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BOOK REVIEWS

Coco A. (2018), *Politica e Città in Trasformazione: il Caso di Bari* [Politics and Cities in Transformation: The Case of Bari], Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, pp. 198.

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In this book Antonella Coco attempts to reconstruct the political transformations that have taken place in Bari over the last 25-30 years. The beginning of this sociological reconstruction is established in the period following the institutional reform that introduced the direct election of mayors in Italy. This reform triggered a great transformation in the local systems of government, which became places for the construction of public policies, with great independence and freedom of action for the new mayors (Bettin and Magnier 1995; Piselli and Ranella 2002). A series of global and national processes have produced a convergence that has determined an increase in the autonomy of local governments and the assumption by cities of the role of key centres for the localization of some preferred functions: these new opportunities for protagonism are linked by the author to the possibility of a new historical interlude (Weber 1922). These possibilities of wide political and economic autonomy of cities are not a constant quality but occur when the national powers - i.e. the States - are weak, fragmented and uncertain. Globalization processes are at the origin of increasing flows of information, capital, technologies and people that States have difficulty in regulating. Faced with the weakness of States, cities tend to emerge as a regulatory group of the

economy (Borelli 2012) and, in this context, global cities are becoming important (Sassen 1997), but new opportunities are also being created for small and medium-sized cities (Storper 1997). Many authors share this idea of the growing importance of cities as a result of the progressive weakening of States. For example, according to Rhodes (2000), this happens under the pressure of the globalization of production processes, financial transactions and international law, while according to Peters (1996), this happens because of the inability of national governments to present a coherent set of policies under the pressure of multiple networks.

Coco classifies this phenomenon from the perspective of cities as collective actors. Continuing the work of Bagnasco (2008), the author defines the city as a way in which society takes form, and to observe sociologically the city she adopts an approach that aims to observe the city as a political system and an economic system, both understood as sets of functions and structures. Her work is in line with the neo-Weberian current that started the attempt to reconstruct the new historical interlude (Bagnasco and Le Galès 2000). The two authors argue that there are many similarities between contemporary European cities and their medieval predecessors and that in today's historical interlude the new political economy of European cities is based on characteristics similar to those of medieval cities. Like today's cities, these cities were able to formulate their own public policies on planning, security and economic development and to build confederations and networks with other cities to defend their mutual economic interests and to defend themselves against other rival cities. This perspective, which puts cities back at the heart of European urban, economic and political sociology, can be effectively captured through the concept of cities as collective actors (Bagnasco 2008). Cities are not unitary actors represented by political administrators but are active actors with whom local actors and institutions cooperate to achieve common goals. This process is effectively described in the concept of governance, defined as a process by which social groups, institutions, public and private actors, through mechanisms of partisan mutual adjustment (Lindblom 1959, 1979), reach agreements and collective projects to adapt or achieve determined economic conditions. Governance, therefore, is neither a product nor a form of territorial government, but a process of mobilisation of actors and social groups to achieve goals collectively identified in fragmented and uncertain environments (Gelli 2005; Le Galès 2017). This suggests that the governance of cities as collective actors is not an a priori but a political process and it represents the possibility for different urban actors to react to the transformation of constraints and opportunities. This approach to the study of cities emphasizes the need to analyse the diversity of actors, groups and institutions, which can give rise to different forms of collective action and thereby avoid the danger of transforming the city in-

to something to be observed and to observe the city as the sum of the logics of conflict and cooperation between groups, institutions and actors that constitute the cities. This perspective suggests investigating the qualities of the actors of urban governance and the forms of interaction between them. What this perspective develops, in fact, is an attention to the interaction between the local and the other levels of regulation, to social groups rather than to those who govern, to informal and social networks rather than to government institutions (Le Galès 2018). The answer to the historical question 'who governs the city'? is not urban government (i.e. the structure of the actors) but the processes of dealing with problems (and solutions) perceived as common (i.e. governance, the process of coordination between the actors).

The author of this book has chosen a city in Southern Italy, Bari, as a paradigmatic case for deepening the processes described above. The South of Italy represents an interesting case for the peculiarities of the modernization process that characterize it. The available studies highlight the economic and employment difficulties of the South and the great differences compared to the northern regions in terms of infrastructure and services (Trigilia 2012), a dualism that is also found in public services (Cersosimo and Nisticò 2013) and welfare (Ascoli 2011). The dualism between North and South has been institutionalized through a compensatory mechanism fuelled by continuous compromises and through the instrument of public money transfers, public employment and welfare (Fantozzi 2011). A local assisted society was based on the ability to attract public money from central government and for this reason one of the main priorities of the political elites of the South was to establish themselves in the institutions of the political centre. In these regions, familism and clientelism maintain a low level of trust in the legality, institutional system and impersonal logic on which administrative systems should be based (Fantozzi 2007). The research job presented in the volume was based on the reconstruction of the literature concerning the city of Bari, on the analysis of secondary data and on the realization of semi-structured interviews with qualified testimonials. This information has been managed by adopting a historical-evolutionary approach to the transformations of the city through the reconstruction of the main events of the political and economic life of the city through the main contributions of sociological research on the city of Bari.

