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Social cohesion and economic development: some reflections on the Italian case

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Globalization processes, market deregulation and the retreat of the welfare state occurring in advanced capitalist societies have revitalised the debate about how to conciliate economic development and social cohesion. This debate proved to be very active in Italy, where great differences occur between local contexts as to the economic performance, the inequalities level and, more in general, the cohesion of the social fabric. Within this framework, this paper explores the level of both economic development and social cohesion in Italian provinces, through the analysis of secondary data. The article, therefore, draw a portrait of the national differences, contributing also to the debate on the operationalisation of the concepts. Finally, the complex relation between economic development and social cohesion is analysed, and its non-linear trend is outlined.

Di fronte ai processi di globalizzazione, alla deregolazione del mercato, e alla crescente contrazione dello stato sociale che interessa le società a capitalismo avanzato, ha ripreso quota la riflessione su come coniugare lo sviluppo economico e la coesione sociale. Questo dibattito ha trovato terreno fertile anche in Italia, paese da lungo tempo contraddistinto da profonde differenze locali tanto nelle performance economiche, quanto nelle disuguaglianza e – in senso più ampio – nella tenuta del tessuto sociale. In questa prospettiva, nel presente articolo vengono esplorati i livelli di sviluppo economico e di coesione sociale nella penisola, a livello provinciale, facendo prevalentemente ricorso a dati statistici di tipo secondario. Con particolare riferimento al caso italiano, l'articolo fornisce, quindi, un contributo alla messa a fuoco dei due concetti e alla loro operativizzazione, mappandone la distribuzione a livello locale. Viene altresì analizzata la relazione tra coesione e sviluppo, osservando come essa si dispiega nel territorio della penisola.

Keywords: Economic development, Social cohesion, Inequalities, North-South divide, Mezzogiorno, Terza Italia

Introduction

The economic tendencies of recent decades have revitalised the debate about the attempt to align economic development with social cohesion. The great social contracts of the post-war, defined at the time as Fordist, guaranteed, via the intervention of the state, a good compromise between competitiveness, economic efficiency and growth on the one hand, and social equality on the other (Crouch 1999). In recent years, however, with the transition from a system characterised by so-called organised capitalism to a flexible model, new risks and insecurities have appeared (Beck 1992). Nowadays, advanced capitalist societies appear more deregulated than in the 1970s and 1980s, more differentiated, and more difficult to govern and to organise in a coherent and stable fashion. In other words, the issue of how to reconcile

economic growth and social stability has re-surfaced. This is an objective which seems much less taken for granted than it did in the industrial era, so much so that Dahrendorf has spoken, in relation to the topic of the commitment to aligning economic vitality with the containment of inequalities, of squaring the circle. The prospect seems almost to have bounced back, given that contemporary debate ispervaded by the idea that there exists a trade-off between economic efficiency and social equality (Tomassi 2009).

The centrality of the relationship between competitiveness and social cohesion is also reflected in public discourse, in the policy area and in the legitimising rhetoric of supra national institutions. The best known case is the Lisbon strategy, which underlined the need for the EU to inject renewed vigour into its economy – which from the end of the 90s has been more stagnant than in the past - aiming at innovation, a knowledge economy, and environmental sustainability. At the same time this strategy aimed to confront the stagnation in the levels of employment and the growing polarisation between, on the one hand, highly paid jobs requiring good qualifications and, on the other, poorly paid jobs for those with few qualifications (European Commission 2004).[1]

Given the importance in international debate - in the political sphere as well as in academic and public discourse - of a joint reflection on economic development and social cohesion, let us now take a closer look at Italy. We can affirm that this theme takes on a particular importance in relation to the socio-economic structure of the peninsula. It is well known that Italy is characterised by deep territorial differences at the level of production, economic performance and capacity for innovation. This also extends to social inequalities.

One can also add that the areas of the so-called third Italy, characterised by the development of small industries and based on a particular combination of markets, reciprocities and political exchanges, have also been considered in relation to their capacities to activate good levels of economic development, thus maintaining social coherence (Bagnasco 1988).[2] Furthermore, some recent dynamics have shown the difficulties of the economy of Italy before the challenges of innovation. (Perulli and Pichierri 2010, Cerea, Cucca and Rago 2010).

The research in this paper is closely linked to this strand of literature and can be located in the particular area of the debate which we have outlined above. More precisely, the paper contains an analysis of the distribution in Italy – at sub-national territorial level (i.e. at provincial level)[3] – of social cohesion and economic development and how the relationship between these two is established.

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[1] These discussions do not just relate to large scale national and international contexts, but also to more geographically restricted areas. An example in point is the study of what is termed 'urban political economy' which analyses – in small city districts – the links between economic processes and social segregation (Ranci and Torri 2006).

[2] Those areas which fit in with the third Italy model are, as is well known, mainly located in the Central and North Eastern regions of the country..

[3] Although the provinces are subject to economic processes which extend beyond their boundaries, they are usually used in Italy as units of analysis in the context of this 'ecological' type of research, which focusses on issues relating to socio-economic development (i.e. Ballarino and Schadee 2005). Furthermore, territorial units based on economic and not administrative boundaries, such as local labour systems (Sistemi Locali del Lavoro), while presenting some potential advantages as compared to the provinces, do not offer a sufficient number of

Our analysis is mainly exploratory and 'ecological' in nature. It is cross sectional and has three principal objectives. Firstly, we will try to make a contribution to the long-standing debate on the applicability of the concepts of economic development and, in particular, the concept of social cohesion. We will analyse the limits and the potential of creating composite indices from secondary data. Secondly, we will study how these two dimensions are distributed through Italy, interrogating the validity of some of the classic territorial divisions in Italy – identified according to socio-economic variables – with particular attention paid to the South, traditionally the most problematic area. Finally, taking Italy as our point of departure we will analyse the relationship between economic development and social cohesion, studying its intensity, development and shape, also taking into full consideration the differences between macroareas. [4]

In line with our objectives, the paper is structured as follows: we will firstly provide a review of the literature (section 1) in which we will examine the major contributions on social cohesion and economic development as well as the relationship between the two. We will then look at the theme of the applicability of the concepts, showing how the indices used were put together (section 2). Then we will move to the mapping of economic development and social cohesion in Italy (section 3), and then look at how they are related (section 4). Finally, in our conclusion we will illustrate the major findings of our work concentrating on some of the mechanisms which link development and cohesion, and some possible ways of analysing them.

1. The debate over social cohesion and economic development

The concepts of social cohesion and economic development, as well as the relationship between the two, have been of interest to sociologists from the very early days of the discipline. Our analysis must, as a matter of course, recognise from the very start the principal theoretical reference points, central to guiding the phase of operationalisation, as well as the analysis of empirical data. A detailed analysis of the debate on social coherence is, to say the very least demanding (see Camozzi 2008; Chan *et al.* 2006; Friedkin 2004): it is a very broad concept, with unclear boundaries, to the extent that Bernard (1999) defined it as a 'quasi concept', 'a convenience concept' or as a 'hybrid mental construct'.

