

THE NEW METROPOLITAN CITIES AND THE ROLE OF STATISTICS IN TERRITORY KNOWLEDGE AND GOVERNMENT¹

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1. Introduction

In compliance with the provisions of law 56/2014 - the so-called “Delrio Law” - on Metropolitan Cities, Provinces and the union and merger of Municipalities, a new Wide-Area second tier Local Authority, the Metropolitan City, has been operative in Italy since January 1, 2015. The new provisions thus implement what was provided for with the reform of Title V of the Constitution (constitutional law 3/2001), that is, the addition of Metropolitan Cities to those bodies like Regions, Provinces and Municipalities making up the Italian Republic.

Ten cities are included in the Delrio Law as Metropolitan Cities: Turin, Genoa, Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari and Reggio Calabria². They replace former Provinces with regard to their territorial jurisdiction and the execution of certain functions, and absorb their assets and human resources.

Without analyzing the legal implications deriving from the establishment of this new subject in charge of the government and the local administration and acting in the political and administrative scene, throughout this article we will try to highlight the “status de facto” in which the Metropolitan is actually. In addition, we will describe how statistics, especially those processed within the Metropolitan Cities, can contribute to the success of this new institution. Finally, we will focus on those normative mechanisms on which the statistics could usefully work in order to produce good governance actions, such as transparency and citizen participation in local government.

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² To date, the Metropolitan City of Reggio Calabria has not yet elected the new metropolitan government bodies because it is waiting for the termination of office of the democratically elected provincial bodies. Moreover, it should be noted that Sicily and Sardinia, because of the powers provided for by the special autonomy, may identify other Metropolitan Cities to set alongside the cities above mentioned.

2. Urbanization, a key feature of our age

According to a study published by the United Nations, in 2015, 53.4% of the world population lives in an urban area. In 1970, this percentage was 37.3% and in 2000, 47%³. At a European level the same estimate provides a value of 60%⁴. Cities are increasingly becoming the main place for economic development and social networks. In fact, if the city was traditionally the place where production and therefore residential activities were carried out, today cities also constitute places of recreation and socially interactive activities. Concurrently, city dimensions grow wider and wider, and we can no longer talk about “the city”, but rather about an urban system made up of multiple related cities in an interdependent relationship.

The European government is also convinced of the central role that cities have in determining the well-being of a country, to the extent that the EU government has based their development policy on this issue for the period 2014-2020. The policies based on the city and regarding the city take on a leading role to foster territorial cohesion, precisely because of what the city means both within the community and on a supranational and international level⁵.

A series of studies conducted by the EU on metropolitan areas to measure the urban dimension of the continent, clearly expressed the European interest on this topic. The European Spatial Planning Observation Network identified 76 metropolitan areas, sorted into five types (Global Nodes, European Engines, Strong, Potential, Weak). Seven of the ten Metropolitan Cities included in the law fall into this classification. On a higher level, considering all the cities in the world and referring to the Global Report, which publishes annually a global ranking of cities, we see that Rome and Milan hold, respectively, the thirty-second and the forty-fourth place in the eighty-four position list.

The difficulty of unequivocally classifying urbanization clearly shows the complexity of this phenomenon, that is hard to describe if we only use a “quantitative” criterion linked to anthropogenic concentration in the territories. In fact, the latest evolution of urban forms also includes important qualitative changes that involve the relationships between the different components of the city. First and foremost is the relationship between “the center” and “the periphery”, the latter increasingly expanding to the point of incorporating the “small cities” that make up

³ Cf. UN Habitat (2006; 2009).

⁴ Project Espon, various years.