In the first chapter, Antonella Coco describes the political life of the city of Bari during the 20th century and focuses on the 20 years between 1995 and 2014. After the end of the Second World War, the right-wing parties controlled the municipal administration and the monarchic and fascist feeling still prevailed, but already in the second half of the 1950s the control of the municipal administration went to the Democrazia Cristiana, which in Bari tried a progressive centre-left government that managed the

phase of the economic boom, especially in the building sector. This period of prosperity, which affects increasingly large sections of the population, is called by Amendola (1997) "belle époque" and goes from the '60s to the '80s. Bari in those years is called the "Milan of the South", meaning the economic capital of Southern Italy. In the '60s, the industrial growth of the whole Puglia began, based on three main axes: the siderurgical sector in Taranto, the petrochemical one in Brindisi and the metallurgical one in Bari. In those years, the prevailing criterion in the selection of the political class was that of competence in administrative and public management; therefore, the governing class comes mainly from the public administration or from the independent professions. Between the 1960s and 1980s in Bari, the parties of the left wing of the Democrazia Cristiana controlled by Aldo Moro, the part of the socialist party most closely linked to Bettino Craxi and the two agrarian and university components of the communist party, grew stronger. In short, until the 1990s Bari showed the characteristics of a city politically oriented in a pro-government sense. In the early '90s, during the national passage from the First to the Second Republic under the blows of the Italian (corruption and arrests of many Italian politicians) and Bari (especially in the health sector) tangente-polis, the parties of Centre-Right (Forza Italia and Alleanza Nazionale) formed a new political class. These parties governed Puglia and Bari from 1995 to 2004. During those years, Bari was the only city in the South of Italy to be administered by the centre-right parties after the new law on the direct election of mayors. In this post-reform phase, in contrast to other Italian municipalities, Bari is characterized by the absence of forms of civic mobilization; no alternative model of municipal government emerges compared to the past and the local political agenda remains almost unchanged (Piselli and Ramella 2002). At the end of the 1990s, Bari and the whole of Puglia witnessed a strong participatory awakening and intense civic mobilization, that is, the "Apulian Spring", interpreted as the reaction to the process of degradation of public life to the advantage of private economic interests (Bitetto 2005). In 2001, the association "Città Plurale" was born which in the following years would serve as a platform for the construction of the candidacy of Michele Emiliano and his victory of the political elections of 2004. The election of Emiliano as the Mayor is interpreted as a moment of political rupture from the past and a rupture from the disaffection with politics (Bitetto 2005). In this phase also emerges the figure of Nichi Vendola, a former member of parliament and national leader of the Communist Refoundation, who in 2005 became president of the Puglia region against Raffaele Fitto. Emiliano and Vendola both propose themselves as symbols of discontinuity and try to promote the image of Puglia and Bari as laboratories of innovation (Amendola 2016). Emiliano would be re-elected as the Mayor in 2009 against the former mayor Di Cagno Abbrescia.

In the second chapter, the author describes the main characteristics of the Bari economy. The development of the city of Bari until the 90s is characterized by the city's strong link with politics. Companies thrive in sectors dependent on politics (especially construction and private healthcare). The historical manufacturing presence, on the other hand, weakens a lot. A relationship between politics and economy can be observed in the form of local potentates, represented above all by entrepreneurs in the construction sector, by private health managers and by those of local finance (Catanzaro and Piselli 2002). The crisis of the political system of the 1990s also affects the political and economic equilibrium of the city and the system of mediation of interests between politicians and entrepreneurs. Politics appears less and less capable of protecting the most influential economic sectors, while in this phase the industry shows its own capacity for endogenous growth that depends on specific production and territory. The observation of the Bari economy requires the adoption of the metropolitan scale because the relations between Bari and the other municipalities are intense (Moro 2016) and have strong elements of interdependence due to the historical exchanges between the countryside and the city and the investments in urban construction by agricultural owners. Outside of Bari, in small and medium towns such as Monopoli, Molfetta or other municipalities on the boundary with Basilicata, important entrepreneurial experiences were born. These processes are part of regional dynamics: innovative tools aimed at enhancing the resources of the territories have influenced the Apulian economic system in recent years. The tools of decentralized planning, integrated planning and strategic planning have contributed to encourage bottom-up development actions. The size of the Bari economic system is second only to that of Naples among the major cities of the South. Another indicator of the wealth of the territory is represented by the relationship between imports and exports and by foreign trade, which confirms Bari's position with respect to Naples and the rest of the South. The urban area is characterized by a high weight of the tertiary sector and the emerging tourism sector, a novelty for the city, which drives the airport sector and the cruise sector. In this chapter, the author also presents a detailed reconstruction of the textures and processes of the main economic sectors: industry, construction, commerce and professions.

