneto and Emilia-Romagna because they have similar Gross Domestic Products (GDPs) and populations⁵ but have implemented fundamentally opposite functional redistribution strategies. Emilia-Romagna seized the Delrio as an opportunity to rescale its governance, creating an institutional network that fostered collaboration between governmental levels while centralizing decision-making at the regional level. Veneto has a relatively fragmented territory and is one of the six regions that changed the least, and one of the two that maintained a distribution of the functions very similar to the status before the reform⁶. Furthermore, replicating Messina's case selection allows this study to test the longitudinal applicability of the Regulatory Mode theory. The goal is to use a typical case to explore how and why a general relationship occurs. This exploration can lead to several outcomes: confirming a theory's proposed causal pathways through pattern-matching; identifying alternative causal mechanisms; or demonstrating the absence of a causal link between variables (Seawright and Gerring, 2008).

This research employs a qualitative, multilevel approach using policy and interview data to critically explore how regional sociopolitical contexts influence variations in local and territorial policies. Messina (2006) describes this as an ecosystemic analysis of local politics, a procedure that explains policy-making processes through a deep "contextual comparison" inspired by Rokkan. It simultaneously analyzes institutional and cultural variables, positioning the data within a historically and territorially constructed sys-

⁵ Gross Domestic Product (GDP) 2019 Total: €157,862 million (Emilia-Romagna) and €159,984 million (Veneto) – Population 4,445,000 (Emilia-Romagna) and 4,852,000 (Veneto).

⁶ The other region, Molise, is the second smallest by area in Italy, making it a poor choice for comparison with the other case.

tem of meaning. To gather the complex data required for such rich comparative work, 41 expert interviews were conducted with politicians and experts in the territorial politics of the two regions (19 from Emilia-Romagna and 22 from Veneto). Participants were selected if they held an official position in local government or were experts (e.g., professors, researchers, journalists) in local institutions and politics. The interviews were conducted in person and remotely over a fifteen-month period (2021–2022), which included four months of fieldwork. The interviews lasted between twenty and ninety minutes, covering topics such as the decision-making processes, the political discourse, and the implementation of the territorial policies under study.

The time frame under analysis formally includes the institutional status of the regions from 2014 onwards. Within this framework, the study analyzes a total of five territorial reforms. Beyond the national Law 56/2014 (Delrio), the analysis includes regional laws 13/2015 and 15/2016 (Emilia-Romagna), and 19/2015 and 30/2016 (Veneto). This policy analysis informed the development of the semi-structured interview guide(s). This study employed Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA) to examine primary textual sources and transcribed interviews. This method facilitates the interpretation of textual data by categorizing and identifying themes, offering a structured yet flexible approach (Schreier, 2012). The QCA used both inductive and deductive methods, beginning with a codebook informed by the literature. Initial variables served as “mother codes,” while sub-themes (“child codes”) emerged inductively from the data. Coding was conducted using Dedoose, a mixed-methods software platform that streamlines qualitative data analysis and integrates quantitative data. The research design triangulated interviews, legislation, and regional council transcripts to capture the cases’ complexity and enhance the external validity of the findings, ensuring broader applicability beyond the Italian context.

4. Emilia-Romagna - Integrative Governance

Emilia-Romagna is located in North-Central Italy and is currently organized into nine provinces and 39 municipal unions (2024) (Appendix, Figure 1). It implemented the principles of the Delrio reform, rescaling institutional functions to consolidate governance. Regional Law 13/2015 assigned specific duties within determined functions to each institutional level. In other words, given an institutional function, like protecting the environment, each level was assigned an interconnected role that places the Region at the center of the policy network. The Impact Assessment Office of the

Italian Senate aptly named this approach “Multilevel Governance.” In this system, the Region programs, directs, and controls the functions, the Provinces (eight plus the Metropolitan City of Bologna) (Appendix, Figure 1) coordinate (and at times program, depending on the specific function), and the Municipalities in their Unions administrate and manage the services related to the function (Fucito and Frati, 2017).

By redistributing functions among its institutional levels, Emilia-Romagna redefined administrative roles to reinforce the Region’s institutional role in direction, planning, and control (Napolitano, 2018). Some functions, like forest management and social services, were divided into specific sub-functions and allocated to the territorial level that could better manage each particular assignment. This reform process sought to decrease territorial multiplication and foster the association of smaller municipalities to deliver services that interest the larger area (Fucito and Frati, 2017). The reform implementation appears driven by public/civic interest, corporatism, and pragmatism, reflecting high institutional trust and the strength of regional organs (Messina, 2012). This approach actively considers the needs of industries, entrepreneurs, labor unions, NGOs, and universities. This consultation involves various representative and economic-social categories, such as trade unions, cooperatives, and middle-sector associations. Their consistent participation is woven into political decision-making, creating an intricate and integrated network of relationships.

The historical roots of Emilia-Romagna’s integrative legacies extend back to the autonomous and decentralized socialism of the late 1800s. During this era, the emancipation movement created opportunities for inclusive and participatory civic engagement. This mobilization, rooted in the local context, facilitated the establishment of integrated institutions that thrive on continuous interaction between municipal administrations and society. The socialist “laboratories” in Imola and Reggio Emilia (Appendix, Figure 1) marked the genesis of a cultural, political, and administrative model. This model is characterized by a robust associative fabric, strong civic virtues, organizational capabilities, and a focus on social citizenship, which fostered advanced forms of local welfare (De Maria, 2011). Today, these historical approaches significantly influence institutional strategies for territorial rescaling. The enduring impact of these legacies of integration continues to shape the current approach to territorial reorganization, specifically through models of inclusive governance, civic participation, and local welfare. This historical continuity, illustrating how the integrative mode affected reform implementation, will be demonstrated through two key examples: the Metropolitan City of Bologna and the institutional dynamics within the regional Municipal Unions.

