

Métropoles

12 | 2013 :

Territoires, villes et métropoles en Italie

Articles

Policy change without metamorphosis. The 1993-2011 urban regime in Turin

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Résumés

The topic of this article is the attempt of an industrial city to convert its model of development through a political strategy, in an age of post-Fordist restructuring and economic globalization. The city is Turin, wherein between 1993 and 2011, in a long cycle of government, a ruling elite acted to avoid the social and economic decline of the city by promoting an ambitious agenda. The category of 'urban regime' is the interpretive framework of the analysis. To contribute to the understanding of urban change dynamics and to highlight some still ambiguous questions in urban regime theory, the present study aims at reconstructing: a) which circumstances contributed to the development and then to the establishment of the urban regime; b) which factors have probably undermined its robustness and limited its success.

Le sujet de cet article est la tentative d'une ville industrielle de convertir son modèle de développement à travers une stratégie politique, à l'ère de la globalisation économique et de la restructuration postfordiste. Il s'agit de la ville de Turin dans laquelle, entre 1993 et 2011, une élite dirigeante stable a agi afin d'éviter un déclin économique et social en promouvant un agenda politique ambitieux.

La cadre interprétatif de l'analyse est celui des régimes politiques urbains. Pour contribuer à la compréhension des dynamiques du changement urbain à Turin et pour clarifier certaines dimensions parfois ambiguës de la théorie des régimes, l'article vise à reconstruire : i) les circonstances qui ont permis le développement et l'établissement du régime politique urbain turinois ; ii) les facteurs qui ont probablement sapé sa robustesse et limité son succès.

Entrées d'index

Mots-clés : politique urbaine, changement dans les politiques, régime politique urbain

Keywords : urban politics, urban regime, policy change

Texte intégral

- 1 The topic of this article is the attempt of an industrial city to convert its model of development through a political strategy, in an age of post-Fordist restructuring and economic globalization. The city is Turin, wherein between 1993 and 2011, in a long cycle of government, a ruling elite acted to avoid the social and economic decline of the city by promoting an ambitious agenda¹.
- 2 In the early Nineties, Turin was a medium-sized city with clear signals of an industrial crisis. The great automotive industry Fiat, which has guided and shaped the expansion of the city in the last century, has reduced workers and closed down several establishments. In the Eighties, the restructuring of the company had caused social mobilization and territorial redistributions of residents, abandoning the empty establishments and increasing territorial fragmentation and social marginality. In order to face these challenges, which required a more vigorous government action, public institutions, local and regional authorities and political forces that had hitherto governed the city seemed unable to formulate a programme of renewal and to propose policies matching up with the problems.
- 3 In this complex scenario, a coalition of center-left parties supported by a new alignment of political and social forces ascended to power, governing the city for eighteen years under the leadership of two mayors, Valentino Castellani and Sergio Chiamparino. The core of the government project may be summed up with the label 'beyond Ford'. The attempt is to lead Turin towards new production goals and more advanced social and territorial balance, making the city able to compete with other European ones.
- 4 Many scholars and commentators have focused on the programmes and the outcomes of the urban change that took place in Turin in the considered period. The large majority of them has praised the innovation of the agenda and of the policy-making procedures, the strength of government and the successful outcomes. In these analysis Turin is deemed as a city that managed to achieve most of its objectives and to solve many of its problems, and that is going to solve the others as soon as the policies of the new course will have deployed all their transformative potential. Not only an example of good practices and administration, but also of a successful plan able to overcome the challenges of economic modernization and urban transformation, an exception within the Italian scenario (Pinson 2002; Dente et al. 2005; Scamuzzi 2005; Winkler 2007; Emmott 2010). We are rather inclined to temper the enthusiasm of such judgments, while admitting the relevance of the case within the Italian landscape of stagnant and politically depressed cities. We are not denying neither that Turin has been the scene of a high-profile political experiment, nor that the city has experienced significant changes, becoming more and more attractive for tourists and for its own citizens. But in the light of recent empirical evidence the results are uneven and, in many cases, not fulfilling the intentions and expectations of the players themselves, and well below the appreciation that the city enjoys in Italy and abroad (Belligni and Ravazzi 2012).
- 5 Whether it was a real 'revolution' or a stalemate after a promising start, its governance model has highly contributed to gain the positive image of the city. This model shows significant similarities with several American cases of city government of the last decades, conceptualized as 'urban regime' by the scholarly literature on urban

politics². The category of 'urban regime' is the interpretive framework through which we analyzed the twenty-year government cycle running Turin at the turn of the 21st century.

- 6 After briefly recalling the highlights of urban regime theory to outline the essential analytical basis of our interpretation, our exposure will be split into three parts, roughly corresponding to the three phases of the government cycle. In the first part, we shall explain which circumstances contributed to the development and then to the establishment of the urban regime. In the second, we shall summarize the projects, the efforts and the resources that have contributed to the consolidation and stabilization of the urban regime. In this part, we shall trace the profile of the Turin governing elite and its role in the evolving dynamics of the regime. In the final part, we shall focus on the declining phase of the regime, highlighting the factors that have undermined its robustness and limited its success. In the conclusions we shall argue which elements of this case-study may help urban regime theory to step forward in explaining the dynamics of urban change.

1. Urban regimes

- 7 With the theory of urban regimes, developed in the United States in the first half of the Eighties (Fainstein and Fainstein 1986; Elkin 1987; Stone 1989), urban politics have been brought back to the research agenda as a subject of empirical investigation and of theoretical analysis, after being long relegated to the margins of mainstream political research programmes³. In the wake of a renewed interest in the political and economic role of cities, urban regime analysis combines innovative governance theory, political economy approach and policy analysis.
- 8 From governance theory the urban regime approach derives the view that in complex and fragmented contexts, such as modern cities, urban government cannot be practiced as hierarchical control (power over) by a group of elected decision-makers who impose unilateral decisions, but only as cooperation (power of) between political authorities and social actors (Stoker 1995, Stone 2006). In this perspective, urban decision-making systems ordinarily function as governance arenas where local authorities collaborate with private actors in order to formulate and implement public agendas (John and Cole 2000).
- 9 Compared to policy analysis, the approach of urban regimes aims to broaden the focus of research from single public policies and their policy networks to the systemic impact (locality wide) of long-term programmes and the enduring cooperation schemes supporting them, by shifting the emphasis from single policy issues to the agenda and the outcomes determining the urban change.
- 10 Last but not least, the urban regime approach emphasizes agency rather than structure: urban politics, in spite of the 'city limits' (Peterson 1981) and the bounded rationality of the actors, can affect the social and economic system through the choices and the strategic action of the local elite. Although the imperatives of economic growth cannot be reasonably eluded - especially after that the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian structure and the globalization of the economy have exposed the industrial cities of the West to the risk of decline - the urban decision-makers still have significant chances in choosing their own development model and the related policies. In this perspective, cities are responsible for their own well-being and architects of their own future (Stone and Sanders 1987; Logan and Swanstrom 1990, Clark 1994, Harding 1999; Bagnasco and Le Galés 2001, Savitch and Kantor 2005).