Different approaches emerge from the classic discussions of the term. In Durkheim's sociology, considerations on the forms of solidarity present in society occupy a central place (Rosati and Santambrogio 2002). The issue is brought into focus above all in Durkheim's *The division of labour in society* in which he argued that the specialisation of occupations within society increases with the move from agricultural to industrial societies (Bagnasco 2007). This process leads to greater separation, but also to a greater interdependence between individuals, linked together in a kind of organic solidarity. The more advanced this solidarity is, the more effective it is as a factor in social cohesion.

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indicators for the type of analysis we are carrying out. For these reasons – even though there are some limitations – we believe that the choice of provinces offers the best balance between the available data and the issues we wish to explore..

4 As we will show our aim is not so much to identify causal links between economic development and social cohesion, a problematic operation from both analytical and empirical perspectives. Rather we wish to look at how the relationship holds together, and how the individual elements which make up the relationship are themselves maintained and progress.

The idea that society is a complex system, made up in turn of inter-dependent subsystems is central to Parson's sociology (Bonazzi 2008). The fundamental question which inspires Parson's theories relates to the conditions which make social order and the efficient functioning of the system possible. His answer is to be found in the existence of a prevailing model of ethico-cultural values which are assimilated by individuals through the process of socialisation (Barazzi 2008). It follows that the process of interiorisation of values, on the one hand, and the fact that social subsystems systems are interconnected, on the other, make a society cohere.

Finally, the contribution provided by Tocqueville to an understanding of American democracy is well known. In his *Journey to America* he noted the number of associations which 'instruct' individuals to be more cooperative and, in more general terms, foster co-operative tendencies. Associationism and forms of civic participation are here considered one of the fundamentals of cohesion.

The three classic authors briefly discussed above give an idea of the extent to which the subject of social cohesion is at the heart of complex theoretical explanations, and at the same time, is a 'guiding concept' for some of the empirical analysis. The more recent literature demonstrates similar characteristics. Amongst the vast variety and multiplicity of connotations, the most common and current definition complies with the literal meaning of the term, 'hold together', 'the ability to come together' (Chan *et al.* 2006) or, the more abstract meaning, 'something that we all value' (Rajulton *et al.* 2007). Furthermore, as Friedkin highlights, 'As often happens with issues that generate a lot of attention, the literature on social cohesion has become more and more confusing with the increase in the number of researchers dealing with the topic.' (2004, p. 409). The matter is further complicated by the overlapping definitions fostered both in the academic and political spheres, the first being more theoretical and the latter more policy-orientated.

Having outlined the basic arguments, this paper will now examine the details of the dimensions of the concept of social cohesion (Bernard 1999; Jenson 1998), moving through the abstract definitions to identify the key elements that can be empirically measured through suitable indicators. Some of these dimensions pertain to the individual sphere: from trust in people and institutions to the sense of togetherness, from the presence of shared values to the willingness to cooperate, to share knowledge and valuable resources. Others can be attributed to the characteristics of the whole of society: from the presence of a strong social fabric, to the ability to access resources, from political and civic participation to the control of deviance and social exclusion, and finally the quality of the environment.

Due to the vast wealth of meanings the exact definitions can vary considerably. Furthermore, in the case where these definitions have an empirical goal, the choice of the dimensions is affected, as this paper will show, by the availability of data. A good balance between theoretical articulation and empirical interpretation can be found in the contributions of Berger-Schmitt, who is supported by the European Commission (2002; 2000). The author links the concept of social cohesion to two fundamental dimensions: (i) the presence/absence of inequality and social exclusion and (ii) strong social ties and interaction. These definitions are used as a starting point to produce an index that is detailed in the following paragraph.

Moving to the economic development, the main dimensions of the concept seems easier to detect and less controversial. Therefore the debate about its measures mainly dealt with the

limits of the economic indicators in the representation of development as a whole, or with the underlying mechanisms, rather than concentrating strictly on operationalisation (Martinelli 2004). As to this specific aspect definition appear indeed to be very simple, mainly relating economic development to the level of goods available to to the population of a specific country or region (Bottazzi 2007). The first measure of development is therefore economic wealth in relation to the population (Ibid.). In this sense, the classic measure of development that will also be used in this paper is the GDP per capita.

It is well known that for long time the GDP has been the subject of critical reflection, in as much as it excludes the dimensions of wellbeing. Moreover it includes expenditures that clearly has a negative influence on wellbeing such as, for example, the money spent following accidents or on weapons..[5] Therefore, the GDP is often accompanied by a series of indicators and indices that try to show the state of "social health" of a population. Economic development and social cohesion, analytically distinct in this paper, are, therefore, both used as key features of a broad concept of growth: it is not by coincidence that their relationship represents the central issue in many economic and social science studies, and benefits from a political relevance that has often helped to stimulate interest. This line of research has once again stimulated massive debate on the idea of intense growth in limited terms of economic development. However, this only illustrates one side of the argument: there is also the idea that growth needs to be considered alongside social failings. This view is naturally also reflected in the empirical definition of the 'measurement' of development: it has earned a growing consensus, and there is even a 'Social Indicators Movement' that aims to widen the scope of the empirical findings beyond the simple production to provide a broad spectrum of dimensions and variables. (see Zajczyk 1997).

However, these concerns are not central in this study, as we will measure well-being under the domain of social cohesion: therefore we take on an idea of economic development that is as 'strict and pure' as possible, not superimposed on the concept of development in the widest sense, disregarding its influences on social capacity.[6]

Finally, different positions can be found also in the debate regarding the relation between economic development and social cohesion. In particular two main approaches can be identified,based on the way they connect the two dimensions. They will be labelled here as 'Culturalist' and 'Developmentalist'.

According to the first line of thinking, the dimension of civicness (the backbone of social cohesion or good citizenship) is seen as an independent variable. A celebrated source in this

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[5] There is an extensive amount of literature on this issue. Amongst the most recent we have chosen to highlight the study conducted by the economists Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi, which aimed to define the unit of measure capable of evaluating both economic performance and social progress (Stiglitz, Sen and Fitoussi 2010).

[6] It is useful to add that even by concentrating only on economic development, the GDP creates some controversies: for example, it does not take into consideration productive activities that are informal and sometime illegal that do not pass through the market. Similar controversies decrease in the case of the indicators that are used on the provincial level, in that it provides estimates and not direct statistical findings. However, in spite of these criticisms, the substitution of the GDP with an alternative measurement framework has rarely been tried, let alone in the field of studies that compare territorial units on a sub-national scale (Ricolfi 2010). Hence, the choice of this indicator is motivated, as well as by the lack of an alternative, by the will to follow the attitude of the literature on the subject.

line of research is the work of Putnam (1993), on the performance of Italian regions. The basic idea of his work is that a good amount of civicness occurs when there is an elevated level of 'civic involvement' and of 'civic commitment' both of which increase commerce, credit, craftsmanship, and economic development (Ballarino and Schadee 2005, p. 243). Therefore, according to this research, the economic development is a by product of civicness; the origin being the civic development, which is then followed by economic development. This argument contradicts the economic-determinants literature (Fukuyama 1995; O'Connell 2003).