4.1 The Metropolitan City of Bologna

A telling example of Emilia-Romagna's governance approach can be seen in the institutionalization of collaboration opportunities in the Metropolitan City of Bologna, as it replaced the former Province of Bologna (Appendix, Figure 1). The creation of metropolitan cities originated from a constitutional reform (Law 3/2001) and was implemented by Law 56/2014 (Delrio). However, an executive member of the Metropolitan City of Bologna argues that the reform was incomplete, noting that metropolitan cities have evolved into second-tier entities. The core issue is the absence of effective executive discipline, compounded by the fact that fiscal tax collection (including taxes and automobile-related revenues) is handed over to the state despite the existence of relevant laws. This economic fragility poses significant challenges to the metropolitan city's relationship with the regional and state levels.

Confirming its integrative institutional approach, the Metropolitan City of Bologna uniquely initiated a metropolitan conference to formulate its statute. This conference, acting as a constituent assembly, finalized the metropolitan city's statute in 2016. A representative from Bologna's Office of Territorial Reforms explains that the aim was to identify institutional levels that could effectively represent the territories. In addition to the Metropolitan Council and the Mayor stipulated by the Delrio reform, the city created a unique Metropolitan Conference comprising all municipal mayors within the Metropolitan City. Additionally, they established a Presidency Office, represented by presidents of the municipal unions—intermediary units that group various local municipalities. This special office demonstrates how the legacies of concertation compel decision-makers to create institutionalized opportunities for dialogue among representatives, moving beyond the accommodation of individual local grievances.

Moreover, Emilia-Romagna's integrated decision-making process led to the creation of the delegated councilor position, which is unique among Italian Metropolitan Cities. In Bologna, the Metropolitan Mayor delegates certain councilors to handle specific matters. These delegated councilors convene regularly with the mayor to review and approve the mayor's acts. Although these decisions are essentially unilateral acts signed by the mayor without a formal council, the statute mandates a designated moment in the process for political collaboration. This collaboration, including a potential power of veto, serves as a forum for political discussion, preventing excessive centralization of powers. Notably, the metropolitan city, the municipalities, and the region have successfully undertaken collaborative projects. For instance, the Municipality of Bologna concurrently devised the metropolitan territorial plan, achieving technical and functional convergence with several

territorial players. A member of the Bologna executive explains that this concertation is unique in Italy, attributing it to the integrative approach to territorial governance:

In Bologna, we decided to start a self-reform process, (...) we have less fragmentation, we manage to be the first metropolitan city in Italy to adopt a statute and strategic plans for metropolitan mobility. In Emilia-Romagna, there is a strong, shared political-institutional culture that has allowed us to face the institutional weaknesses of the relationship between metropolitan cities, provinces, and regions in a more cohesive way. So, we compensate for the unresolved completion of the reform with strong political cohesion and the construction of innovative consultation tools.

In this context, the Metropolitan City of Bologna plays a strategic role for the entire regional territory, functioning as the Emilia-Romagna hub. The Region and the Metropolitan City jointly established an official forum to shape legislative initiatives and programmatic-political objectives in harmony with the metropolitan strategic plan. This process, which involves prior consultation with the Provinces, is based on a comprehensive general agreement. The forum is entrusted with identifying specific additional functions to be assigned to the Metropolitan City of Bologna through subsequent agreements.

One regional leader of the Democratic Party, who supervises relations between party members in institutional positions across levels of governance, explains that the transformation of the Province of Bologna into the Metropolitan City of Bologna and its institutional framework has fostered a renewed sense of coexistence. This involves a dynamic interaction among the regional capital, the metropolitan area, and the surrounding territories. He attributes the collaborative success to strategic choices at the regional level, noting that Bologna has achieved a new equilibrium as a key infrastructural hub with recognized attractiveness within the regional system. Rather than seeking individual gains, Bologna's significance lies in its inclusive role of supporting and encompassing other territories.

The speaker underscores the importance of maintaining a delicate balance. Bologna's role is not viewed as competing against the rest of the region but as a supportive force for a strengthened and consolidated regional system. Success is attributed to avoiding excessive centralization of resources and power in the regional capital and steering clear of undue standardization of its role. The speaker notes that the culture of participation and consultation has effectively utilized the metropolitan city framework, distinguishing it from other regional situations where similar efforts led to a concentration

of power in the capital, often at the expense of other provinces, without bolstering the overall regional system.

4.2 Municipal Unions

The impact of the integrative mode is also evident at the municipal level, where several interviewees underlined institutionalized and informal collaborative efforts consolidating the governance of the territory. This analysis focuses on the Union of Municipalities, a stable and structured form of inter-municipal cooperation with a formal organization with established governing bodies, including a President, Executive Committee, and Council. These institutions require the involved administrators to engage in a shared dialogue that addresses the needs of a larger territory, extending beyond the individual entities (municipalities) they represent. Municipal Unions were an integral piece of the Delrio reform, since they were seen as one of the main 'recipients' of the elimination of the Provinces. The Municipal Unions are present throughout Italy but seem to have higher 'success' rates in Emilia-Romagna⁷.