- 11 Urban regime is only one of the modes that cities adopt to establish governance practices (Di Gaetano and Klemanski 1999). The heuristic utility of the category actually lies in its ability to discriminate a regime from other kinds of urban governance. Then, which variables are relevant to define a local government system as an urban regime? In a nutshell, the elements that allow to distinguish an urban regime from other forms of governance seem to be the following (Dowding et al., 1999; Dowding 2001; Mossberger and Stoker 2001; Stone 2005 and 2006; Mossberger 2009): a) a long-term priority agenda with a clearly identifiable and viable core of intentions⁴; b) a coalition of public and private actors based on an informal and durable cooperation designed to promote and support the implementation of the agenda; c) the mobilization of public and private resources necessary to the achievement of targets. The need to deal with a development crisis is not universally recognized as a key element of urban regimes⁵.
- 12 If the elements above trace the boundaries between urban regimes and other forms of urban governance (such as policy networks or partnerships), the differences within the category are also theoretically significant. Literature has produced various classifications of urban regimes, some of which are redundant. For our purposes, the crucial distinction is between pro-welfare and pro-growth regimes (Savitch and Kantor 2002, Baer 2005)⁶.
- 13 Pro-welfare regimes are led by progressive coalitions and aim to equity, social quality and citizen empowerment. Welfare policies are seen not only as a way to redistribute resources and improve urban services, but also as a strategy to support local demand (Ferman 1996). Although there are updated versions that attempt to combine social cohesion and environmental sustainability, this family of regimes seems to belong mainly to the Keynesian age of the compromise between state and market (Harvey 1989). Since the Eighties, pro-welfare regimes have become rarer and mostly unstable, both in Europe and in the USA (Stone 2004, Mossberger 2009).
- 14 In a pro-growth urban regime, economic growth is the main goal, while social integration cannot be anything more than a byproduct or a constraint. The strategic priority is to create a good business climate to attract private and public investments, innovative companies, managerial functions, skilled workers, creative talents and tourists, and the developmental policies (in the form of supply-side policies) are the best instruments to achieve these goals. Pro-growth regimes privilege efficiency and risk and try to minimize regulation and taxes. The majority of urban regimes established in the Eighties either belongs to or gravitates towards this model (Peterson 1981; Savitch and Kantor 2002).
- 15 Pro-growth agendas may consist of different sets of policies and may be supported by different coalitions (Lee 2006). Some cities focus on advanced technologies and research, sometimes called 'knowledge machines' or 'triple helix model' (Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff 2000; Koch and Stahlecker 2006)⁷, others try to foster culture, creativity and entertainment (often labeled as 'knowledge machines' or 'entertainment machines'). These kinds of pro-growth regimes differ from the so-called 'growth machines', aiming at enhancing real property gains and led by local economic elites (Molotch and Logan 1987; Vicari and Molotch 1990; Harding 1994; Stone 1989).
- 16 The case of Turin appears to belong to the class of pro-growth regimes, albeit with some deviations. Labelling its core agenda as one of the three subtypes mentioned above is however more challenging: in the Turin experiment all the three agendas are intertwined, designing a hybrid which is difficult to classify.

2. The beginning

17 Urban regimes are historical formations with their own life cycle⁸: an incubation step sets the stage for the start, a phase of consolidation and stabilization follows and then the regime declines more or less rapidly. The Turin regime has followed the same cycle: its curve rose slowly, culminated a bit beyond the half of the first decade of the new century and then it bent sharply.

18 The gestation period of this regime lasted from the mid-Eighties until its official birth, which coincided with the results of the municipal election in 1993, when a center-left coalition led by an academic professor (Valentino Castellani) unexpectedly beat the left-wing coalition led by the mayor who had governed the city in the Seventies (Diego Novelli). This outcome depended on several circumstances, some of which were intentional efforts, while others random events.

19 The main boost for political change was the economic crisis affecting the city since the late Seventies. Industrial restructurings, relocations and closures of factories made people aware that the city had to deal with these problems in the short time if it didn't want to fall into an irreversible decline.

20 In this scenario - common to many European and American cities - a group of intellectuals belonging to the reformist wing of the left developed, since the mid-Eighties, a collective reflection on the nature of the urban crisis. It also outlined the axes of a project for the modernization of politics and local economy, leading to a vigorous public debate in the political and business circles of the city⁹. That debate produced the institutionalized corpus (Schmidt 2010) of ideas, narratives and claims around which the coalition would consolidate and the future politics would take shape.

21 In terms of claims, the group criticized the politics and culture of the previous city governments. Four were the main objections: a) the anachronistic belief that large manufacturing companies were still the heart of the social system and the only driving force of the economic development, b) the tendency to reproduce into the administrative context the class divisions of the industrial environment, c) the lack of a negotiation habit into both industrial and political relations, d) the lack of management skills, procedural rationality and administrative know-how in the political class (Berta and Chiamparino 1987, Bagnasco 1986 and 1990).

22 In terms of purposes, in order to bring politics back in, policy-makers had to innovate not only the outputs (the agenda) but also the processes (how they were governing the city). The agenda could be nothing but a set of growth-oriented policies, diversifying the economy, attracting companies and resources, valorizing the 'hidden treasures' of the territory. Welfare policies were a constraint, but not a priority anymore. The policy-making process had to be reformed through the institutionalization of governance practices, more effective in solving problems than the top-down model. As hierarchical public institutions were not able to manage social complexity and the market came out to be insufficient to ensure integration and consensus, the policy-making could only be based on negotiations and agreements between public institutions and civil society organizations¹⁰.

23 This core of purposes, which initially divided political forces in two opposing sides, soon became hegemonic connecting with spontaneous initiatives of business actors and with the centrifugal forces that tore left-wing parties and trade unions. Gathered around the powerful president of the local Chamber of Commerce, businessmen and professionals formed the 'Group of 70' with the aim of proposing a candidate alternative to the one of the 'radical' left and supporting a new coalition and a new agenda focused on the economic growth. The Group of 70 prepared a document (Torino

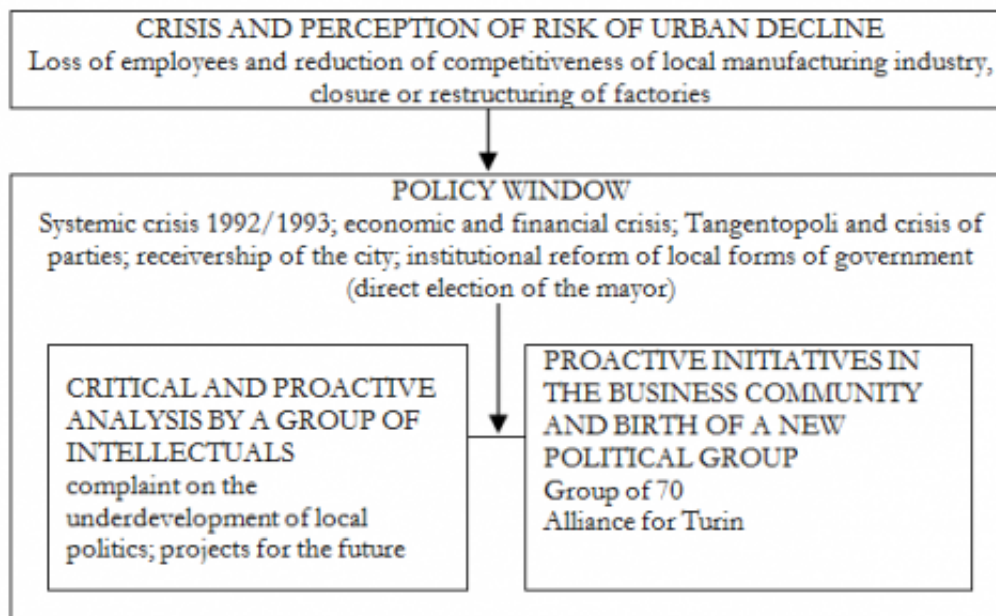
Incontra 1992) composed of 18 points explaining which policy issues the next city government should privilege. One of the protagonists of this pioneering experience remembers that time with the following words:

In the decision-making vacuum generated by Tangentopoli and by the crisis of political parties, which was strongly felt especially among industry and finance environments,[...] we started to promote our proposal with the strategies to be followed. X was the most visible person, whom people identified as the *deus ex machina*, but initially we were a group of six businessmen, afterwards reached by many others. (I.29)

24 After long and tense debates, the Left Democrats Party (PDS), heir of the old Communist Party, endorsed the idea of a radical change in political strategies and, together with these new groups of the 'civil society', proposed a common candidate alternative to the former left-wing mayor Novelli. At the end, the new candidate - the future mayor Castellani - was supported by the most moderate members of the Left (PDS and Greens), by many circles of intellectuals, professionals, businessmen and representatives of Catholic and liberal associations. This new coalition settled at the top of the municipal administration, keeping the reins of the city government for four mandates.

25 Come to think of it, although the activism of the reformers and the demand for change coming from the city, the establishment of the new government cycle is the product of a non-linear dynamics involving exogenous streams and endogenous forces, which not necessarily need to meet¹¹. The catalyst was the political crisis of 1992-1993 broken out with the scandals of 'Tangentopoli' and worsened by the collapse of public finance and by the delegitimization of the ruling classes and the parties (fig. 1). The sum of these exogenous phenomena opened up a 'policy window' that let change supporters fill that political space (Kingdon 1984, Baumgartner and Jones 1993).

Fig. 1. The establishment of the urban regime in Turin



3. The regime machine : agenda, coalitions, resources

26 After the 1993 elections, the agenda setting took place both informally (in unofficial and decentralized places) and within official arenas through formal commitments¹². Three documents may be considered the key instruments of the agenda. The original core ideas were formulated in the aforementioned '18 theses for the development of Turin', wherein the local business elite offered its recipe for stimulating urban growth. The second key instrument was the new General Plan (approved in 1995), which established guidelines and criteria for the use of urban spaces. The projects of the first government phase found a synthesis in the First Strategic Plan of the city (Torino Internazionale 2000)¹³, followed by a Second Strategic Plan (Torino Internazionale 2006). These documents expressed a core of guiding ideas capable of aggregating a wide range of interests and of inspiring a broad assortment of policies.

27 The main intention - changing Turin into a post-industrial metropolis based on technology and culture - gradually took shape divided in three different sub-agendas¹⁴.

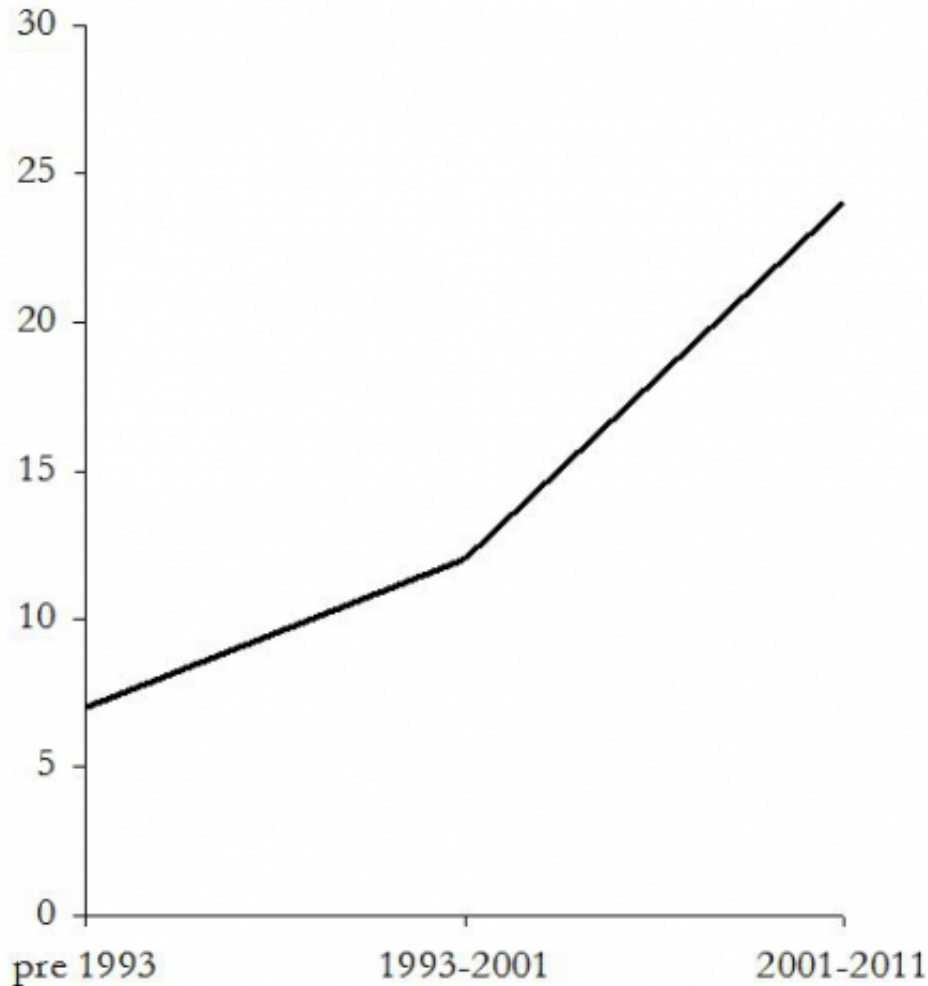
28 The programme of the first sub-agenda might be summed up into the expression *polycentric city*. It is an urban planning agenda that focused on housing and infrastructures (some of them were projects not realized by previous governments). The projects related to the 2006 Olympic Winter Games updated and enriched (but in many ways also distorted) the guidelines defined by the Plan. After almost twenty years, the visible result of this plan is an urban development that drastically reshaped the landscape of the city. The change was mainly due to the work of the Railway Loop (more than 7 km of tracks were pitted), the new buildings in the abandoned industrial areas and along some main roads, the urban regeneration projects in some poor neighborhoods, the expansion of the two academic institutions in the city (Polytechnic and University), the restoration of buildings and monuments in the central area, the construction of the new railway station and the renovation of the old one (fig. 2).