In the third chapter, Coco investigates the transformation of the city and the government of the territory through the interaction between political decisions and entrepreneurial actions. As Amendola (2016) observes, the physical form of modern Bari, born at the beginning of the 19th century, represents the main principles of the new bourgeois order, i.e. the market as a logic of functioning and rationality as a value. The bourgeoisie of commerce becomes the protagonist of the market city, of which the

port is a fundamental infrastructure. After the Second World War, the port became secondary and increasingly isolated and distant from the vital part of the city. Over time, the distance between the old Bari and the village wanted by the French king Murat in 1813 - the Murat village - grew both in terms of quantity and quality. The ancient village was marginalized and disintegrated with the birth of the new Bari at the beginning of the 19th century. Between the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the first neighbourhoods were built close to the Murat area, which marked the beginning of the expansion of the city, and continued to be built after the First World War. The fascist period was an important phase for Bari. In the '30s, the city was transformed to exalt the regime through a new urban image. Urban planning and activity restarted in the 1950s with the redaction of the new urban development plan, designed under the strong influence of landowners, businessmen and politicians in the centre-right, from which speculative and private lines were favoured. The capital of agricultural origin got invested in the city in the construction sector. One way of urban transformation is the expansion of new suburbs. The formation of the industrial area and the growing tertiarisation characterised the 1960s and 1970s, while in the 1980s and 1990s problems of degradation and insecurity emerged. The articulation of inequalities within the urban space shows a correspondence between the spatial and social structure, i.e. between the value of the urban areas and the resident social groups. The congestion of the central areas, the degradation of the peripheries, the inefficiency of the public services and the crisis of the key sectors of the economy are interpreted as signs of the decline of the city (Chiarello 1997). The prevailing criminal activity was the drug trade, and Bari became the strongest regional centre for drugs, but there were also areas where small criminal groups managed the smuggling of tobacco and drugs (Mortellaro 2016). Between the end of the 90's and the beginning of the 2000's, in concomitance with the new season of the European programming, Bari lived a moment of great transformation. The programmes Urban, approved for the first time in 1994, aimed at the poorest cities and districts with the most social problems, encourage intense processes of urban regeneration. These programmes have had a greater impact on the redevelopment of buildings and economic development and little towards social initiatives.

The reconstruction of *Coco* is therefore extremely detailed and exhaustive and has the unequivocal merit of being able to recognize the importance of institutions and politics in the construction and deconstruction of social capital (Raniolo 2016; Trigilia 2012). His study exemplifies the strategies, approaches, methods and research tools that characterize the peculiar Italian way to study the economic policy of cities (Bagnasco 1992). This tradition is anchored in the community studies of Italian scholars

in the 50s and 60s (Tosi and Vitale 2016), the influence of which brings in dowry to subsequent traditions a great deal of attention to the local dimension, focusing its attention on local social structures and local systems of relations. These are themes that, as Tosi and Vitale point out, have been incorporated into the comparative political economy of the cities, in the analysis of the social construction of the market (Bagnasco 1988) and of the climate in the industrial districts (Becattini 2000). In the studies of this kind, as in the tradition of community studies, particular attention is paid to the relationship between urban analysis and problems of collective action. These studies are therefore presented as a sociology of the local rather than as a sociology about the local: the local is not limited to giving an account through analysis, but these studies are a product of the local and the local is in turn a product of these studies. The relationship between the local and the studies is symbiotic. It is not by chance that the authors of these studies often have close relationships with the local contexts they study, in which they operate in a "partisan" way to support local innovation processes. Another characteristic of these studies is the richness of the historical-comparative approach, recognizing the importance of the historical-evolutionary processes of local construction. This approach translates into mainly qualitative research methodologies based on ethnographies, qualitative interviews and document analyses. Their work focuses on the reconstruction of political, economic and territorial processes and their research programmes, thus producing a strong overlap between urban sociology, political sociology and economic sociology.

The limitation of the study, also for the considerations formulated in the previous paragraph, is represented by the lack of attention paid to the interactions between the different levels of local scale - district, municipality, metropolitan area, province, region and nation. These different levels are cited by the author and, in some cases, the differences between the level under study - the city of Bari - and the other levels are accounted for, but what seems to be missing in some passages of the text is a deepening of the existing (or non-existent) relationships between these different levels and the effects they produce on each of them. This is a limit that is, however, largely due to the desire to delineate with rigor and precision the main object of the research, without giving space to possible distractions, an attempt that the author succeeds fully. On the basis of these considerations, it is to be expected that the work of the author will give rise to two trajectories of research development: the first could focus on the interactions between the various levels of the local; and the second would suggest deepening the transformations of other cities so as to make possible a comparative approach, a strategy befitting of the strand of the new economic policy of cities.

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