Crucially, this relative success seems connected to the regional legislation detailing its role within the regional governance environment. Regional Law 13/2015 affirms the essential roles of Municipal Unions as governing bodies and key partners for the Region, recognizing the role of mountain Municipal Unions in promoting and coordinating mountain policies, providing local services to citizens, and serving as governing bodies for optimal territorial areas. It also encourages municipal mergers to reduce their number and optimize the use of public resources while strengthening their unions as the core of local service organizations for citizens. Following this, Regional Law 15/2016, "Promotion of Associative Pathways: Optimal Areas, Unions, Mergers, and Municipal Incorporations," introduces measures to support the union and merger of municipalities and remove obstacles that hinder associative processes. To this end, the Regional Observatory on Municipal Unions has been established to monitor the effects of municipal unions' shared management of services for citizens and to oversee merger processes.

Emilia-Romagna's focus on consolidating power in Municipal Unions stems from its unique regional social capital and trust towards public institutions. This foundation arose from its experience as independent city-states during the twelfth century, developing an early form of democracy that created a sense of civic community and ensured public good provisions

⁷ In 2015, the average financial activity of the Unions in Emilia-Romagna was C8,051,029.13, more than three million Euros more than the second-placed Tuscany. It also placed first in the average number of inhabitants living in a Union (Marotta, 2015)

and protection from aggression (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nonetti, 1993). This historically rooted, integrative approach is discussed by many Regional Councilors when talking about how Emilia-Romagna makes critical strategic choices for the territory. As one member of the Democratic Party puts it:

Emilia-Romagna Regional Councilor: The logic remains that there is still a great institutional responsibility for the great strategic choices. We can say it. I believe that this is the result of history, [with] an element of political continuity helped a little.

Interviewer: The 'Red Italy'?

Emilia-Romagna Regional Councilor: Exactly! Pink now since we [are less certain of the electoral results].

In other words, in Emilia-Romagna, the political actor makes decisions in a network of local governance that produces a 'public good' (Messina, 2012) that benefits the whole system rather than a specialized one like in Veneto. Due to the Region's sociopolitical history, regional institutions seem to be intertwined with the local communities and socio-economic actors, which fosters the coordination of beneficial territorial policies in an integrative model.

The last quote introduced the idea of a 'Pink' region, where the historically 'Red' (Socialist) electoral trend has been influenced by 'white' (Christian Democrat) tendencies (a phenomenon sometimes characterized as 'Green' given La Lega's success in 2019 and 2020). Over the last decade in Emilia-Romagna, much like in the broader Northern region, a distinct voting pattern has emerged, particularly between urban areas and smaller towns. Cities tend to favor the Democratic Party (PD) and the center-left, whereas smaller towns lean towards La Lega, and the center-right. For context, in the 2019 European elections in Emilia-Romagna, the center-right parties secured 44.7% compared to their opponents' 38.7%. However, in the capital municipalities, the Democratic Party and affiliated parties garnered 43.8%, surpassing the center-right's 40.3%. Conversely, in smaller towns, the ratio was 36% for the center-left to 47% for the center-right (D'Alimonte, 2020). The recent political diversification in the region brought some attrition between institutions led by opposing sides⁸. A member of the regional executive cites the example of a Union of Municipalities in the Province of Forlì: (Appendix, Figure 1) the advent of a center-right (La Lega) leadership in one of its municipalities marked the dissolution of this collaborative association and severed connec-

⁸ This does not happen in the Metropolitan Cities because they are de facto a monocratic entity under the leadership of the capital city's Mayor.

tions with certain center-right administrators. Nevertheless, the interviewee clarifies that this discord is rare and does not manifest at the regional level or in the majority of the territory.

When considering provinces with heightened political intricacy like Piacenza (Appendix, Figure 1), there is a commendable history of collaborations between the center-left and center-right, particularly in the mayor's dual capacity as both mayor and president of the province, and in navigating the challenges posed by the pandemic. Two interviewees explained that Piacenza, being the initial province impacted by the pandemic due to its proximity to the COVID-19 outbreak, benefited from a seamlessly supportive institutional framework. This integrative approach proved instrumental in averting the problems witnessed in Lombardy, where nearby municipalities could not react to the emergency in an organized manner, fostering discord between mayors and the regional administration. Lombardy had a higher concentration of private healthcare facilities and chose to treat patients in centralized hospitals, rather than emphasizing collaborative community medicine, like Emilia-Romagna (Labini, 2020). Due to Emilia-Romagna's integrative approach, in the Province of Piacenza, the collaborative effort yielded dividends by compelling the regional administration to intensify attention, allocate resources, and exert additional efforts specifically within that territorial domain, devoid of any distinctions rooted in political or partisan affiliations.

The centrality of integration is also visible in the Province of Modena (Appendix, Figure 1). The mayor of a Modenese municipality, and a member of a Union of Municipalities, explains that,

Even before being right-wing or left-wing politicians, we are citizens who have grown up in a context that, like all living beings, has influenced us in the development of our relationships. Therefore, it is impossible that identifying with a political party would shield you from any element that is part of your growth, your formation, even about these issues. (...) I have always said that governing the people of Emilia is quite easy. Why? Because there is a heritage, a civic sense that was born and permeates our region, which, in my opinion, would benefit and influence anyone who governs a territory, regardless of their political affiliation, whether right or left.

This perspective shows how the integrative approach to decision-making is intertwined with society. The political actors embrace this *modus operandi* both in their actions and vernacular. The legacies permeated the bureaucratic spheres, where collaboration among different players has been institutionalized. This case underscores how the dynamics between political and technical decisions are bound to the informal institutions of the territory. The centrality of regulatory modes is also palpable in Veneto, whose histo-

ry has developed an aggregative approach that prioritizes ad hoc territorial solutions rather than collaborative governance structures.