⁵ From an analytical point of view, we have at least five different levels of scale that provide insight and allow us to build our understanding of the city: 1) the intra-urban level: for example, the subdivision into districts; 2) the city as a whole in relation to other cities; 3) the city in its own regional context; 4) the city in its national context; 5) the city in a global context (worldwide and/or European) (Wilson, 2010).

the wider “Metropolitan City”. We can observe that, on the one hand, in this large territory, production as well as leisure-related activities are following a centripetal movement from the outskirts to the center; on the other hand, the whole city is undergoing fragmentation, exclusion and conflict situations. As Martinotti already stressed in 2001, the metropolitan area is a territory linked to one or more cities with their own center by means of a functional and interdependent relationship. Such a connection can be measured either directly or through the identification of areas characterized by homogeneity and proximity. An urbanized area is defined by a central unit and a surrounding territory with pre-existing settlements or settlements arising following the expansion of the original nucleus. The new form of the city also requires a new institutional configuration, that goes beyond the physical and administrative boundaries of the previous municipal. This is the fundamental step for drawing up policies and subsequent administrative actions that are able to lead to an equitable and sustainable development, which can progressively expand to the upper regional and national levels from a local level. The smart, inclusive and sustainable growth advocated by the “Europe 2020 Strategy” begins with the development of cities considered in their broadest sense as Metropolitan Cities.

3. The system of Metropolitan Cities in Italy

The Metropolitan City is the Italian legal system’s answer to the institutional need to organize this new urban space, by promoting the possibilities of development and recognizing the leading role that the new “large cities” have, not only on a local and regional level, but also on a national and European one. The Metropolitan City is obviously a partial response and many changes may be done to improve this first result, partly because it is objectively difficult to describe the Metropolitan City in a satisfactory and definitive way. Metropolitan Cities are actually an adaptive solution adopted by the different players operating in an area, so the cities are bound to change over time and space or according to new requirements of territorial organization and social fabric⁶.

⁶ The gradual transformation of urban cities into Metropolitan Cities was a phenomenon well known to demographers. In recent decades, interchanges between the big cities and their hinterland, especially the nearest one, have taken place above all with a large number of people relocating their residence from the capital to neighbouring towns. As a consequence, in a short space of time some small Municipalities have turned into medium-sized cities and urban peripheries with a poor urban quality have started growing. One of the main motivations that contributes to the building of the new settlement models is the price of housing.

The ten Metropolitan Cities identified by the Delrio Law represent an important part of the national system, as we are going to show later on, but probably their choice has also been determined by the influence they have, both within their own regional context and on a national level⁷.

The Metropolitan Cities occupy a total area of 302,073 square kilometers or 11% of the total Italian territory. They are inhabited by more than 18 million residents, who represent 30% of residents in Italy, and include 1,016 Municipalities, amounting to 13% of all Municipalities in Italy. The centrality of these areas can easily be figured out by analyzing some "economic" indicators related to the production structure and value added: 34% of employees and 32% of enterprises and local units are concentrated in the ten cities under examination.

Table 1 - *The system of Italian Metropolitan Cities. Comparison between the last two censuses (2001-2011)*

Metropolitan Cities	Residents	Municipalities	Population increase (%) in Municipalities with more than 10,00 residents between the last two censuses	Population increase (%) in the county town between last two censuses	Population increase (%) between the last two censuses
Turin	2,247,780	315	4.7	0.8	3.8
Genoa	855,834	68	-1.2	-4.0	-2.5
Milan	3,038,420	134	4.2	-1.1	3.3
Venice	846,962	44	7.9	-3.6	4.6
Bologna	976,243	60	10.1	0.03	6.7
Florence	973,145	44	5.9	0.6	4.2
Rome	3,997,465	121	20.7	2.8	8.0
Naples	3,065,956	92	1.5	-4.2	-0.1
Bari	1,247,303	41	3.4	-0.2	2.4
Reggio Calabria	550,967	97	-1.2	0.2	-2.3
Total Metropolitan Cities	17,800,075				
Total Italy	59,433,744				

The Metropolitan Cities produce 36% of the value added and house 32% of total workers. At the same time, however, we also register 39% of voluntary homicides and 32% of robberies, two basic indicators showing the social tensions

⁷ It is still quite heated the debate on the choice of the ten Metropolitan Cities and the exclusion of some urban areas showing characteristics suitable for obtaining a local government in a metropolitan form. The choice has also probably been made taking into account a sort of "representativeness" of the region in which they are situated.

that can arise within a context where relationships weaken and become more complex.