The second line of thinking has, instead, clear origins in the developmental paradigm. The idea is that economic development and social cohesion are inextricably linked, both in sync and robust, the starting factor being economic development. It develops the theory, supported by cross-national comparative research, according to which there is a curved line relationship, which is usually positive, between development and equality. This can also be positively connected with 'positive change towards more civic and work-related values and attitudes among people' (Inglehart 1997; O'Connell 2003, p. 244). In other words, across certain thresholds, the growth of economic development decreases social inequality, and tends to increase social cohesion. A possible reference is the Kuznets curve; or rather the graphic representation of the second line of thinking where economic inequality grows during the first phase of development in a country, but then begins to decrease, reaching a certain level of average income and full industrial maturity (Kuznets 1955).

For the purpose of this study, we have given above a brief description of the two approaches, illustrating the polar extremes. In reality the issue is far more complex and there exists a variety of arguments, which usually consist of a mixture of the above approaches. They do, however, provide a basis for other arguments, which have gained consensus and have an important role in public debate on the process of policy making. With regards to cultural rhetoric, the academic work of Putnam is well known, and is often used by the general public to idolise the civic culture and civic society that sustains them, neglecting, however, other aspects of social structure, and political and economic systems. The developmental arguments also provide some appealing stimuli for political discussions and are a source for shared feelings (Franzini 2010). Some of these, for example, have been used to legitimise the so called *Washington Consensus* that supports a policy of minimal economic intervention, for example, liberalisation of the markets and business, reduction in public spending and maintaining a balance of spending. This is argued to create development which would then lead to the positive consequence of social justice.

The conflicting ideals of the 'Developmental' and the 'Cultural' arguments effectively illustrate the terms of the debate over the relationship between cohesion and development; nevertheless it can be misleading for interpretative purposes because it implies the idea that they are mutually exclusive. We will expand on this point in the conclusion.

2. An hypothesis of operationalisation of the concepts of social cohesion and economic development

In this sectionof the paper we will break down the concepts into the relevant dimensions and the indicators selected to describe them, and we will then focus on the construction of combined composite indices.

Firstly, it is important to clarify that in this paper the concept of social cohesion will be treated as a systemic property of the whole of a society and therefore will deal with both the individual and collective actors (organisations and institutions) that comprise the concept (see Guizzardi 2008; Lockwood 1999). In order to observe the levels of cohesion in any given local community, rather than the individual's experience, it seems appropriate for the research to be conducted on ecological data. This paper does not aim to analyse aggregated data to infer the performance of the single dimensions, but to outline the characteristics of the contexts being examined.[7]

The concept of social cohesion is, as illustrated in the previous paragraph, multifaceted. If each theory can be explored empirically, in some cases finding data (in particular of the subjective dimensions) can result in difficulties that condition the path of operationalisation (Poggio 2007). This implies, therefore, the exclusion of some of the dimensions and a series of backwards steps in order to reach a compromise between (i) the representation of the concept, (ii) the definition in the literature and (iii) the availability of data.

In this sense, reference to the Berger-Schmitt definition (see par. above) represents a satisfactory solution, in that it insists mainly on systematic aspects of social cohesion, overlooking the subjective dimensions of trust, which can be difficult to explore on a provincial level with secondary data.

The two central dimensions of the definition (the presence/absence of inequality and social exclusion and the strength of social ties and interaction) have been previously categorised into four fields: (1) the polarization of distribution of resources, (2) exclusion and disadvantage; (3) participation and (4) civicness, and all of these have been then operationalised across an array of indicators (see Tab. 1).

Tab. 1 – The concept of social cohesion: dimensions and indicators.

	Dimensions		Indicators
Social Cohesion	Disparity, inequality, exclusion	Polarisation of distribution of resources	**Income** — **Gini's D* index of taxpayers for bands of income (2005)** – Elaborations on data from the Finance Ministry
			Housing — **Gini's D*index of housing occupied by residence for state of conservation (2001)** – Elaborations on Istat data
			Education — **Gini's D* index of residents with Educational qualification (2001) -** – Elaborations on Istat data
		Exclusion and disadvantage	**Income** — **Taxpayers under 10.000 €/year – val % (2005) -** – Elaborations on data from the Finance Ministry
			Housing — **Buildings in poor state of repair out of the total occupied buildings – val % (2001)** – Elaborations on Istat data
			Education — **illiterate and without educational qualification out of total of residents– val % (2001)** – Elaborations on Istat data
			Work — **Inhabitants aged 0-59 unemployed in families– val % (2004)** - Istat
			Deviance — **Index of delinquency – Violent Crime (2003)** – Istat
			Health — **Chance of life at birth – average based on sex (2004)** – Elaborations on Istat data

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[7] In this sense, it is important to avoid a fall in the 'ecological fallacy': in our study the correlations actually follow the territorial aggregates, without being used as surrogates for correlation on an individual level.

		Membership, Voluntary	**Volunteers in organisations out of 10.000 residents (2001)** – Istat
Links, relation, participation	Participation	Vote	**Electoral participation – average value (2001-2006)** – Elaborations on data from the Home Office
	Civicness	Recycling	**Tonnage of recycling out of total of refuse produced – val % (2005)** – Elaborations on data from Arpat
		Daily reading	**Readers of news per 100 inhabitants (2002)** – (Cartocci 2007)
		Blood Donation	**Blood Donors per 100 inhabitants (2002)** - (Cartocci 2007)

Regarding the distribution of resources, indicators from the more traditional fields of study have been chosen: income, housing and education, for which both the level of polarisation of distribution and the presence of bands of exclusion will be considered. For the latter issue we have extended the field of study to include relevant topics such as work, deviance and health. As for the dimensions of links and participation, the indicators used are borrowed from the most well known analysis of the phenomenon (see Putnam 1993, Cartocci 2007) with additional data on recycling. These data present some problems: membership and recycling are affected by the services on the ground and by institutional intervention. Therefore, we have to deal with indicators which are partially invalid and do not fully return a multidimensional concept like civicness, however it does allow us to collect some information.

Deciphering the concept of economic development is much more straightforward, by virtue of the choice to concentrate on so called *hard* dimensions, without superimposing on it the general idea of development, while therefore excluding the sphere of wellbeing (see previous. section). Moving through the abstract theories we have identified three dimensions and their indicators: (i) the volume of production, of which the indicator is the GDP; (ii) wealth, indicated by family assets and (iii) employment, expressed by the rate of employment (see Tab. 2)

Tab. 2 – The concept of economic development: dimensions and indicators

	Dimensions	Indicators
Economic Development	Volume of Production	**GDP (2005)** – Istituto Tagliacarne
	Wealth	**Family Assets (2005)** – Istat
	Employment	**Rate of Employment (2005)** – Istat

The indicators illustrated are then put together to form two composite indices, one relative to economic development and the other to social cohesion. For the latter there is then an intermediate index calculated, relative to the dimensions listed in tab. 1 (polarisation, exclusion, participation and civicness).