5. Veneto - Aggregative Governance

The northeastern Region of Veneto is currently organized into six Provinces, one Metropolitan City, 46 *Unioni di Comuni* (according to ANCI, 2025), and 25 *Area Programmatic Agreements* (*Ipa*). Many *Unioni di Comuni* and *Ipa* exist only *de jure*, and their associated functions are limited or non-existent, due to the Region ceasing to fund institutional collaboration. The region presented a significant uniformity in the redistribution of provincial functions between the Region and the municipalities, *de facto* maintaining the status quo before the *Delrio* reform. According to the Impact Assessment Office of the Italian Senate, Veneto (law 19/2015), and Molise, are the only Italian regions that confirmed the allocation of the function assigned to the province before the *Delrio* reform, in other words, maintaining the status quo and abiding by the principles of the reform minimally (Fucito and Frati, 2017). With the regional law 30/2016, Veneto's regional government transferred some minor provincial functions to the region (tourism, energy, public works, etc). However, it remained one of the most moderate reform efforts among the Italian Regions. A study from the Italian Research Institute of Regional, Federal, and Autonomy Systems (ISSIRFA) notes that Veneto is the only Italian region that, despite centralizing some competencies, provinces (with law 30/2016) effectively retained the exercise of these competencies. In other words, Veneto's already minor redistribution of functions was *de facto* even more limited (Napolitano, 2018) (Appendix, Figure 1). This institutional standstill maintained Veneto's fragmented and decentralized governance, which historically aggregated the interests of individual entities, rather than integrating functions through collaboration between local players.

The literature on Italian political cultures describes Veneto as a region as 'white' (Christian Democrat) (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nonetti, 1993; Messina, 2012; Almagisti, 2015). However, a more in-depth exploration is needed to fully understand the concept of the "White Veneto." While it may have served as the prevailing political color in the region, it is essential to recognize that this political landscape wasn't evenly distributed throughout the territory. At the sub-regional level, there is a notable lack of homogeneity, and the electoral geography reveals significant variations with different party dynamics across various zones. The region can be categorized into at least three primary areas: Firstly, the "white area" encompasses the entire province of Vicenza and significant portions of the provinces of Padova, Trevi-

so, and Verona (Appendix, Figure 2). In these areas, the support for the DC (Christian Democracy) remained notably higher compared to the regional average. Secondly, we have the provinces of Venice and Rovigo, the south-eastern segment of the region, where support for the PCI (Italian Communist Party) is more pronounced. Lastly, there is the Belluno area, with a stronger historical tradition of socialism and social democracy. This diversity is rooted in historical and social factors, such as the role of the Church in providing cultural and organizational support to the local DC, as well as economic and industrial development in these regions, which has been extensively studied in other works (Diamanti, 1993).

Veneto's highly fragmented governance can be explained by the behaviors of public and private entities that act in an aggregative way, rooted in parochial and conservative-Catholic values, which consist of the centrality of small-business networks, the family nucleus, and an approach rooted in a strong work ethic and rural tradition (Messina, 2012; Princivalli, 2020). This social fabric results in limited local government intervention and reliance on ad hoc, privately driven solutions in the territory. For example, a Regional Executive member (La Lega) explained that, between 2021 and 2022, the Region undertook a series of initiatives, participating in 23 engagements dispersed across the territory. Rather than foster multilevel cooperation by including as many local actors as possible, Veneto's aggregative approach involved interfacing with local administrators through a bottom-up approach to understand the needs of each locality. This initiative yielded a plethora of ideas and exposed diverse sensitivities inherent in each locality. The difference between the aggregative approach of Veneto's executive and the integrative institutional path of Emilia-Romagna is stark. Local administrators are particularly aware of how aggregative legacies affect regional governance. As a Venetian municipal politician puts it:

We [in Veneto] have a sort of tradition/ambition of relying on our intermediary institutions [the Provinces], those organs closer to the people, and this is a cultural thing, I do not know how to say it, but there is a heritage that we bring with us from the '70s (...) [the province] is still highly recognized by the local mayors, who do not find the same capacity and interlocution when they go to the Region [where] you become crazy.

The localized, private, and rural approach to decision-making, and the general distrust in the region as an institution, is well-known in Veneto's political class. The Region is described as distant and unorganized, so much so as to 'make you crazy.' This aggregative way of dealing with problem-solving is not lost to the Region, which has partially decided to keep the provinces for their established relationship with the local institution in the territory and

their experience in handling complex functions like the road infrastructure and school building.

In general, Veneto is characterized by a vision of politics as an exchange or mediation rather than a tool to pursue the common good. This is connected to a low level of trust in the institutions and a relative weakness of the regional organs compared to the local ones, a phenomenon Messina (2012) and Almagisti (2015) call 'anti-state localism'. Survey data shows that the local authority closest to the citizens (Municipality) enjoys the support of 39% of Italians, but among those in the northeast (Veneto), trust rises to 48% (Osservatorio sul Nord Est, Demos 2023). These polls highlight that local political culture not only exists in the political realm, but also encompasses the whole regional society, contributing to the development of regulatory modes. This analysis highlights two main examples of how Veneto's aggregative legacies have influenced its implementation of the Delrio reform: the organization of the Metropolitan City of Venice and the Municipal Unions (and Area Programmatic Agreements).