Figure 1 - *The weight of the Metropolitan Cities on some major territorial and socio-economic variables (% of the national total).*

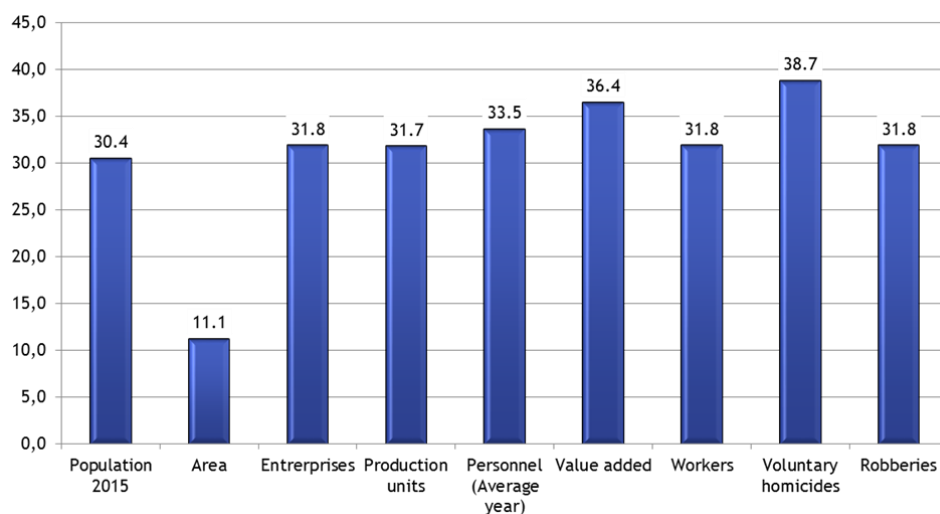
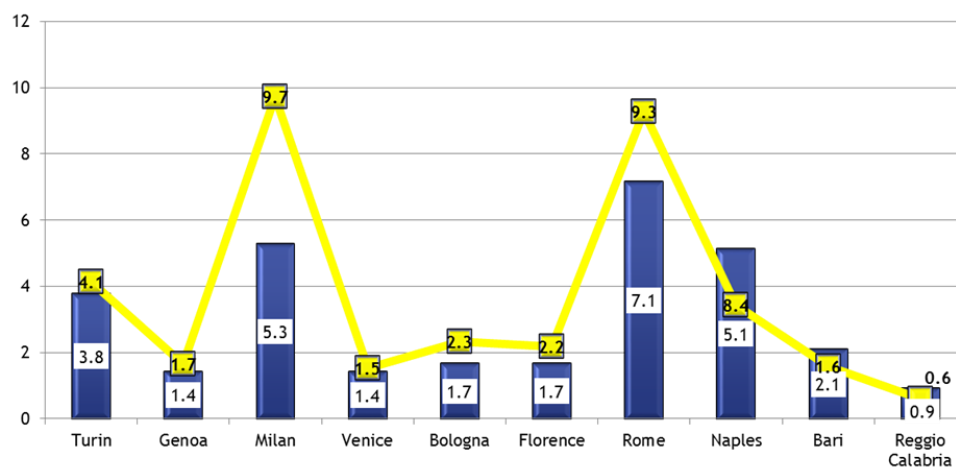


Figure 2 - *Comparison between the weight of the population and the weight of the value added for each of the ten Metropolitan Cities (% of the national total).*



In order to evaluate the leading role played by the ten cities on a national level, we compared the percentage of the value added produced to the percentage of the residents. As it was already expounded in other international researches, Milan and Rome actually play a leadership role. On the other hand, other cities, in particular Naples, Bari and Reggio Calabria, the three Metropolitan Cities of the South, show a percentage of value added lower than the percentage of the resident population. However, they have a major importance at a regional level and in the South of Italy, which is suffering endemic delays in the level of development.