By referring to the classic conception of the course of operationalisation of complex concepts (Lazarsfeld 1969), the construction of the additional indices starts from an elevated number of variables. This entails difficulties and raises some methodological issues. The empirical analysis of these complex phenomena require an unavoidable, but necessary, process of simplification. As Marradi states 'every time you want to combine one or more indicators, the semantic complications increase almost exponentially, the decisions necessary to reduce the

typologies are always problematic and the intellectual control at the heart of the process and on the results decreases' (Marradi 2007, p.186). With the various risks in mind, we offer, in a schematic form, some comments on the construction of the indices used:

- In the absence of empirical evidence or references in the literature we have chosen to attribute equal weight to each constituent dimension of the indices (0.25 in the case of social cohesion, 0.33 for economic development).
- The variables used have been normalised in the variation field, attributing a value of between 0 and 100. This choice can involve the risk of increasing the gaps if they are small, but permits a more efficient comparison between the cases. Furthermore, the distortion effect is weakened by the territorial scale and by covering the whole population (Italian provinces).
- The intermediate and final indices are obtained respectively from the average of the indicators and of the dimensions, but have a theoretical variation field of 0 to 100. The dimensions of polarisation of distribution of resources and exclusion, in the constructions of the overall index of social cohesion, are considered to have complementary values.[8]
- The indices of polarisation have been calculated using the measurement of dispersion of the Gini's D* index for the ordinal variables (see Leti 1983), an operator that reaches its maximum when the observations are equally distributed in the two extreme modalities, and the minimum when the observations are concentrated in the same modality:

$$D* = 2 \sum_{k=1}^{K-1} \left[f_k' \left(1 - f_k' \right) \right]$$

Where f_k' represents the cumulative frequency relative to the kth modality.

- The variables used to construct the indices show a very strong correlation between them and with their indices. If on the one hand this renders the indicators 'redundant', on the other hand it seems to confirm the existence of a common root, or of a hidden dimension.
- Strong correlations exist between the variables used and the numerous variables that were considered in the first round of sorting, and then excluded from the final index. These can also be used, on a theoretical level, to describe the concepts being studied. The possibility of constructing different indices without substantially altering the results shown, according to the principal of inter-changeability of the indices (Lazarsfeld 1969), is a confirmation of the validity of the choices made.
- The robustness of the indices used for the analysis was tested by comparing them with other indices that were produced from the same variables but with different methods: according to the additional procedure applied to the standardised variables rather than to the normalised variables and across the analysis for principle constituents. In both cases the indices obtained a correlation higher than 0.90 with those used.
- The index of social cohesion is expressed on a temporal arc that is more extensive than that of economic development. As a result of the limited data available and the fact that this study had to resort to use the census as a source of data, the first index is made up of indicators that vary between the years 2001 and 2005, the second on the data taken only from 2005. Despite that, the two dimensions are measured in the different time frames, these are actually relatively contemporary. A choice of this kind will probably result in the

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[8] As social cohesion is defined as the absence, or reduction, of disparity and of levels of exclusion.

relative stability of some of the variables used to describe cohesion, especially those used from the census. However, the relationship between the provinces, in terms of economic development, does not seem to be particularly altered in the period referred to. The added value per capita for every year referred to and the GDP per capita of 2005 show correlations that do not ever fall below 0.98.

3. Cohesion and Economic Development Indices of Italian Provinces: the relationship between internal dimensions and territorial representations

In line with objectives of this study, we will in this section provide a picture of both the key findings that emerge from the analysis of the indices and of their territorial distribution.

With regards to social cohesion, two processes appear to be necessary: the analysis of the relationships between the various constituent dimensions of the concept and of the relative index; as well as the examination of their territorial distribution.

An important fact that should be highlighted is the existence of strong relationships between all the reconstructed dimensions. In particular, on the one hand, the strong positive correlation found between the index of exclusion and the index of polarisation of resources, and between the index of participation and that of civicness. On the other hand, the two indices that pertain to the dimension of inequality are negatively correlated with the indices of links, as shown in tab.3. The index of social cohesion that this derives from illustrates, however a higher internal coherence, being constituted by deeply interconnecting dimensions.

Tab. 3 – Correlation between the intermediate indices of social cohesion

|	Index of EXCLUSION	Index of POLARISATION	Index of CIVICNESS
Index of EXCLUSION	-		
Index of POLARISATION	,737[**]	-	
Index of CIVICNESS	-,773[**]	-,549[**]	-
Index of PARTICIPATION	-,818[**]	-,530[**]	,739[**]

** The correlation is significant at the level 0,00
N = 103

The results appear to confirm the ideas suggested in the literature. On the national scale the provincial contexts that are characterised by a high level of inequality and exclusion show a limited creation of links, participation and civic feeling. Strong correlations, as expected, are also found in the indicators, particularly relating to income, housing, education and deviance (we will expand in the following section on the correlations at national level).

We will now consider the second objective of the descriptive phase of this study, in other words the analysis of how the values of the indices for the 103 provinces in Italy are distributed throughout the national territory. It emerges that there is a divide in cohesion between the north and south with the north-east taking a slight lead (see Fig. 1). Within this area there are some niche territories, distributed in a random fashion, where cohesion is

slightly more raised. For example: Ravenna, Reggio Emilia, Parma, Vicenza, Treviso, Siena, Livorno. These are some of the provinces of the centre-north-east that have an average-size capital city and are traditionally characterised by social equality and economic wellbeing (see Serravalli 1999)

**Fig. 1 – Index of social cohesion – Geographical Representations**
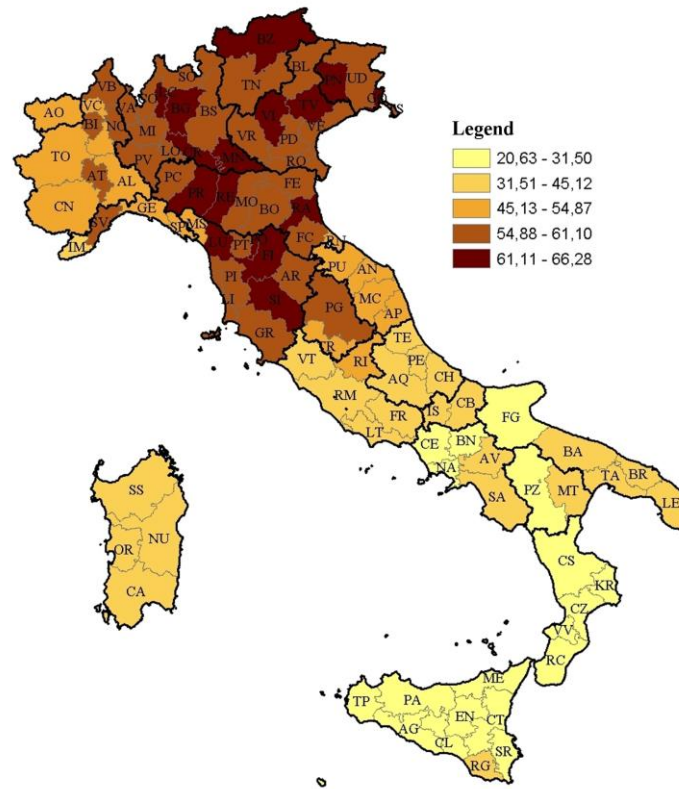
Alternatively, the distribution of the single dimensions that make up the sphere of social cohesion is more pronounced. This is especially the case with regard to the polarisation of resources that register higher values even in some of the northern provinces of the country (above all Bolzano, but also Milan and Bologna) and in the capital. Participation is highest in Tuscany, Emilia-Romagna and at the south of the Veneto. These zones are traditionally more politically active.