Fig. 2. A map of the polycentric sub-agenda



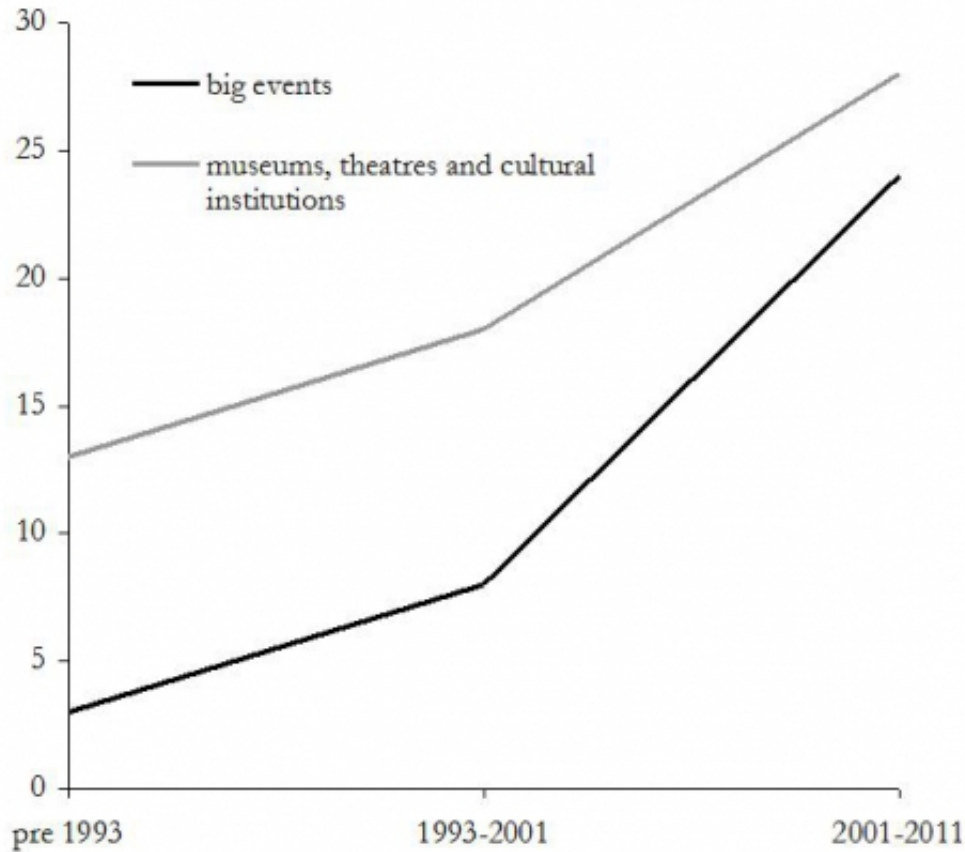
29 The second sub-agenda evoked the idea of a *polytechnic city*, for the main target was transforming Turin into a high-tech cluster: a knowledge machine where the innovative technical and organizational skills could meet the industrial tradition and the knowledge developed within the two academic institutions and research centres of the city. In this perspective, the University and Polytechnic started ambitious plans of expansion (in terms of structures and research centres¹⁵) and created two business incubators and three poles to host innovative companies (Environment Park for green-economy companies, Multimedia Park for the film industry and Turin New Economy, located in the area of the old Fiat main factory). Overall research and technological centres grew from 7 in the early Nineties up to 24 in 2010 (fig. 3).

Fig. 3. Research centres and technological poles in Turin



30 For the third axis we use the label *pyrotechnic city*. The intention here is to promote projects and initiatives aimed at making culture ‘the new job in the city’, assuming that culture might be a lever for economic growth in a post-Fordist society. Inspired by the entertainment machine model of other urban experiences (Lloyd and Clark 2001), the city should become a ‘creative district’ full of cultural activities and services, but also a ‘market of entertainments’ addressed to intellectual classes, young people and the residents of the gentrified centre. Leisure and tourism, exhibitions and scientific meetings, religious celebrations and festivals seemed to be a smart remedy to industrial decline. The organization of big events became the most visible component of the new urban politics of culture. The 2006 Winter Olympics marked the climax, but also many other events attracted people and mobilized substantial economic and organizational resources¹⁶. At the same time, the museum system and the film and theatre sectors were reorganized and received new resources (fig. 4)¹⁷.

31 *Fig. 4. The cultural system in Turin*



32 A governance coalition of public and private actors contributed, with different incidence and determination, to implement the agenda by supporting and financing projects and initiatives (tab. 1).

Tab. 1. Governance coalition

	Growth coalition	Knowledge coalition	Entertainment coalition
Main policies	infrastructures, building expansion, urban regeneration, Olympic infrastructures	support to innovation in high-tech, ICT and research sectors	support to cultural events and to 'art industry'
Core institutions	Municipality Fiat Association of builders National Railway Company Politechnic and University	Municipality and Region Politechnic and University Bank foundations	Municipality and Region Bank foundations

33 The organizations supporting the polycentric sub-agenda primarily referred to the Association of builders as the main focal point. Around it, a dense network of secondary stakeholders committed to the 'land community' contributed to sustain the agenda: the Faculty of Architecture, big architectural and engineering firms, local banks,

associations of small business and large-scale distribution, the downtown property holders, some football clubs. Fiat behaved here as a holder of large building lots negotiating favourable agreements with public institutions. Public institutions - the Municipality and in some policies also the Region - played a role of intermediation and coordination among the real estate interests and between them and higher levels of government. Overall, the prevailing pattern of cooperation was based on temporary agreements mostly satisfying short-term interests (for example concessions in exchange for tax revenue).

In the polycentric agenda [...] there was a lack of planning and public institutions adopted the strategy to adapt their decisions to the pressures of real estate interests due to the need of raising cash. (I.24)

- 34 In the knowledge coalition, public institutions - City and Region, especially in some key departments or through public Agencies - were more far-sighted, promoting and supporting long-term projects.

Partnerships involving Polytechnic, University and private companies have often worked thanks to the mediation of the Region, which finally chose to support projects on the basis of a long-term plan and using objective criteria. (I.32)

- 35 The two Turin bank foundations helped implement the sub-agenda through *ad hoc* funding, while University and Polytechnic contributed mostly with their innovative potential of the applied research and the business incubators. The business community, particularly the larger companies, appeared here in the background. High-tech and ICT companies occasionally participated in some projects, while Fiat was not interested to invest resources and know-how in this field.

- 36 Usually, the entertainment machines are led by coalitions where the business sector specialized in producing and supplying cultural services holds the leadership (Lloyd and Clark 2001). In Turin, on the contrary, public and nonprofit institutions played a significant role, leading as well as financing projects, in a sort of diarchy with the Municipality, especially with its Department of Culture, directed by a skilled politician, who managed to weave a dense network of relationships to support this issue. But equally important was the power of the two bank foundations, which sometimes became a sort of shadow departments, acting proactively and not only financing single projects. If these are the pivotal actors, also development agencies, cultural associations and the University (in its sectors most linked to the territory) contributed with projects and know-how.

- 37 Consolidation and legitimation of urban regimes go hand in hand with the mobilization of public and private resources (Stone 1993; 2004). From the late Nineties to the early years of the new century, Turin could actually rely on huge resources, partly provided by the coalition partners and partly by the government and the EU. Public resources, however, were far greater than the private ones¹⁸. In addition to the ordinary municipal funds¹⁹, a huge flow of special funding came from the state: transfers for special projects like the Olympics and the new subway; transfers coming from the European Urban II programme to finance urban regeneration projects²⁰, funds allocated by the National Railways Society for the Railway Loop. Other capitals were raised through debt: the City borrowed up to € 3.5 billion, making Turin the most indebted Italian city. Among the cities of the country Turin became one of the most assisted by public money.

- 38 Alongside the public commitment, the two bank foundations contributed with significant investments, especially in the sectors of culture and research and

innovation²¹. As an interviewee stated:

Bank foundations have strongly supported the world of culture and (partly) research, without their contribution Turin would not have done what it did. (I.32)

39 Their increasing incidence in policies made them not only core actors of the urban regime, but also countercyclical institutions and potential guarantors of urban economic stability.