In any case, as the demographic data shows, in recent decades the relationship between the county town and the surrounding municipalities in large urban areas has increased, thus encouraging the growth of medium- and large-sized towns around the main city. It should be highlighted that this new balancing among settlements has not always been followed by a parallel repositioning or a new planning of services on a metropolitan scale, nor have we seen a parallel repositioning of functions or an improvement in road conditions or public transport. The new metropolitan-level government should correct the negative consequences of spontaneous changes, avoiding an extreme peripheralization and fostering instead metropolization processes, that is, the creation of a territorial system where the positive aspects of both the metropolis and the small city can merge⁸.

4. The functions of Metropolitan Cities and the role of statistics

According to the regulations that introduced the institution of the Metropolitan City in the national law, these large areas are intended to be the development engine of the country, since they are well supplied with services, infrastructures and strategic functions. From the recognition of this role comes the realization that the fragmentation of administrative boundaries within these areas creates inefficiencies and prevents a full use of the resources that these important portions of territory are endowed with.

In this paper, we will not analyze in detail all the functions assigned to the Metropolitan Cities in compliance with the law; we are going to discuss only the aspects with major implications on the statistical function.

The Metropolitan City holds all the basic functions that belonged to the Provinces. One of these functions is the data collection and processing and the

⁸ Cf. Province of Rome, Capitale metropolitana. Periferie Comuni. Rapporto di Studio sulla condizione sociale, Economica e Territoriale, October 2010.

technical assistance to Municipalities. The Metropolitan City is also assigned the task of adopting and annually updating a three-year strategic plan of the metropolitan territory, that constitutes a guiding act for the entity and for the activities to be carried out by the Municipalities and the unions of Municipalities of the territory.

In practice, the definition of a strategic plan for a Metropolitan City must be a collaborative process, whose organization is entrusted to the Metropolitan City. A strategic planning is a process in which a territory builds a shared vision of the future and defines the strategies to implement it. The word “strategic” means that such a planning must include few policies, projects and actions, but all of them with significant impact on economic and social levels.

Given the central role played by the Metropolitan City in the territorial planning, it is necessary for the entities to have efficient and operating Statistical Offices. Since they are network nodes of the wider National Statistical System⁹, the Statistical Offices of the Metropolitan Cities can provide objective and reliable knowledge of the area’s characteristics as well as highlight its limits, risks, potentialities and strengths. The policymaker is obviously in charge of decisions, but the tool to guide the decisions must be of an objective type, because it has to be evaluated by the public. Planning should also be continuously monitored, so as to make it possible to correct policy implementation, both in terms of results and impact on populations and areas.

Therefore, promoting and strengthening the Statistical Offices of Metropolitan Cities becomes strategic for the Authorities, also because of the guarantees the offices ensure regarding the way statistical data are analyzed. Without describing every single action that offices put forward, we can however explain certain lines of action necessary to best support the strategic planning process.

The first one to be mentioned is the systematizing of all the statistical information regarding the metropolitan territory. Statistical Offices have specific knowledge of the sources from which they can obtain information, primarily the sources of official statistics, but also the works of other authoritative Organizations of administration and research. It is important to organize this information and make it clear at a regional level (at least local) in order to also attempt homogeneous territorial aggregations for policy management. In addition,

⁹ The L.D. 322/89 establishes the National Statistical System. Moreover, according to the Decree, every public administration has to equip itself with its own Statistics Office, as a unit of Official Statistics. From 2010, for the production of quality statistics, the National Statistical System has adopted the Italian Code of Statistics (Directive Comstat, no. 10/2010), that receives the conditions of the European Statistics Code of Practice. The code is based on the observance of 15 principles, among which objectivity, methodological soundness, accuracy and promptness of data (Italian Code of Statistics www.sistan.it).

Statistical Offices must play an active role in the emergence and enhancement of data assets belonging to the Authorities. The “statistical” use of this data becomes necessary to identify and calculate the result and impact indicators. Finally, the Statistical Offices dealing with data from administrative sources can make a real contribution to the publication of data in open format, thus taking part in the activities for a greater administrative transparency and showing in practice the meaning of statistical data as a public good (Tabarro, 2012).