Examining the index of economic development, the homogenous internal results are more discernible than those of social cohesion[9]. You can see a pattern of territorial distribution that is more defined (see Fig. 2). The north overall stands out against the rest of the country, showing once again high levels of development. However, even within the provinces there are certain areas that have a higher level of economic development due to their proximity to each other. The areas cluster along the Emilian axis which – in turn – meets with an axis which runs down from the Trentino to the Po valley, passing through the west of the Veneto and eastern Lombardy. These are the areas historically characterised by industrial districts and the widespread presence of goods produced in small and medium businesses: this creates a rich basin of economic development that is typically referred to as the third Italy. To these

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[9] The correlations between the three variables used never fall below 0.95.

areas we should also add the metropolitan area of Milan in the north-west and the provinces of Cuneo and Aosta.

Fig. 2 – Index of economic development– Geographical Representations
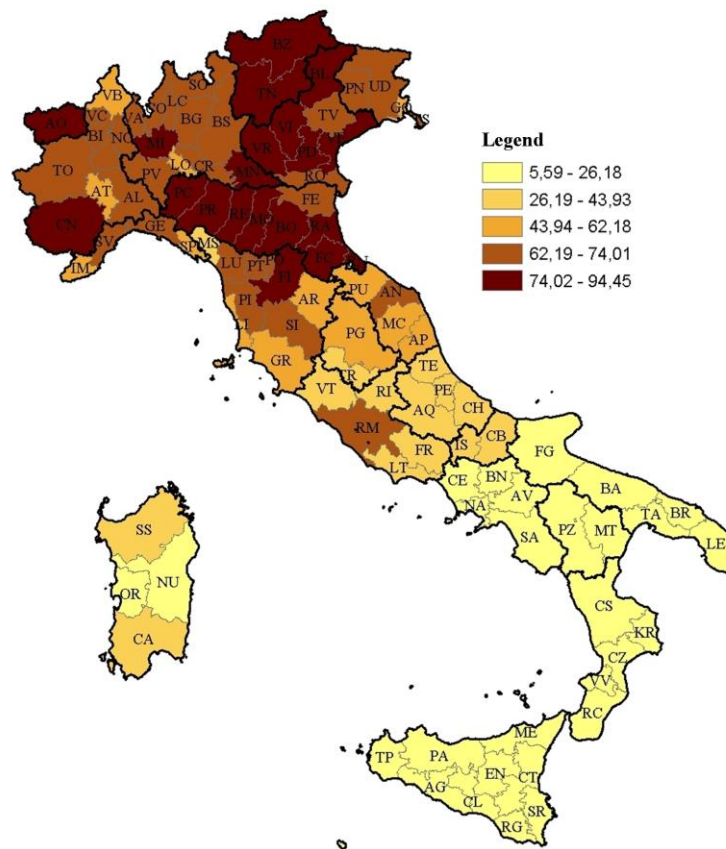
Summarising on a national level, the data from the maps in fig. 1 and 2 confirm the divide between the strong centre-north (especially the north-east and the Emilia-Tuscany zone)[10] and the south that is consistently lagging both in economic performance and in social fabric. This is also widely supported in both the literature and public discourse. We will try, however to develop the picture, by looking beyond the stereotypes of the south and the narrow subject of the so called north-south divide.

The data shown confirm that 'the south remains the most underdeveloped area of the country' (Trigilia 2011, p.41). This discrepancy can only be partially weakened if you take into consideration the unofficial economy (Istat 2010; Ricolfi 2010)[11]. From this data, it is evident that the south struggles to 'spark growth capable of self-sufficiency' (Trigilia 2011, p.42). However, it is striking that despite an abundance of data the issue of the south had been overlooked in recent years by scientific debate, is an object of only occasional interest, and is exploited both in public discourse and political discourse (Viesti 2011).

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[10] Other than being the section of the country averagely more successful, the centre-north-east is the area denoted by the lowest internal variance- measured by the coefficient variation- both in relation to economic development and social cohesion.

[11] The estimates relative to the extent of the hidden economy cannot be used in our elaborations as they are not disaggregated beyond the regional threshold. These, however confirm the extent of the unofficial economy in the south compared with the centre-north (Istat 2010).

Nevertheless, the south of Italy is not completely homogenous; it is only distinguished by relative underdevelopment and stagnation. The differences between the provinces is considerable and has grown in recent years (Cannari and Franco 2011; Busso and Storti 2011). Compared to the other territorial macro-distributions, the south makes up the cluster of provinces that are less homogenous.[12] For instance, the Adriatic ridge that is made up of Puglia, Molise and Abruzzo is considerably livelier and has a strong manufacturing industry (Viesti 2011), while the situation is more serious in the provinces of Campania, Calabria and Sicily. These are the three regions that struggle to find a road to economic development, even by the standards of the south. However, not even in these areas can backwardness be considered a generalized feature since even here can be found 'businesses and territories' that try to overcome the obstacles and difficulties deriving from a pretty inactive context (Asso and Trigilia 2010). For example, Siracusa and Ragusa in Sicily are known for the presence of a traditional industrial sector, which had benefitted from a keen entrepreneurial input in recent years.

Overall, the empirical findings require a variety of analytical approaches. If we focus on the growth of the south, we find the existence of 'more than one south' (Trigilia 2008), even though there exists a widespread persistent lag with respect to the centre-north, this however is manifested in variable structures and gaps. If we examine further the heterogeneity within the south, we can see that this takes on some indicators (GDP and income) which show the situation to be more complicated in an area which is clearly stagnant when compared to the rest of the country. In other cases (the level of employment and the rate of unemployment), the southern provinces that are more thriving appear to be nearer the national average, with an immense gap between them and the areas distinguished by a lower economic performance.

4. The relationship between social cohesion and economic development in Italy

The relationship between social cohesion and economic development can be, in the first instance, examined through the analysis of the correlation between the two composite indices. As the analysis of the distribution detailed in previous paragraphs has suggested, these have a similar trend, confirmed on a statistical level by a correlation that does not seem to leave room to doubt neither the consistence (narrowness and intensity) nor the direction (see fig. 3). However a more careful analysis of the distribution in the Italian provinces with regards to both cohesion and development show that the relationship does not have a linear trend. With the growth in the value of development the cloud shape of points seems to expand and the correlation diminishes.