5.1 The Metropolitan City of Venice

The importance of regulatory modes in Veneto is exemplified by how the region handled the establishment of the Metropolitan City of Venice. The interview data shows that parochialism and low institutional planning have resulted in a 'missed opportunity.' Rather than systematically developing a Metropolitan City to leverage the territory's functional strengths, Veneto sought to maintain the de facto status quo by meeting the minimum parameters instituted by Law 56/2014. Following the Delrio law guidelines, the Metropolitan City replaced the former Province of Venice. The region endowed the Metropolitan City with specific responsibilities in urban planning (as stipulated in Article 3, Paragraph 4, Regional Law No. 30 of 2016). The Metropolitan City of Venice encompasses a larger geographical area than its population density justifies. With a population barely exceeding 900,000, it includes a significant amount of rural territory, making it feel like an administrative imposition rather than a natural urban entity.

According to several interviewees, the regional authorities seem to have missed a pivotal juncture in determining the functions of the Metropolitan City, stirring debate about the allocation and recognition of responsibilities in urban planning and related domains. The Mayor of a Municipality within the Metropolitan City of Venice (Democratic Party) explains that 'the metropolitan mayor has exhibited a discernible disparity in commitment compared to counterparts in cities like Bologna or Turin, manifesting a lack of collaborative synergy, hindering the comprehensive oversight that a metro-

politan city necessitates.’ By comparing the Metropolitan City of Venice with Bologna and Turin, the mayor underlines how efficiency and collaboration are not central to the territorial and institutional design of the Metropolitan City of Venice. Instead, the regional decision-makers have taken a passive stance to maintain the status quo and let the localities find solutions.

Regardless of political views, all interviewees from Veneto agree that Venice is historically and currently defined by a unique set of strengths and weaknesses due to its economic and geographical predispositions. As a member of the Regional Executive (La Lega) puts it, Venice stands as a unique urban entity. The intricacies inherent in managing a city as unique as Venice defy a reductionist characterization as a mere metropolitan entity. The Metropolitan City electoral law instituted by the Delrio centralizes power in the mayor of the main city, who also becomes the governor of the whole metropolitan territory (formerly the province). Beyond creating a democratic imbalance in interest representation, it fails to serve the genuine interests of the metropolitan entity, where the former provincial rural territory assumes a metropolitan semblance.

Another sign of the strength of the aggregation approach and the status quo is the institutional resistance to proposed changes in the governance structure of the region. According to several interviewees and the work of Patrizia Messina (2020), there has been a plan to rethink the outdated administrative boundaries, be they municipal or provincial, which no longer adequately define the scope of the vast metropolitan area (Messina, 2020). Instead, emphasis would be placed on a more efficient territorial arrangement that prioritizes functions such as mobility and logistics, with the aim of governing the extensive flows within the conglomerate that has emerged in these contemporary urban-metropolitan contexts. This approach seeks to overcome the limitations of traditional administrative borders, acknowledging the competitive disadvantage in Veneto and recognizing the mismatch between the coastal area where the Metropolitan City of Venice operates and the dispersed urban landscape in central Veneto, connecting cities like Venice-Mestre, Padova, Treviso, and Vicenza (Appendix, Figure 2) through initiatives like the new Pedemontana high-speed freeway.

The central Veneto area displays all the hallmarks of a functional metropolitan region, operating as a polycentric conglomeration. It features high population density, substantial daily commuter flows of people and goods, a notable concentration of small and medium-sized enterprises, and essential hubs for logistics and advanced tertiary services, including significant universities (Messina, 2020). A provincial executive member from Padova explains that there has been an extended discourse about forming the “*Pa-treve*” (Padova, Treviso, Venice) metropolitan scenario, which is required

as a functional metropolitan city rather than the currently institutionalized one. Unfortunately, this vision has struggled to gain momentum in Veneto due to its aggregative mode and parochialism. Indeed, the landscape is characterized by marked administrative fragmentation (with four provinces and over 200 municipalities) by distinct localism, and a notable absence of a cooperative institutional network culture among public and private stakeholders. In other words, this proposal seeks to reform the Metropolitan City structure, consolidating functions based on socioeconomic rationale. Unsurprisingly, the majority of the political and institutional actors of Veneto are against this proposed top-down, integrated approach to territorial governance because it would run counter to the legacies that have characterized the territory for several decades.

5.2 Municipal Unions and Area Programmatic Agreements

Veneto's governance of the association of municipalities on the territory is another clear example of how its aggregative regulatory mode has affected the implementation of the Delrio reform. While Emilia-Romagna fosters the creation and maintenance of *Unioni di Comuni* (Municipal Unions) through top-down incentives and the shared legacy of prioritizing the collective interest, Veneto's legislation generates institutionally decentralized governance to appease the interests of each locality. With this approach, the regional government assists the local institutions without focusing on the big picture. The paramount example of how institutional legacies affect institutional collaboration is the relative weakness of the Municipal Unions and the existence of the Area Programmatic Agreements (Ipa)⁹.