5. The statistics in the programming cycle

Before the Delrio Law, public bodies had been engaged in another important reform action. With the L.D. June 23, 2011 n. 118¹⁰, the so-called “harmonization of the financial statements of public administration” came into force. The objective of this reform was to make the budgets of public administration homogeneous, comparable and suitable to be aggregated in order to control national finance (protection of national public finance), to ensure that public finance complied with article 104 of the Treaty established by the European Union and, finally, to encourage the implementation of fiscal federalism.

Among the activities set out by the new harmonized accounting, programming has received renewed attention. The activity of programming, that consists of defining the search and appropriate allocation of resources, becomes the pivot around which the administrative and budget actions turn. The accounting reform, therefore, aims at programming by no longer using purely self-referential accounting criteria, but instead methods which take into account the substance of the administrative reality, that is the people and the territory of reference.

As stated by the documents produced by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF)¹¹, programming is a process of analysis and evaluation that allows us to organize activities and resources for social purposes and to promote economic and civil development of the community. Good programming should, therefore, be able to include a socio-economic description of the area as well as the demand for local public services. At the same time, it also takes the appropriate tools to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of the administrative action and local government.

In other words, the programming process should be done by taking into account results and effects, rather than by working from a merely administrative point of view, where the emphasis is placed on the roles and tasks in the organizational structure and on the allocation of expenses on the balance sheet. To Program the

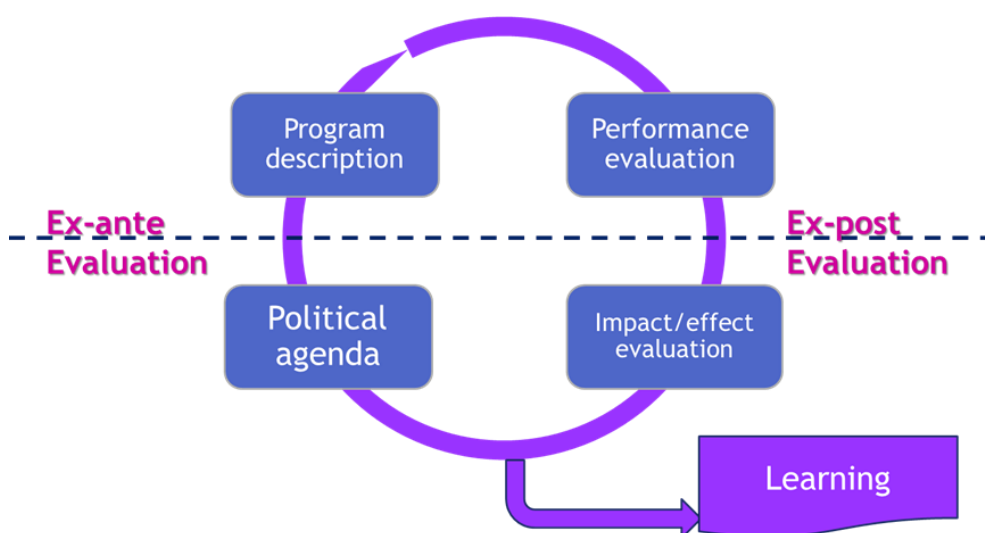
¹⁰ Then modified by L.D. 126, August 10, 2014.

¹¹ Cf. <http://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/VERSIONE-I/e-GOVERNME1/ARCONET/>

Authorities' activities means to understand and evaluate the purpose of every single action, the recipients and the changes you want to produce with it.

The new harmonized accounting involves the production of a Single Programming Document (SPD). This document consists of two main parts: 1) a strategic section; 2) an operational section. The first one sets out the general objectives defined by the administration for the reference period, the second one specifies the operational phases to reach those objectives through projects and interventions. One of the key chapters of the strategic section is the description of the context and its needs. It is relatively obvious that the Entity must establish the contents of the strategic section on a strong foundation made up of analysis and statistical descriptions of the reference area.