40 Compared to the semi-public²² and public resources mobilized for the agenda, private money has been by far scarcer. With the exception of some funding for the polytechnic agenda, the contribution of the business sector is actually marginal, especially in relation to strategic projects²³.

41 Despite these imbalances, the mobilization of money is overall impressive. At least until 2007, when the first signs of the international crisis appeared, the resources seemed to be adequate to support a really ambitious government programme.

42 In addition to material resources (and partly because of them) the coalition could count on intangible resources: a high level of political stability (partly due to the direct election of the mayor) and an unprecedented consensus towards the second mayor (partly due to the success of the Olympic Games).

4. The governing elite

43 An urban coalition politically acts through an informal group of people who, by virtue of their position, prestige, ability, is able to directly or indirectly influence the policy-making. Although the urban regime approach does not focus on 'who governs', but on 'how' a regime machine is established and works, it seems reasonable to assume that composition and quality of the governing elite affect methods and outcomes of administrative action, reinforcing or depressing it (Stone 2002). Therefore, the characteristics of the elite and the relationships among its components, and between them and the surrounding society, provide useful information to understand limits and prospects of an urban regime.

44 In Turin, the formation of a governing elite is the result of a slow process of amalgam (more than circulation)²⁴. At the turn of the century it has acquired a relatively stable and recognizable profile: little more than a hundred middle-aged educated men (only 11% are women), with executive positions in public and private organizations of local governance.

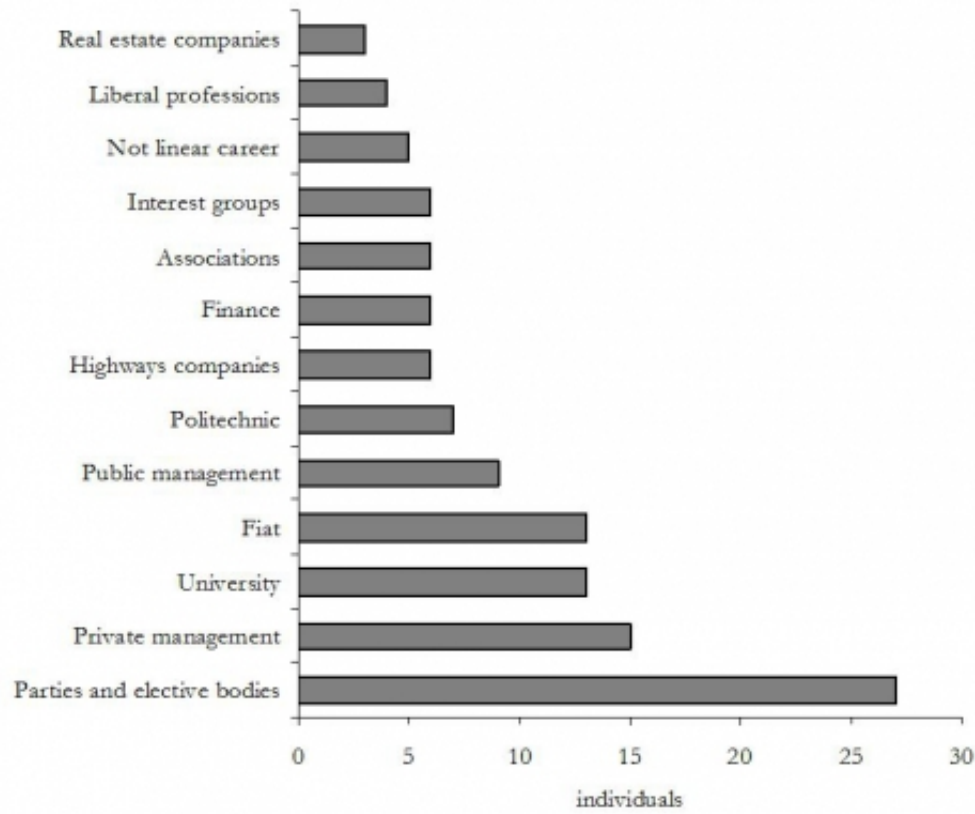
45 The ideological unity is a crucial aspect. Although the group contains all the three major political cultures of the last sixty years (Catholic, socialist-communist and liberal), almost all members share the same paradigm of economic growth to reach through developmental policies.

The growth was the objective of our project, but there was no alternative, any city is forced to shape the policy agenda to attract business (I.6). The idea was to invest in economic development to increase the overall wealth and only subsequently to be able to redistribute it. (I.17)

46 On the contrary, the socio-professional profile of the members is highly heterogeneous. There is an almost perfect balance between politicians (both party professionals and career politicians), members of the local business class and professionals of the nonprofit sector. This means that about 65% of the members comes

from 'civil society', with different backgrounds: people who worked for private corporations, people who grew up professionally in academic institutions, people coming from associations or public institutions (fig. 5).

Fig. 5. Socio-professional backgrounds of élite members



47 The access to governing elite seems to be related, rather than with membership in and loyalty to a party, with cooptation mechanisms of some local environments particularly active in selecting local neo-notables: the 'milieux'. The milieux are networks based on family ties, friendships, professional, political or religious links, which work as elitist communities of speech and political socialization. Belonging to a milieu gives social capital, provides relational and reputational resources to spend in the public sphere.

48 Two thirds of the elite members seem strongly linked to a milieu. Some of them come from the 'world Fiat', including the network of relationships linking the Agnelli family and its closer friends, past managers and professionals from the entourage. The 'academic' milieu is of growing importance, represented by a large group of professors (mostly from the Polytechnic and the Faculty of Economics and Law) who often have become consultants of local administrations. From the 'ex-PCI' milieu we could spot the communist cadres of the political generation that occupied local and regional governments in the Seventies and Eighties. The other components are the liberal-masonic, mostly inspired by liberal principles, and the Catholic one, internally composite but broadly in line with the guidelines of the Church and the principles of social Catholicism (tab. 2).

These networks date back to the early years of university or even high school. In the academic milieu ties are active since the time of the activism of student groups. The milieu called ex-PCI date back to the grassroots party activism of the Seventies. The milieu Fiat was composed by the network of people surrounding Giovanni Agnelli, including the Industrial Union. The Catholic milieu matters very much because it cuts across different networks, innervating

also the other milieux (I.9). These groups provide an identity. Belonging to a milieu helps keeping a collective identity because the linkages last for years and even decades. (I.4)