Fig. 3 - Relation between the index of economic development and the index of social cohesion

[12] The great internal variability, in terms of development and cohesion, of the southern provinces clearly emerges if you compare the coefficient of the variation percentage of the macro areas (obtained by dividing the standard deviation by the average and multiplying it by 100). The south: 45.69 for economic development; 25.5 for social cohesion (North West: 12.7; 8.9, North East: 10.5; 4.8, Centre: 21.9; 13.1). There is an obvious internal differentiation directed towards the low end: the provinces of the south that reach a higher score in the index of economic development, actually, are positioned substantially below the average of the north of Italy.
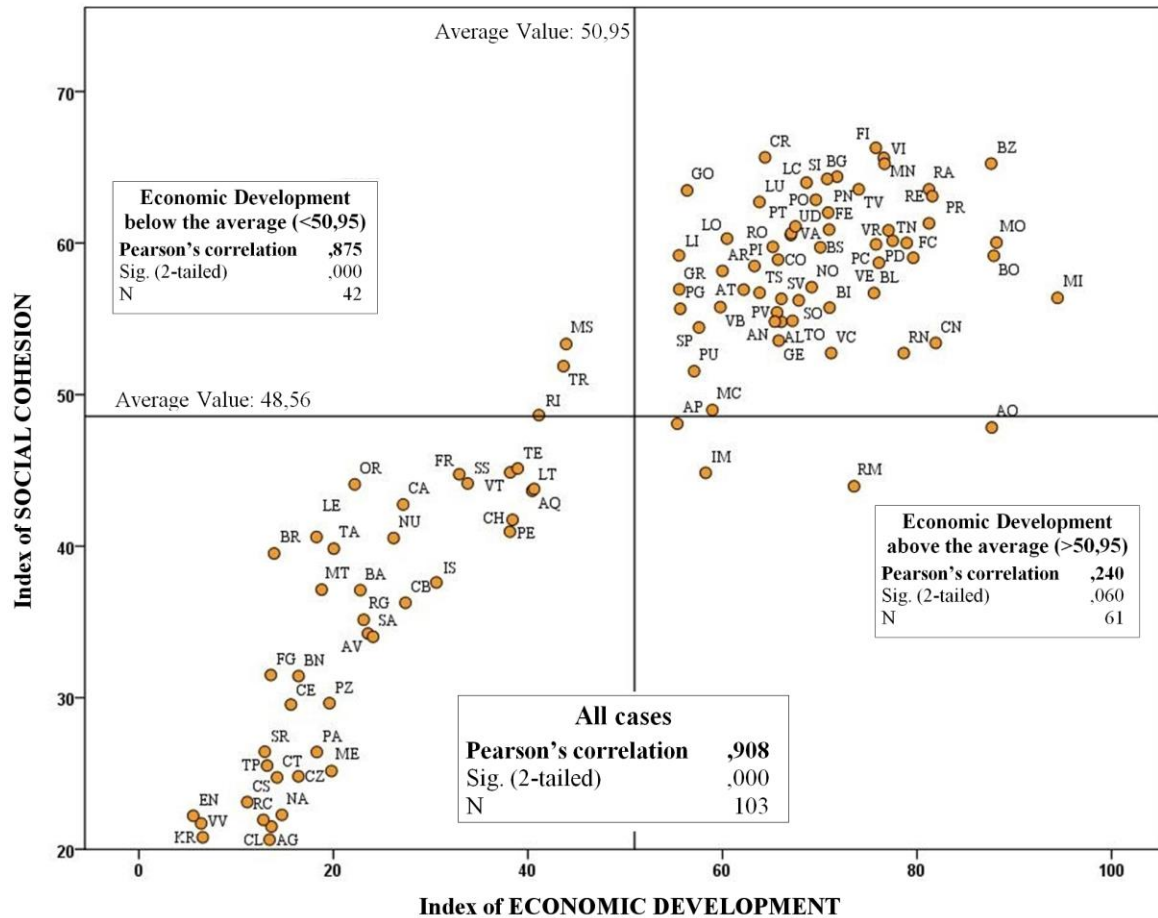
This hypothesis is confirmed by looking at the same correlation distinguishing the cases on the basis of the level of economic development (see again fig.3). For the 42 provinces that are below the national average the relationship remains strong and significant, while the 61 provinces of above the national average show wider dispersion, and a correlation that diminishes and loses significance. The analysis suggests the presence of a 'threshold effect' in the relationship between social cohesion and economic development: this seems to matter in an unambiguous way, only for the lower levels of development; for the higher levels of development (see the section in the top right of fig. 3.) the connection between the two dimensions is not discounted.

Is it possible by analysing our data to indentify the factor that decreases the strength of the correlation?

To better understand the aggregated effect it can be useful to consider the correlation between economic development and the specific dimensions that make up the index of cohesion (operationalised through the intermediate indices, see section 2), proceeding also in this case to both examine the overall picture and to differentiate both groups with respect to the average value of economic development (see tab. 4). The idea behind this process is to try to identify the 'irregular trend'- at the various levels of development- of one or more of the ingredients that make the concept of social cohesion.

The dimensions of participation, of civicness and of exclusion show substantially similar trends to those from the combined index: strong correlation of all the provinces. The

correlation remains significant and positive, though diminishing, even if we study the cases separately, the lowest level of economic development, on the one hand, and those from the higher level development, on the other (see tab. 4)
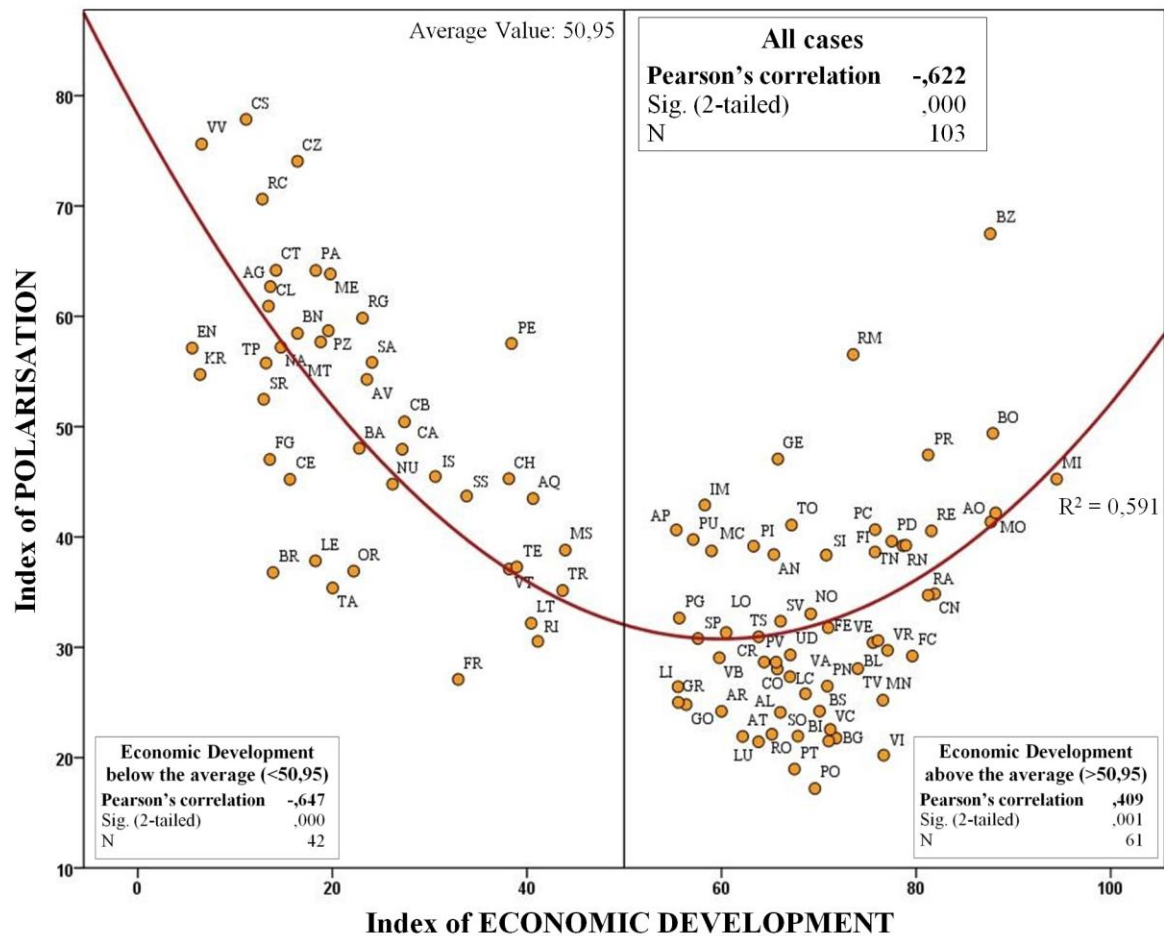
Tab. 4 - Correlation between economic development and the dimensions of social cohesion