Scheme 1 - The role of statistics in the programming cycle



Another important change included in the new harmonized accounting is the classification of balance items in “missions” and “programs”. The “missions” are the main functions and the strategic objectives. The “programs” are homogeneous groups of activities aimed at reaching the objectives of the missions. The “missions” and the “programs” described in the new harmonized accounting include all the activities carried out by the Authorities and relating to different functions, both fundamental and not, established in the national and regional systems. This type of setting creates some definite advantages for the calculation of indicators to assess and measure the activities of institutions. The possibility to

create a unique connection between the activities carried out and accounting elements allows us to quantify the “costs” of public policies and evaluate their sustainability over time. The classification of expenditure for missions and programs provides an informative basis of integrated public accounting. Finally, the importance given to the understandability of financial statements facilitates the understanding of the connection between the resource allocation choices and the objectives pursued, also in terms of comparison between different Entities, with clear consequences on the planning of indicators useful for programming and social reporting. The Statistical Offices of the Metropolitan Cities can implement, in the best possible way, all the potential of the classification system established with the new harmonized accounting in order to obtain proper programming and reporting.

Conclusions

The new functions that the Metropolitan City as a wide area has to carry out require a detailed knowledge of the territory and an interpretation of the local situation that takes into account the relationships between human, economic and environmental components of that territory. In order to develop a strategic plan, the Metropolitan City must have timely, objective and valid statistical data at their disposition, together with data interpretation ability useful for both the policymakers to make decisions and for the citizens to evaluate administrative and political actions.

This type of support can only be provided by the Statistical Offices, that are preparing everything in order to provide their contribution to deal with these challenges. We will conclude these pages illustrating some lines of action followed by the Statistical Offices of some Italian Metropolitan Cities in order to systematically work in coordination with each other within the National Statistical System. The lines of action currently in place and consistent with the above can be summarized as follows¹²¹¹:

¹² In order to have a complete and detailed overview of all the initiatives that the Statistics Offices of wide-area entities (Provinces and Metropolitan Cities) are carrying out, you can visit the website www.upinet.it/cuspi, in particular the section dedicated to projects. Among all the initiatives, we focus on the project Administrative Archives Census and the project Bes of Provinces (www.besdelleprovince.it). Moreover, since April 2016 a memorandum of understanding between ANCI, UPI and ISTAT has been active. It is about the development of the statistical function in the Municipalities, Provinces and Metropolitan Cities and takes into account the most recent laws

1. creating and updating the local statistical information systems, or at least collecting and systematically processing the statistical data at a municipal level. The purposes of this activity are: to return systematized data to the territories, and, above all, to provide analysis in support of those Municipalities still lacking full autonomy in statistical function;

2. support to the programming documents, first of all with the context assessment analysis according to the Single Programming Document;

3. development of indicators to monitor the administrative action, also in terms of impact and outcome evaluation. This activity must be preceded by the acknowledgement and the treatment for statistical purposes of the informative deposits within the Entities;

4. optimization, at a metropolitan level, of professional resources and statistical skills in order to establish Statistical Offices on a metropolitan scale.

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SUMMARY

The new metropolitan cities and the role of statistics in territory knowledge and government.

Among the main changes that have affected the landscape of institutional reforms in recent years, surely that of the full implementation of the metropolitan cities is one of the most interesting. Placed nominally in the Italian Constitution since 2001, they had never been realized. The Law 56/2014 establishes that starting from January 1st 2015 they finally come into operation. The new wide-area functions that the metropolitan cities have to play, require a detailed knowledge of the territory and a reading capacity of it. Among the new features, in fact, there is the task of drawing up a strategic plan from which to extract guidelines for the governance of the territory.

The article will attempt to show that this reform process requires, for its full implementation, timely, objective and good statistical data, in order to give to policy makers a sort of compass to support their decisions and to give to the citizens elements to evaluate the administrative and political action. The system of statistical offices of the Italian wide area authorities tries to play its role through a series of practices and quickly illustrated projects.

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