If Emilia-Romagna paid particular attention to the unions and merger of municipalities, aiming to eliminate barriers that impede associative processes (Regional Law 15/2016), Veneto's territorial policies following the Delrio (19/2015 and 30/2016), seemingly ignored the Municipal Unions, maintaining the status quo and letting these local entities manage themselves. The effects of very different regulatory modes are particularly vivid when analyzing the differential outcomes between Emilia-Romagna and Veneto, which are very stark when comparing the trajectory of the Municipal Unions. In 2015, Veneto had the second-lowest average of municipalities per Union (3.84—after Sicily's 3.82) and is one of the regions that has shown a steady decrease in the number of Unions formed (Marotta, 2015). Marotta (ivi) points to a persistent trend of resistance among municipalities in Veneto toward forming inter-municipal Unions, suggesting that this aversion might require further

⁹ Ipas are not directly regulated by regional laws no.19/2015 and no. 30/2016, but are important to discuss as part of the existing institutional context of the region.

investigation. This project directly addresses this need by exploring the specific factors that shaped Veneto's territorial organization choices, providing a detailed analysis of the regional attitudes and administrative preferences that have influenced Veneto's distinct approach.

In examining the current expenditures of inter-municipal Unions, there is a striking contrast between Veneto and Emilia-Romagna. As discussed above, the average Union expenditure in Emilia-Romagna is around 8 million euros, far surpassing the approximately 1.6 million euros reported in Veneto. This significant gap suggests that Emilia-Romagna invests more heavily in fostering effective, well-resourced Unions capable of meaningful collaboration. The higher investment in Emilia-Romagna supports the development of Unions, enabling comprehensive shared management of functions and services across municipalities. The integrative legacies have likely contributed to reducing administrative fragmentation and strengthening regional cohesion. Conversely, Veneto's limited financial commitment to its Unions signals a different approach, fostering greater functional disarray among its municipalities. With an average Union expenditure far below the threshold of six million euros, as identified by Melideo (in Marotta, 2015), Veneto's Unions often lack the resources needed to operate. This governance choice undermines the effectiveness of inter-municipal collaboration, reinforcing the aversion to cooperative initiatives noted by Marotta and many interviewees. As a result, Veneto's municipalities are more likely to operate independently, perpetuating aggregative legacies of disunity and regional fragmentation that contrast sharply with the more cohesive model seen in Emilia-Romagna.

While this study focuses on the regional territorial reforms following Law 56/2014, it also considers the legislative context preceding the Delrio reform to contextualize Veneto's governance of its municipalities. The Area Programmatic Agreements (*Intese Programmatiche d'Area*) were created with Regional Law 35/2001, as a tool for decentralized planning and regional development through which the Region offers the opportunity for local public entities and economic and social stakeholders to participate in regional planning (Regione Veneto Website, 2025). *Ipas* represent intermunicipal networks similar to Municipal Unions in terms of governmental relations and influence of regulatory modes, but different in institutional nature, as they were regulated by different financial and juridical parameters. Yet, these Area Programmatic Agreements did not become reliable *de facto* actors on the territory. There has never been a balanced plan that considered how the municipalities connect with those at the regional level through *Ipas*, having confusing guidelines on their functions, the personnel, and the financial resources needed to bring them to fruition. This move fostered the multiplica-

tion of power loci as the Ipas became yet another place of territorial power in a complex governance system. According to the director of an Ipa in western Veneto, the problem is that everyone goes their own way, so there is a problem of both vertical institutional integration and horizontal connection at the local level, a clear indication of the lack of concertation within the various community players.

This individualist logic is still driving regional decision-making, and the uniqueness of the Ipas is further proof of that. Veneto's Area Programmatic Agreements are a decentralized instrument for territorial development that includes local public institutions like Municipalities and privately run economic and social entities. These grassroots agreements embody Veneto's aggregative approach as they cannot be found anywhere else in Italy. The few Ipa that appear to be functional (according to the interviewees, four out of 22) are drivers of change. An Ipa manager explains:

The Ipa includes public, private, third sector, schools, foundations, and banks, creating a dynamism where you can talk with different sectors. You are not all from the public administrations, there is an openness, a vision of the same problem that is difficult to have in the Municipal Unions. Then the other thing is that there is a large participation of the private world, usually as a trade association, and interest groups. (...) They find it more easily in these Ipas which are planning centers that bring together public and private.

This public/private hybrid allows one to 'escape' the formal regional regulations, which are considered limiting. Not being bound to the budgetary restraints of the public sector leaves room to hire more personnel, increase efficiency, and access more funds to push for inter-municipal goals that the other institutional level cannot or will not address. This example shows how Veneto's aggregative mode hinders widespread efforts of grassroots associative governance. A journalist and expert on Veneto's history and politics explains how the region is defined by its legacies. In the heart of the Veneto region, a distinctive and robust localism prevails, coupled with a profound sense of municipal identity. This uniquely aggregative approach manifests at the regional and local level, where the Area Programmatic Agreements stunted the development of municipal unions, mirroring a broader challenge in the realm of interest representation.

In summary, the weakness of the Municipal Unions and the uniqueness of the Area Programmatic Agreements are symptoms of Veneto's aggregative regulatory mode. The interviewees highlighted that there could be an institutional way to leverage the fragmented interests of the territory, coalescing specific local grievances through a dynamic system of governance that en-

gages the different territorial actors. Yet, present-day governance decisions seem to be inescapably influenced by aggregative legacies, precipitating a crisis of local governance.

6. Conclusion

Seeking to explain what affects reform implementation variation among regions, this project tested the Regulatory Modes theory by examining the mechanisms behind the legislation on governance rescaling between 2014 and 2016 in two Italian regions (Veneto and Emilia-Romagna). This study has confirmed the applicability of the theory to cases of reform implementation, emphasizing the negotiation and collaboration among actors across various levels of government. The argument illustrates how regions perpetuate informal socio-political regulatory modes rooted in historical collaborations, public management, and identities dating back to Italian unification. The study emphasizes the evolving and dynamic nature of regulatory modes, asserting that they emerge as a strong predictor of reform implementation and governance differentiation, necessitating an adaptation to local contexts that trumps the influences of partisanship and economic goals. These contextualized legacies are rooted in the past, but develop and are sensitive to changes from within and without.