		Index of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		
		All cases N=103	Economic development below the average (< 50,95) n=42	Economic Development above the average (>50,95) n=61
Index of SOCIAL COHESION	Correl.	,908**	,875**	,240**
	Sig.	,000	,000	,060
Index of EXCLUSION	Correl.	-,887**	-,869**	-,274*
	Sig.	,000	,000	,033
Index of POLARISATION	Correl.	-,622**	-,647**	,409**
	Sig.	,000	,000	,001
Index of CIVICNESS	Correl.	,835**	,554**	,332**
	Sig.	,000	,000	,009
Index of PARTICIPATION	Correl.	,828**	,846**	,350**
	Sig.	,000	,000	,006
** The correlation is significant at 0,01				
* The correlation is significant at 0.05				

Fig. 4 - Relation between the index of economic development and the index of polarisation

Average Value: 50,95

All cases

Pearson's correlation	-,622
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
N	103

Index of POLARISATION (y-axis)

Index of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (x-axis)

$R^2 = 0,591$

Economic Development below the average (<50,95)

Pearson's correlation	-,647
Sig. (2-tailed)	,000
N	42

Economic Development above the average (>50,95)

Pearson's correlation	,409
Sig. (2-tailed)	,001
N	61

The most interesting feature is definitely the relationship between the polarisation and the economic development, that shows a clear U trend (see fig. 4.), with equally strong and significant correlation, but with the two groups of provinces at high and low development on opposite sides. However, the other constituents of social cohesion- participation, civicness and exclusion- are correlated with the economic development, on all of their levels, in a strong and coherent manner as expected. Therefore the diminished relationship between the combined indices and the growth of development is primarily traceable to the trend of polarisation of distribution of resources.

This statistical relation between the indices has a clear substantive meaning. The U trend implies that where there is a lower level of economic development the distribution of resources is for the most part polarised: the disparity in the inequality of educational qualifications, of the quality of housing and, above all, the levels of income are the indicators that are the most pronounced. The distribution of these resources becomes more homogenous in the presence of an intermediate level of development, then unequal again where the economic development is higher.

Another significant and interesting finding is the level of polarisation in the provinces that have the biggest metropolitan areas with a population that exceed 600,000 inhabitants: Rome, Milan, Naples, Turin, Palermo and Genoa. These provinces have higher values in the index of polarisation compared with the national average, as well as lower values in the indices of social cohesion compared with the provinces of the macro areas to which they belong . By

analysing the distribution of income in the capital cities of these provinces, the hypothesis that the big cities are characterised by greater polarisation of resources appears to be confirmed.[13]Furthermore, in these capitals the number of people who claim to earn an annual income of above 100,000 Euros is 5.64 times higher than the number who earn less than 10,000 Euros. Capital cities from the other provinces have a value of 1.52. It can be argued that the dimensions of the urban centres have an important interpretive role, especially regarding the polarisation of resources. The economic fabric, in particular the finance industry and the so-called knowledge economy, is centred in the urban areas, however these are the areas that seem to generate inequality especially with regards to the increase of income disparities. Though faced with inevitable differences and continual evolution, the consideration that 'The overall dynamic of polarisation in profit levels in the urban economy remains in place, as do the distortions in many markets' (Sassen 2002, p. 37)[14] seems to also be significant for the Italian case. The importance of the metropolitan context, which signifies a scenario where the relationship between the dynamic economy and the capacity for social cohesion decreases, confirms that we are faced with a multidimensional relationship.

The analysis of the relationship between economic and social cohesion requires yet further study. It is well known that in the Italian case almost all the variables are correlated with the north-south territorial variable, 'which acts as a third variable that influences all social phenomena, and thus appears as a consequence to correlate amongst themselves when you do not have the territorial variable under control' (Corbetta 1999, p. 618). It is, however, appropriate to examine in 'net' terms the relationship of the effect of belonging to a particular territory. To do this we have put together two indices that measure social cohesion and economic development based on the variance between the provincial value and the average value both in the macro area of belonging and in the region.[15] The correlation between the relative indices compared with the macro-area and the region, allows us to identify the effect of belonging: the correlation actually falls as the level of territorial detail increases on which we weight the indices (see tab. 5), but remains significant in the total number of cases, it seems to show a similar trend: stronger for the smaller levels of development, deprived of significance for the bigger levels. This as a consequence has led to two results: i) the variable territorial collocation exercises an influence on the relationship and (ii) the relationship has a capacity also taking into consideration the territorial variables.

Tab. 5 – Correlation between the indices of social cohesion and economic development absolute and relative

Correlation between the index	Pearson Correl.ation	,908**

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[13] For this purpose a supplementary study is conducted to calculate, using the same method adopted for the measurement at the provincial level, the distribution of income for groups in the capital cities of the provinces (source: elaborations on Finance Ministry data).

[14] Here there of echoes of the debate that has been going on since the immediate post-war years (Mills and Ulmer 1946) according to which 'average cities' guaranteed a greater equilibrium between economic development and social cohesion (see Bagnasco and Storti 2008; Lyson 2006).

[15] The indices are calculated by subtracting from the provincial value the average for the macro area. They will have, however, average and will have both negative and positive values.

SOCIAL COHESION and the index of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT		,000
(absolute indices)	Sig. (2-code)	
Correlation of index	Pearson Corrleation	,539**
SOCIAL COHESION and index of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (Indices relative to the average per macro-		,000
area)	Sig. (2-code)	
Correlation between the index of	Pearson Correlation	,266**
SOCIAL COHESION and the index of ECONOMIC DEELOPMENT (Indices relative to the regional average)	Sig. (2-code)	,007
N=103		
** the correlation is significant at 0,01		

Conclusions: development and cohesion - a complex relationship

Moving from the main empirical findings, the conclusions offer an opportunity to focus on the key analytical issues, stated at the beginning of the paper.

  A preliminary challenge was that of operationalising the concept of social cohesion. It has already been said that it has a high level of abstraction and a complex relationship that connects it with empirical reality. Therefore, it is inevitable that the elaboration of the concept for empirical ends requires the definition of "boundaries", that determine the choice of the single indicators. Even though this process can be argued to be arbitrary, it can be considered a necessary evil for any empirical research dealing with it. The study presented in this paper makes no exception. Indeed, we tried to reach a balance between theoretical definitions and data availability for the case observed.

At a descriptive level the indices built, though suffering from the above mentioned tradeoffs, has allowed us to reiterate the endurance of some of the historical divides that define the country and that in recent years have continued to grow rather than diminish. However some findings can be mentioned that could dispute some arguments that are persistent in public debate: compared to the centre-north it is actually the south that has the higher level of domestic variance. This evidence conflicts with the representations of the south as an homogenous area, that still circulate in public opinion and frequently arises in political debate.