Tab. 2. The milieux in Turin²⁵

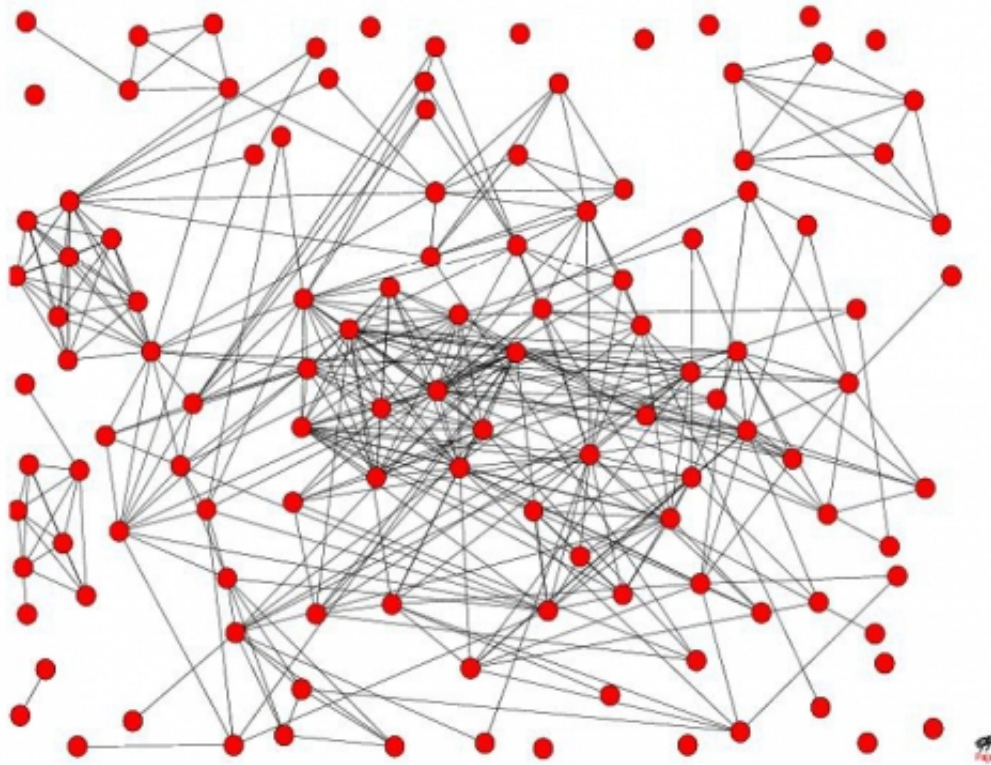
Milieu	Elite members
none	31 %
academic (University)	15 %
academic (Politechnic)	7 %
catholic	16 %
Fiat	15 %
ex-PCI	8 %
liberal	8 %

49 Disproving a recurrent stereotype, while the milieux gain growing importance in political life, the power of parties declines. All evidence collected confirms that parties less and less affect the selection of the ruling class and that they are able neither to lead (or to prevent) the most important public choices nor to mobilize citizens for collective goals²⁶.

Today parties [...] are mainly intended to recruit the political class : choosing deputies, choosing local aldermen a little less [...], but just offering lists of individuals, who might be appreciated by certain vested interests (I.19). [Parties] do not have a say in ruling class' selection and party affiliation is irrelevant to be a decision-maker. X supports Party A, of course, but it's like if I am fan of Juventus, nothing more than that. If X has power, it's not because of the support by his party (I.30). Parties are now machines that do not know the territory, [...] they are places where we talk about people rather than policies (I.3).

50 Finally, analyzed as a positional network (fig. 6)²⁷, the elite shows a polycratic structure, with quite dense and resistant links²⁸, but with a weak centralization²⁹, confirming the absence of a leadership (Watts and Strogatz 1998).

Fig. 6. The élite as a positional network



51 There is not a core group of people holding positions in many strategic organizations, an interlocking directorate which might control the connections of the whole network³⁰.

52 All these cultural, socio-professional and structural attributes design a very different group from those described by the classical elitists. The Turin governing elite is neither a top leadership (Hunter 1953) or a power elite (Wright Mills 1956), that imposes its choices to the community, nor an inner circle (Useem 1984), which concentrates strategic positions in few hands. It rather works like a field of almost horizontal interpersonal relationships wherein members discuss, negotiate, decide emphasizing shared goals and controlling the conflict through cross-subsidies and co-optation of friends and enemies. The Turin elite looks more like a 'central circle' (Moore 1979), who does not act to dominate, but with tasks of communication, coordination, brokerage and cooptation. The label 'distributed leadership' expresses with sufficient accuracy the structural and functional nature of the group.

5. A weak regime

53 The effectiveness of this regime has been uneven. It may be defined effective in some policy-sectors (large-scale infrastructures, leisure and tourism), but it seems unsatisfactory in others (economic internationalization, research and innovation, environmental sustainability, the new welfare) and it fails to achieve its systemic purposes : a radical change of the city's pattern of development. Despite the optimistic view of one of the two mayors³¹, the old 'one-company town' has actually not given the way to a more advanced social and productive equilibrium, based on innovation and knowledge. Turin is today productively weaker than twenty years ago (Fiat seems willing to leave the city in the next future, as well as the main bank, some foreign private research centres have closed while others are lacking money), and the future remains uncertain (Belligni and Ravazzi 2012). 'Policy change without metamorphosis'

is the expression that best sums up the meaning of this twenty-year transition.

54 Then, what has prevented an ambitious, rich and strongly appreciated urban politics to achieve its goals ? Our answer is that the urban regime in Turin, even in the period of greatest activism and maximum consensus, has been a weak regime, unable to give the transformation a unique and stable direction.

55 Strong urban regimes are probably the minority, if not the exception³². In principle, the conditions favouring the establishment of a robust regime are essentially two : a) the action of a cohesive group of actors in support of a long-term agenda, mutually accountable and available to equally bear the costs of the collective action ; b) the compatibility between purposes and resources. In the case of Turin, these conditions are only partially met. Important weakness factors are present since the formation of the regime. They remained latent during the period of huge transfers from the state, but they come up as soon as the first exogenous difficulties arise.

56 The judgment 'Too many irons in the fire', suggested by an interviewee, summarized the first element of weakness : an agenda being too dispersive, whereas only a small group of locality-wide priorities could have been sufficiently coherent to maximize the effectiveness of the resources. At first glance, the activism of policy-makers on several fronts might look like a sign of the will to overcome a monochord urban model based on automotive industry. On closer inspection, however, the dispersion of resources across heterogeneous policy issues has prevented from reaching the critical mass needed to trigger the transformation of the system. The three sub-agendas are not integrated into a single project of urban change, but they proceed separately, each claiming the strategic primacy and aiming to grab the maximum amount of resources. The idea of a city of knowledge, based on the production of enhanced services related to digital economy, would have required to concentrate a great part of the resources on the polytechnic sub-agenda. On the contrary, this agenda has been the less financially supported and certainly the less effective³³. In the long term, the other two agendas have become predominant. Their less innovative nature and especially their stronger linkage to local short-term interests have implied a significant dispersion of resources, thereby inhibiting systemic change. The new urban infrastructures (in particular those related to the Olympics), as well as initiatives related to entertainment and tourism have made Turin a more attractive and lively city ('always on the move', according to the slogan labeled by the municipal administration), but another economic model has not superseded the old one.

57 In the light of our interviews, the main factor contributing to this outcome has been the obsession of politicians to increase consensus including a very wide range of social forces in the governance coalition, many of which interested more in side benefits than in strategic projects and therefore less inclined to engage their own resources in the collective action. Two main factors might have played an important role in the promotion of this bulimic agenda by the coalition : the initial wide availability of funds, which has not encouraged a careful selection of priorities, and a certain planning euphoria of some elite seduced by the rhetoric of the strategic planning and fascinated by a smart city marketing.

58 The second element of weakness lies in the asymmetric engagement of the main players of the governance coalition : public institutions, business community and bank foundations. In principle, this kind of coalition could be very balanced, since each part would be able to provide huge resources. De facto, financial contributions to collective action are uneven, swinging and diverted by opportunistic temptations.