This research significantly advances our understanding of territorial politics with a comprehensive analysis of how institutional legacies at the sub-national level contribute to governance rescaling. By scrutinizing the formal rules and informal norms governing behavior, this research offers valuable insights into the intricate dynamics of regional governance, responding to the dynamic challenges posed by shifting European and state structures. By interrogating how territorial actors navigate the contested political terrain, this project sheds light on the adaptive strategies employed in response to evolving geopolitical landscapes. The quest for varying degrees of self-governance among distinct regional communities influences their respective territories. It shapes the governmental structure within states and, arguably, the transnational governance to which they belong.

In terms of tangible policy effects, the interviews not only brought to light the dynamics that affected the regional implementations of the Delrio Reform, but they also revealed how these different territorial government outcomes produce contrasting results. Beyond the already mentioned disparities in funding for local intermunicipal networks, several interviewees from both regions framed Emilia-Romagna's governance as indicative of efficient and developmentally driven decision-making. Eight out of 18 interviewees from

Emilia-Romagna highlighted the 'Patto per il Lavoro e per il Clima' (Pact for Work and the Climate)¹⁰ as a great achievement of multilevel and inter-municipal governance. This was a shared project for the revitalization and development of Emilia-Romagna based on environmental, economic, and social sustainability, directly affecting the redistribution of function between institutional and non-institutional players, streamlining and consolidating the public administration within the region as auspicated by law 56/2014. On the other hand, Veneto's conservative and localist approach actively resisted the efficiency goals outlined in the Delrio Reform. According to five Veneto's interviewees, it fostered institutional fragmentation, exacerbating a problem of both vertical institutional integration and horizontal connection at the local level, lacking the collaboration necessary to optimize public governance and achieve economies of scale.

The implications of this project can extend beyond the Italian context. Understanding subnational governance systems is crucial for illuminating the mechanisms of resource and power distribution within societies. It offers valuable insights into how institutional legacies shape territorial policies, which can be applied to other countries facing similar challenges. For instance, due to the remarkable similarities with the Italian case (formally unitary nation-state implementing major territorial reforms in reaction to the 2008 economic crisis), the French contexts may unveil unique historical collaboration patterns, public management traditions, and party organizational dynamics, which, when juxtaposed with formal institutions, could contribute to a nuanced understanding of the territorial effects of the MAPTAM and NOTRE reforms (Bourdin and Torre, 2021). Drawing inferences from these shadow cases could enrich the explanatory framework, offering a broader empirical foundation for comprehensively analyzing governance rescaling processes. To better accomplish the goal that they set out to achieve, governance reforms should be elaborated with an understanding of the socio-political ecosystem of each region. While top-down, uniform reforms might be quicker and appease the pressures of national and supranational actors, their 'successful' implementation depends on the legacies of each subnational entity.

References

Almagisti, M. (2015). *Subculture politiche territoriali e capitale sociale. In L'Italia e le sue Regioni*. Rome: Treccani.

¹⁰ In 2020, the Region signed this pact together with local authorities, trade unions, businesses, schools, universities, environmental associations, the third sector, and the voluntary sector, professions, chambers of commerce, and banks.

- Almagisti, M. and Zanellato, M. (2021). “Il ritorno del ‘Doge’: un’analisi storica del voto regionale in Veneto del 2020.” *Regional Studies and Local Development – Studi Regionali e Sviluppo Locale*, 2(04/2021), 43–76. DOI: 10.14658/pupj-rsld-2021-1-3.
- Bolgherini, S. and Lippi, A., and Maset, S. (2015). I processi decisionali delle regioni e i loro assetti infra-regionali dopo la Legge Delrio. Technical report. Padova: Idea Tolomeo srl.
- Bolgherini, S. and Messina, P. (2014). *Oltre le province. Enti intermedi in Italia e in Europa*. Padova: Padova University Press.
- Bourdin, S. and Torre, A. (2021). “The territorial big bang: which assessment about the territorial reform in France?” *European Planning Studies*, 29(11), 1981–1998. DOI: 10.1080/09654313.2020.1777943.
- D’Alimonte, R. (2020). Gli elettori Dem tornano a casa, ma il centrodestra non arretra. *Il Sole 24 Ore*, January 2020.
- De Maria C. (2011). Il “modello emiliano” nella storia d’Italia. Appunti di lavoro. *Officina della Storia*, 6, 1-8.
- Diamanti, I. (1992). *La parabola del voto bianco: elezioni e società in Veneto (1946–1992)*. Vicenza: Pozza.
- Diamanti, I. (1993). “La Lega, imprenditore politico della crisi. Origini, crescita e successo delle leghe autonomiste in Italia.” *Meridiana*, 16, 99–133.
- Diamanti, I. (2009). *Mappe dell’Italia politica: bianco, rosso, verde, azzurro – e tricolore*. Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino.
- Fucito, L. and Frati, M. (2017). “Ex Province. Il riordino degli enti di area vasta a tre anni dalla riforma.” Senato della Repubblica.
- Gerring, J. et al. (2011). “An Institutional Theory of Direct and Indirect Rule.” *World Politics*, 63(3), 377–433. DOI: 10.1017/S0043887111000104.
- Immergut, E. M. (1998). “The Theoretical Core of the New Institutionalism.” *Politics & Society*, 26(1), 5–34. DOI: 10.1177/0032329298026001002.
- Keating, M. (2021). “Rescaling Europe, rebounding territory: A political approach.” *Regional & Federal Studies*, 31(1), 31–50. DOI: 10.1080/13597566.2020.1791095.
- Labini, M. S. and Frumento, P. (2020). Mortalità da coronavirus: quanto vale l’effetto Lombardia. Available at: <https://lavoce.info/archives/65752/mortalita-da-coronavirus-quanto-vale-leffetto-lombardia/> (accessed on: 14/06/2025).