Beyond this descriptive level, the study allows some broad considerations on the connection between social cohesion and economic development. First of all the research confirms the relevance of this nexus concerning the Italian case, since the correlation is significant not only at national level, but also – though lowered – net of the territorial effect. We are not, therefore, faced with a spurious relationship, exclusively determined by a third variable. Furthermore, the "threshold effect" pointed out in this study is not determined by the territorial dimension. On the contrary, we can conclude that the relationship between cohesion and development is influenced by the levels of the two variables: with the growth of the two indices the correlation diminishes, due to an increase in the polarisation of resources. This most commonly occurs in the big urban centres of the country.

In more general terms the presence of a threshold effect provides some critical evidence with respect to the ideal-typical conceptualization of both developmental and culturalist paradigms. Indeed, as has been previously argued, the two paradigms differ in their

identification of the independent variable, but are similar in their attempt to define the link between economic development and social cohesion as linear.

Moreover, within the developmental paradigm, even those contributions representing the relation as a curved line do not fit well with the data found in our study. For example, the idea that in advanced societies economic growth - measured by the increase of income per capita – leads firstly to an increase, and later to a reduction of inequality is not corroborated. This emerges in the form of a graph: if we place the income per capita on the x-axis and on the y-axis we position the data from the index of polarisation measured with the Gini index. In this space we position two curves: the first theoretical, mostly found in the works of the economist Kuznets (1955), the second, instead, obtained by the elaborations of our data (see Fig. 5).

As can be seen by examining the two distributions for the high levels of income, the theoretical trend of the curve of Kuznets predicts a declining line, in other words a smaller disparity in the distribution of resources, while the empirical findings give us a different picture: as has already been underlined, with high levels of development the polarisation increases again.[16]

Fig. 5 - Relationship between income per capita and polarisation

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[16] The comparison between the two curves is intended in essentially suggestive terms. Kuznets, actually, takes on longitudinal perspective: 'his' curve, meant to show the inequality in the distribution of the wealth that could be reach a maximum in the agricultural society, for then decreases in the successive phase of development. Beyond the reference to Kuznets, what also needs to be underlined it the difficulty to sustain that in a systematic and persistent way that the development has a positive effect on the decrease of inequality (see Franzini 2010).
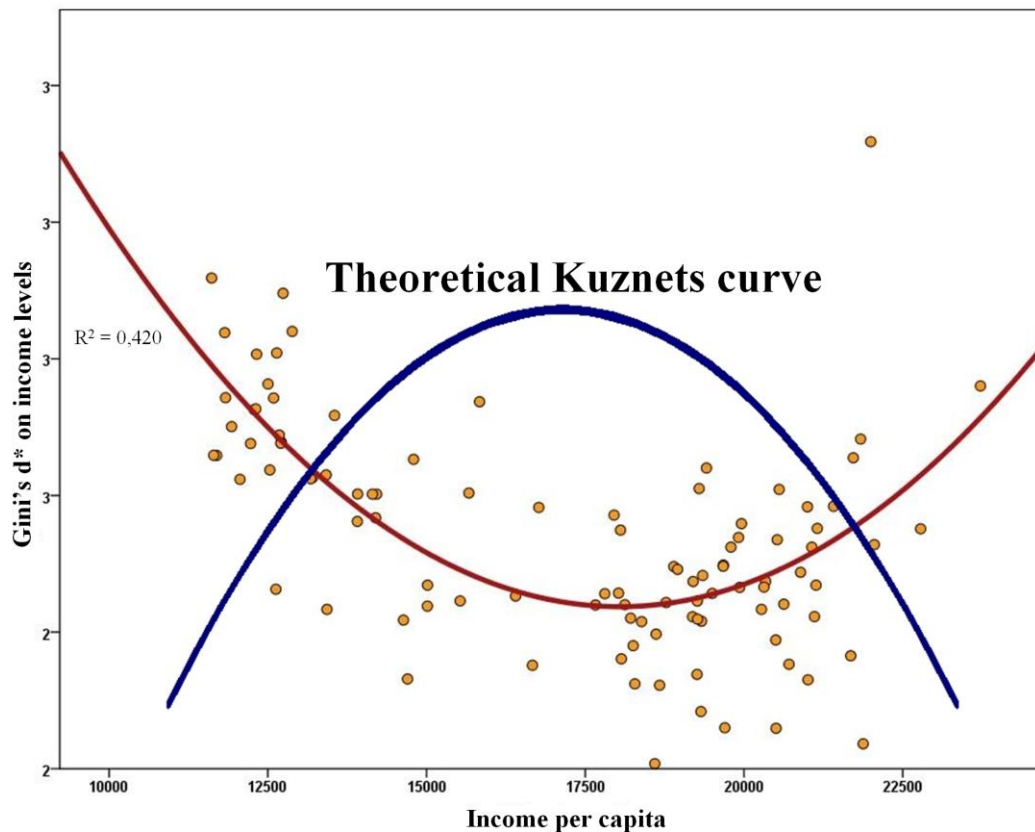
These considerations, however, do not imply that we are drawn to the opposing theory, or the 'Culturalist' paradigm. The scope of the research, and in particular the non-linear trend of the relationship, suggests that it is difficult to substantiate empirically both the cultural and developmental arguments.

For this same reason it is likewise problematic to expect to theorise the existence of the casual connections, in the strictest sense, between the two dimensions examined.[17] Furthermore, as the literature has argued 'the identification of causality in social development is clearly a complex matter' (O' Connell 2003, p.245).

A more convincing outlook would be to integrate the contributions of the two approaches and to provide a more sophisticated literature that illustrates the complicated crossovers between social cohesion and economic development. In other words, open the black-box in order to try to articulate the relationship through the elaboration of the sample case of mechanisms, in relation to the two variables that 'play' with each other[18]. In cases that are spatially and temporally placed affected by variable combinations of mechanisms which the aggregated effect impacts on development and social cohesion in unexpected and unpredictable terms in light of a statistical relationship on ecological data on a large scale.[19]We suggest, as

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[17] Furthermore, from a technical point of view a process of this type- that presents analytic vulnerabilities of which we have referred to- would require a longitudinal and diachronic analysis, often impossible to conduct due to the lack indicators used throughout history.

[18] The output of the relation is however the aggregated effect of the combination of the different mix of these mechanisms that act on a micro-scale.

[19] This makes the elaboration of a 'general rule', like the 'Developmentalist' or 'Culturalist', misleading.

illustrated, the possible combination of mechanisms faced with social cohesion cause a decline in development. Solid social links could favour a certain level of economic stability, which produces the difficulty to take on market signals and the tendency to apply the existing economic routines, causing a possible decline in performance. Furthermore, more cohesive social networks can embrace greater attitudes characterised by unconditional altruism that align the interests of the individual with the collective, offering limited incentives to develop the economy (Steiner 2001).

The study of a relationship that is this complex, however, requires the elaboration of two types of distinct analysis, even if they are complementary: the identification of the connections between the dimensions and the reconstruction of how these connections configure themselves.

Aknowledgments

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