59 The Municipality and the Region restrict their action to a role of coordination and risk absorption and exercise their leadership only in few cases, self-limiting their

‘potential power’. This could be reasonable in a governance scenario wherein each actor invests consistent resources in the projects. But the contribution of the business community to the change efforts is often limited, episodic, and sometimes reticent³⁴. In such unbalanced system, public institutions renounce both to claim the respect of the agreements and to keep under control the systemic consistency of the policies.

60 If the lack of financial support from the business community is undoubtedly a weakness factor of the regime, uncertain is the effect of the powerful role of the bank foundations in the agenda-setting and policy-making. Between public and private actors, the action of the two bank foundations is quantitatively significant (for they finance many policies and single projects) and qualitatively important (for they substitute ‘public power’ in its role of leadership in some areas, such as arts & culture and technological innovation). The presence of these semi-public financial institutions among the top players and their prominent role of mediation between public and private sector is an unusual element within the international framework of urban regimes.

61 The last reason of weakness deals with the composition of the local ruling elite and its relationship with the societal environment. At first glance, the combination of heterogeneous backgrounds and ideological conformism seems to guarantee representativeness and unity. The elite is deeply rooted in the prominent civil society and it is culturally cohesive, able to play as a collective actor. On closer inspection, however, a ruling class largely dominated by neo-notables coming from the milieu tends to reproduce itself, keeping out innovative forces : it is no accident that in its ranks the creative classes (knowledge workers and professionals of the digital society) are marginal. Moreover, the reluctance to include the forces of the emerging post-industrial society must be seen in conjunction with the lack of internal circulation and relationships with citizens. Beyond the rhetoric of inclusion, the elite does not pursue the participation of local citizens, but their acquiescence and their applause as viewers, consumers, tourists : an audience to cherish and to poll, but to keep far from policy-making. The absence of parties capable of mobilizing energies and passions of the people certainly contributes to this attitude, as well as the lack of a credible opposition able to challenge the establishment. More than the myth of the ‘democratic revolution’ evoked at the turn of 1993, the regime appears to belong to the Gramsci’s category of ‘passive revolution’.

62 The combination of these weakness factors makes the regime machine quickly decline, after the peak of popularity and success in the first years of the new century.

Conclusions

63 The Turin urban regime may be considered a weak regime, in spite of the good reputation it has enjoyed, its favourable circumstances (the political and institutional crisis of 1992, the short recovery of Fiat in 2004 and 2005, the Winter Olympics) and the huge resources which it could rely on, Weak because of an overly ambitious agenda without a dominant core which to concentrate efforts and resources on ; weak because of the scarce and conditional support of the private partners and because of the unbalanced engagement of the public authorities (financially highly exposed but without leading the decision-making process) ; in the end weak because of the composition of a ruling elite mainly formed by neo-notables coming from *cliques* and far from the citizens.

64 Although many important changes took place and reshaped the face of the city,

making it aesthetically more pleasant, culturally livelier, socially more differentiated, politically more dynamic, the urban regime in Turin failed the challenge of leading the city from the one-company town to a knowledge-based international metropolis. The sum of the policy changes has not produced the desired evolutionary leap in the pattern of urban development.

65 The analysis of this experience also sheds light on the dynamics that favoured its establishment, consolidation and functioning. If this case could be considered representative of urban regimes, for it points out the crucial role of intellectuals and ideas in stimulating the regime incubation and legitimation, its development seems partially deviating from what stated by the mainstream theory based on the American urban dynamics. The first anomaly lies in the growing power exercised by bank foundations, able to triangle with public authorities and business elite on equal terms and in some cases from a leading position (this element makes Turin probably different also from most of the other European cities). Atypical is also the strong reliance of the regime on public resources (this difference between European cities and American ones has often been highlighted).

66 Last but not least, this research has also attempted to fill a gap in the theory, correlating urban regime and ruling class, since we think that the profile of the latter might affect the resilience and strength of the former. In this case study, the ruling class contains elements of strength and weakness. On the one hand, the mix between social heterogeneity, cultural unity and distributed leadership seems to favour the regime stability. On the other hand, a ruling class mostly coming from the milieux seems to limit the innovative potential of the agenda.

67 Although one case study cannot authorize to generalize the results, the analysis on the ruling class might offer useful insights to develop a more complex urban regime theory, in order to increase its heuristic capacity.

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Annexe

Methodological appendix

To reconstruct the nature and dynamics of the 1993-2011 government cycle, our six-year work has been based on documentary sources and 37 in-depth interviews (even several times) with qualified witnesses. The witnesses were chosen because of their proximity to the environments 'that count' and/or their position as privileged observers of the policy-making processes related to the agenda.

To identify the components of the ruling elite we combined the reputational method with the positional method, 'corrected' through a decisional method. With the positional method we

selected an initial group of individuals with top positions in Turin 'preminent' organizations³⁵ between 2001 and 2006. The group was made up of 2266 people occupying 2768 positions in 638 organizations. An index of civic relevance (ICR), which took into account both the functional relevance of the organization (OR) and the number and type of positions held (PR) was then assigned to each individual in the group (tab. 1). The list of people deriving from this first selection was cleared by individuals with an ICR lower than a (necessarily arbitrarily) 'threshold of civic relevance' (275, indicative of different situations, but equivalent to the possession of two charges, one of which displaying the highest ICR value). This procedure produced a group of 94 individuals. At the same time, exploring news in the two best selling newspapers ('La Repubblica' and 'La Stampa') between 2001 and 2006, we drew up a list of people emerged as much influential in the city. Then we used the judgment of 45 privileged observers (chosen for their acquaintances in heterogeneous environments) to correct the list³⁶. The reputational method generated a group of 52 individuals. The ruling class was the sum (excluding overlaps) of the members of the two groups : 120 people with top positions in almost two hundreds organizations.

Tab. 1. The ICR

$ICR_i = OR_i + PR_i$			
OR_i			
Description	formula	position	value
functional relevance of the organizations	$OR_i = \sum OR_{1,n}$	agenda setting	100
		financing, policy making	75
		management, coordination, promotion	50
		information/symbolic action, control	40
		culture and training, public image	30
		patronage, (indirect or occult) party funding	20
		other	10
		PR_i	
Description	formula	position	value
Positions' relevance	$PR_i = \sum PR_{1,n}$	top management	100
		middle management	75
		high political representative	50
		low representative	25

* Organizations performing multiple functions have been assigned the score of the most important function.

Notes

1 The analysis presented in this article succinctly reformulates the findings of a study conducted between 2006 and 2011 (Belligni and Ravazzi 2012). For methodological details see the Appendix.

2 The opportunity to apply to Europe a model created to study American urban contexts,

which are culturally, socially and structurally different from European cities, has been the subject of an extensive debate (Harding 1999; Savitch and Kantor 2005; Mossberger and Stoker 2001).

3 Two prejudices failed: 1) cities are disconnected from the nerve-center of national and international decisional system; 2) in order to understand problems and find solutions looking at the national level is enough.

4 Stone (2002) defines the urban agenda as a set of key commitments, which are priority setting-oriented.

5 The so-called 'maintenance regimes' seem to exclude this aspect by the class of regimes, but they are mostly types of urban regime affecting small and peripheral towns (Stone 1993).