- Longo, E. and Mobilio, G. (2016). "Territorial government reforms at the time of financial crisis: the dawn of metropolitan cities in Italy." *Regional & Federal Studies*, 26(4), 509–530. DOI: 10.1080/13597566.2016.1210603.
- Lowndes, V. and Roberts, M. (2013). *Why Institutions Matter: The New Institutionalism in Political Science*. London: Bloomsbury Academic. ISBN: 978-0-333-92955-1.
- March, J. G. and Olsen, J. P. (1989). *Rediscovering Institutions: The Organizational Basis of Politics*. New York: Free Press. ISBN: 978-0-02-920115-2.
- Marks, G., Hooghe, L. and Schakel, A. H. (2008). "Measuring Regional Authority." *Regional & Federal Studies*, 18(2–3), 111–121. DOI: 10.1080/13597560801979464.
- Marotta, M. (2015). "Quante Unioni, Quali Unioni. Studio sulle Unioni di Comuni in Italia." Convegno Società Italiana di Scienza Politica.
- Mazzoleni, M. (2016). "La riforma degli enti territoriali in Francia e Italia: l'eutanasia mancata del livello intermedio." *Istituzioni del Federalismo*, 4.
- Messina, P. (2006). "Culture politiche locali e comparazione per contesti: un approccio ecologico all'analisi dei sistemi politici locali." *Antropologia ed Epistemologia per lo Studio della Contemporaneità*, 2(2), 77–96.
- Messina, P. (2012). *Modi di regolazione dello sviluppo locale. Una comparazione per contesti del Veneto ed dell'Emilia-Romagna*. Padova: Padova University Press.
- Messina, P. (2020). "Tra Città metropolitana e City Region. Adeguatezza istituzionale come vantaggio competitivo per lo sviluppo regionale in quattro regioni europee e il caso del Veneto." *Regional Studies and Local Development*, 1(12/2020), 19–53. DOI: 10.14658/pupj-RSLD-2020-1-3.
- Napolitano, G. (2018). *Gli Enti Locali dopo la "Legge Delrio" e le leggi regionali di attuazione*. Technical report. Rome: ISSIRFA.
- Osservatorio sul Nord Est – Demos & Pi (2023). available at: <https://www.demos.it/a01365.php/> (accessed on: 14/06/2025).
- Princivalli, G. (2020). "La comunicazione politica di Zaia." Osservatorio Democrazia a Nord Est.
- Putnam, R. D., Leonardi, R. and Nonetti, R. Y. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. DOI: 10.2307/j.ctt7s8r7.
- Schreier, M. (2012). *Qualitative Content Analysis in Practice*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. DOI: 10.4135/9781529682571.

- Seawright, J. and Gerring, J. (2008). "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research: A Menu of Qualitative and Quantitative Options." *Political Research Quarterly*, 61(2), 294–308. DOI: 10.1177/1065912907313077.
- Strom, K. (1990). "A Behavioral Theory of Competitive Political Parties." *American Journal of Political Science*, 34(2), 565. DOI: 10.2307/2111461.
- Triglia, C. and Ewing, J. (1991). "The Political Bases of Diffuse Industrialization." *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 21(1), 38–52.

Nota sull'autore:

DR. ALBERTO GANIS è Teaching Assistant Professor di Scienze Sociali e Politica presso l'Honors College della Portland State University (USA), dove tiene insegnamenti su multiculturalismo, politiche territoriali, sociologia legale e composizione. Tra i suoi principali temi di ricerca rientrano le identità nazionali substatuali, il regionalismo, il multiculturalismo e le politiche di governance territoriale. (ORCID: 0009-0004-6316-8836)

Appendix

Figure 1: Emilia-Romagna - Map of Provinces with their Capital Cities (Open Source)



Figure 2: Veneto - Map of Provinces (Open Source)



Table 1: Delrio Reform Implementation - Summary of Functional Rescaling Outcomes (adapted from (Fucito and Frati, 2017))

Region	Delrio Implementation	Rescaling Type
Emilia - Romagna	<p><i>Regional Law no.13/2015:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reorganizes government functions by sector across different levels. • Delegates the determination of when functions will be exercised to the Regional Council. • Strengthens the Bologna Metropolitan City (CM) by recognizing its institutional role, assigning functions, and planning future agreements for additional responsibilities. • Encourages cooperation between provinces, municipalities, and unions. • Supports municipal mergers as a strategic opportunity. 	Multilevel Governance
Veneto	<p><i>Regional Law no.19/2015:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeps non-essential functions with the provinces, Venice Metropolitan City (CM), and Belluno Province and reallocates related staff. • Lets the Region define metropolitan areas for strategic governance and regional development. • Requires CM and provinces to close certain entities by deadlines or face intervention by the Regional Council. <p><i>Regional Law no. 30/2016:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transfers non-essential functions from the CM and provinces back to the Region. • Confirms functions to stay with local authorities (EAV). 	Status-Quo