6 With some lag, we may say that the following distinctions belong to this dichotomous model: 'managerial', 'routinized', 'Keynesian', 'redistributive', 'social centered' regimes vs 'entrepreneurial', 'strategic', 'Schumpeterian', 'capital driven', 'market oriented' regimes (Peterson 1981; Elkin 1987; Savitch and Kantor 2002 and 2005; Sassen 2009).

7 For example, during the last two decades, Monaco of Bavaria and the capital of Texas, Austin, have almost exclusively focused on the development of scientific research and ICT.

8 For this reason, according to Stone, they 'are perhaps best studied over time' (Stone 1989, 9).

9 There are cultural and political personalities gravitating around the institutions of the labour movement (primarily the Gramsci Institute), Fiat (the Agnelli Foundation) and the Financial Textile Group, as well as representatives of the Academy and of the Research Institute of the Region (Ires Piemonte). The reflection was developed by Bagnasco (1986 and 1990) and Castronovo (1987) and the journal 'Sisifo', as well as on the local pages of major newspapers.

10 For a detailed and more thorough description of the debate see Belligni and Ravazzi 2012.

11 With the new municipal electoral system, Castellani won thanks to the strategic votes of the Northern League electorate.

12 The sources used to retrace the urban agenda are: Torino Incontra (1992, 1997), Torino Internazionale (2000, 2006), City of Turin (2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2008), Russo and Terna (2004); Dente et al. (2005), Bonomi and Cominu (2007); Comitato Giorgio Rota (2000-2011); Dondona (2008), The newspaper 'Repubblica', edition of Turin (from 2000 to 2010). We also used data and results of a research conducted by Bruno Dente on 23 policies implemented in Turin (Dente et al. 2005).

13 The Plan included a vision, 6 strategic lines, 20 targets, 84 actions.

14 About the distinction between governmental agenda (the dominant intentions) and decision-making agenda (the set of policies), see Kingdon (1984).

15 The new projects concerned many fields of knowledge: telecommunications and information technology, aerospace, physics, genetics, chemistry, biotechnology, economics and restoration of cultural heritage.

16 To name only the best known events: Artissima, Traffic, Salone del Gusto, Salone del Libro, Settembre Musica-MITO, Torino Spiritualità, Biennale Democrazia.

17 For a list of all the policies in the three sub-agendas see Belligni and Ravazzi 2012.

18 Only for 2006 Olympic Games 3 billion of public money arrived in Turin.

19 With the gradual downsizing of Fiat, the Municipality of Turin became the first company in town by number of employees: a holding that managed a huge economic and financial asset, increased in recent years by the dividends of its investee companies (approximately 80 million from 2008 to 2010).

20 In 1998 the innovative 'Special Project for Suburbs' (Progetto Speciale Periferie) started to regenerate some poor neighborhoods located in peripheral areas. The 'Neighborhood Contract' (Contratto di Quartiere) became the innovative tools to design integrated policies involving residents of the neighborhoods.

21 From 1997 to 2009, the two foundations have invested about € 1.5 billion in the city.

22 Italian bank foundations are private institutions but with some legal constraints that make them de facto semi-public institutions: a) since 1999 they can only invest in the sectors established by law (research, education, conservation and enhancement of the cultural and

environmental heritage, health and social assistance); b) since 2002, the 70% of the members of the Management Board must be appointed by local public institutions (Region, Province, Municipality, Chamber of Commerce).

23 The president of the Industrial Union of Turin admits that 'Among European cities, over the past twenty years, Turin has been one of the most capable of change, as we have often repeated. This change was funded in large part by public funds, no longer available' (L. Mattioli, *La creatività ci salverà*, in 'La Repubblica', 25 September 2012).

24 The period chosen for the selection and the analysis of the governing elite extends from 2001 to 2006, universally considered the pinnacle of the cycle. For methodological details about members' identification see Appendix. The information collected on the members was reconstructed through documentary sources (newspaper articles, curricula available on the Web) and through 37 interviews with people chosen because of their knowledge of the environments close to power (see the Methodological appendix for more details).

25 Some people are linked to more than a milieu, but one is always dominant and we have referred to this in the count.

26 As an interviewee admits, 'If you ask me what I mainly identify with, if with my party or my milieu, I would say at once: the latter' (I.17).

27 The network has been reconstructed (using the software Pajek) from organization memberships (the link between two individuals descends from their common membership in one or more organizations).

28 The average clustering coefficient (0.576) suggests a relatively cohesive network.

29 The measures of centrality that we have considered are: *degree centrality*, which measures the connectivity of a node and it is calculated as the ratio between the real number and the potential number of its links; *betweenness centrality*, which measures the importance of a node in connecting efficiently (through the shortest path) all pairs of nodes of the network (Wasserman and Faust 1994). In relation to the first kind of centrality, the number of direct contacts of the most central node is less than a fifth of the maximum amount (23 out of 120: 19%). With regard to the second, individuals with the highest values are not systemic brokers (they are not able to connect parts of the network otherwise isolated. For details see Belligni, Ravazzi and Salerno (2008).

30 Most components of the elite cumulate no more than 4 positions, maximum 2 of which have strategic relevance.

31 According to the mayor Castellani 'the agenda that we developed in 1993 has reached - more or less - all its objectives' (Castellani and Damiano 2011, 13).

32 The empirical evidence shows that not every regime is robust. On the contrary, many cities show what we may call a 'weak' regime (Stone 2002).

33 Citing only the two main failures of this agenda, the biggest (339 researchers and employees) private research centre created in the city (by Motorola) closed in 2008 after a few years of activity and 'Turin New Economy', an agency created for managing brownfield sites sold by Fiat to local public institutions, finds it hard to take off.

34 The waiver of the big local companies (Fiat and Telecom first) to invest in innovative projects in synergy with the research sector is astonishing above all.

35 The criteria to select the 'preminent' organizations were: a) formal role in decision-making (all public and semi-public organizations and associations recognized as decision-makers in public fora and policy tables); b) a significant budget or a large amount of employees.

36 Names which were either proposed or rejected by at least 11 out of 45 interviewees were added or removed from the list.

Table des illustrations



Titre Fig. 1. The establishment of the urban regime in Turin

URL <http://metropoles.revues.org/docannexe/image/4642/img-1.png>

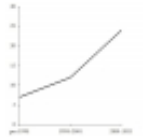
Fichier image/png, 24k

Titre Fig. 2. A map of the polycentric sub-agenda



URL <http://metropoles.revues.org/docannexe/image/4642/img-2.png>

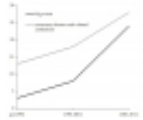
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Titre Fig. 3. Research centres and technological poles in Turin

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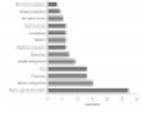
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Titre Fig. 4. The cultural system in Turin

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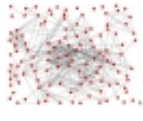
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Titre Fig. 5. Socio-professional backgrounds of elite members

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Titre Fig. 6. The elite as a positional network

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URL <http://metropoles.revues.org/docannexe/image/4642/img-7.png>

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Pour citer cet article

Référence électronique

Silvano Belligni et Stefania Ravazzi, « Policy change without metamorphosis. The 1993-2011 urban regime in Turin », *Métropoles* [En ligne], 12 | 2013, mis en ligne le 01 mai 2013, consulté le 31 mars 2015. URL : <http://metropoles.revues.org/4642>

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