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DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL CAPITAL AND UNITY OF LAW:
SOME LESSONS FROM ITALY ABOUT INTERPRETING SOCIAL EXPERIMENTS

by

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The failed expectations engendered by the experience of post-colonial regimes in Africa as in most of Latin America, the unanticipated collapse of totalitarian parties and regimes in Eastern Europe and the difficulties of consolidating self-governing institutions there, together with renewed attempts aimed at strengthening, or "reinventing", government in established democracies in other parts of the world, have all given added importance to how we interpret social-experiments. Three major interpretative strands of political theory and policy analysis can be identified in discussions of democratic development. One strand, derived from the history of the growth of representative government, has tended to focus on social and economic conditions as essential requisites of democratic development. A second, of a more diffusionist kind, has tended to ground explanations in questions of political crafting among political actors on all sides. A third strand, with a longer intellectual lineage in the history of political inquiry, has sought modern answers to the ancient question of "Which values and norms tend to produce good government or successful polities?"

Each interpretation can be used to illuminate the inadequacies of the others. The path to democratic development set by the Anglo-American experience (if it is possible to speak of a single experience) is not the only way; political crafting, and not civic culture as such, can motivate incumbents and nondemocratic actors to accept democracy. At the same time, while successful transitions to democracy can occur without social and economic preconditions and without the social capital of civic traditions, the consolidation of democratic political practices cannot depend on political crafting and elite accommodation alone, or be confined to

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one level, usually national.

Much of the literature in comparative politics has been concerned with placing in sharp relief the theoretical and empirical weaknesses of particular interpretations. There is merit in such efforts. This paper bypasses altogether this debate, except to call up some aspects that relate to the argument being advanced here. The paper argues that the three families of interpretation share common, deep faults which have often gone undetected due to common presuppositions. What these deep faults are, why they have gone undetected, what implications they have for interpreting social experiments, and how it may be possible to overcome them -- these are the issues that this paper seeks to address.

The empirical material on which the argument is based is drawn from Italian political development, and draws on my earlier and ongoing research as well that of others, most notably the recent work by Robert D. Putnam, Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy (1993). Putnam's study has been unanimously hailed by anglophone (American and British) commentators either as a classic or as a masterpiece in the annals of political inquiry. By contrast, the response to Putnam's work among Italian commentators has been the reverse. All these reactions require that we pay serious attention to Making Democracy Work. Like Putnam, I believe that what we can gain from Italy about interpreting social experiments may have broader theoretical and practical significance. Unlike Putnam, however, I believe that what we can gain goes beyond the issue of civic traditions.

The paper unpacks the argument in three steps. I first discuss deep faults as theoretical and empirical "blind spots". I then illustrate some of the implications they have had for a proper understanding of collective action, social capital and public law. Finally, I suggest how these problems can be overcome by offering a better, more persuasive, account of the evolution of institutions for collective action in Southern Italy.

Blind Spots

What does the literature on Italy reveal about intellectual blind spots? First, that there are many and they are highly interrelated. Second, the reason why they have gone undetected is that they are common to all three strands of political theory and policy analysis. In spite of understandable attempts at "product differentiation", the three intellectual strands are grounded in an eclectic combination of idealism, utilitarianism, and positivism. Third, the result is truncated analyses of Italian political development. The latter will be illustrated in the next section. Here we point to the first two, organized, for the sake of simplicity, under three distinct, but highly interrelated, headings: social capital and institutional performance; the use of

history; and problem-solving by legislation.

Social Capital and Institutional Performance

Increasingly social scientists have (re)turned to what Tocqueville identified as "habits of the heart and of the mind" as both constitutional (prior and independent) and operational features of effective democracies. Normative, ethical or religious values and beliefs shared by most citizens and used in their everyday dealings with others represent vital "social capital" for any society. Habits of the heart and of the mind provide design criteria for all sorts of constitutional arrangements and laws and regulations. It is hard, for example, to imagine any constitutional arrangements and any laws and regulations officially adopted by governments not embedded in, and reflecting, particular values and norms. Increasingly, democratic societies face the challenge of coming to terms with radically different values and norms. Politically correct discourse may not always be morally correct discourse. Once in place, however, constitutional and other rules, including rules regulating property and exchange relations, tend to generate their own values or morality both in terms of the purpose they serve and the incentives they provide to public officials and citizens alike. Building on the work of Giandomenico Romagnosi, Carlo Cattaneo, writing at about the same time as Tocqueville, conceptualized valor sociale, roughly translatable as social capital, as the educative feature of the growth and practice of self-governing institutions.

Social capital is, then, both a constitutive feature of any group or form of collective action and an emergent property of rules-in-use. There is, however, no agreement in the comparative politics literature about the causal significance of normative and cultural variables. One obstacle is the failure of those who use cultural explanations to relate social capital to institutional performance. Many factors may be used to explain why the configuration of institutional arrangements is presumed to have no valor sociale. The literature on Italy offers one set: institutional variables are presumed to be either value-free or neutral, mechanical, devices for translating ideas into practice, or the will of the legislator and the modern Prince.

With the resurgence of cultural explanations in the 1980s and the 1990s, Edward C. Banfield's argument about a Southern Italian village (1958) has regained standing. In his introductory chapter, Banfield suggested a high degree of organization as a necessary condition in order to reach a high level of economic development and democratic political order in a human society. The inability of some human societies to achieve such a high degree of organization can be found in their ethos or cultures. Banfield used the term culture in several different ways. He referred to "non-Western cultures" and to Japanese "culture" (Banfield: 8). He also spoke of "the ability of a culture to maintain organization . . . and a

culture" that "is able to maintain an effective military force..." (Banfield: 8,9) . At the individual level, culture is identified as ethos, morality, basic values, sentiments, beliefs. Thus culture becomes "the limiting factor which determines the amount and character of organization and therefore of progress in the less developed parts of the world." (Banfield, 1958: 9) . Montegrano was part of this less developed world.

The problem is how culture as ethos or morality is related to the ability to maintain an organization or an effective military force. Banfield failed to connect individual preferences, beliefs, ethos or morality to the conditions that apply to the organization of collective action. He did not consider what design criteria informed the choice of institutional arrangements in Montegrano. Thus, having failed to relate government performance to governmental arrangements, and having failed to relate institutions to attitudes and values held by individuals, the problem for Banfield was not "political" but "cultural".

I suspect that one reason for the popularity of Banfield's thesis --incorrectly assumed to be empirically grounded-- is that it confirmed a view of Italy that emerged with Unification and became prevalent among Italian positivists and idealists alike --ranging from Gramsci's characterization of the South as "a great social disaggregation" and Croce's historical characterization of the common people in the South as "an inert and heavy and reluctant mass" (Croce, 1925: 195), to more recent interpretations of Italian history (Tullio-Altan, 1986).

Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy by Robert D. Putnam (1993) best illustrates the explanatory power of the social capital of civic traditions. Putnam accepts Banfield's thesis but proceeds to expand and refine it by grounding his analysis in what makes regional government work. Rich patterns of social solidarity and civic participation especially in the region of Emilia-Romagna are taken as robust indicators of social capital. Putnam is especially persuasive in linking social capital, including trust and horizontal solidarity, to various manifestations of voluntary collective action. But he does not succeed in establishing the causal significance of social-capital variables for the actual performance of regional governments. At the same time, of the twelve indicators of institutional performance, only one --budget promptness-- can be reliably applied to all the regional governments; some indicators, such as local health unit expenditures and the availability of universal day care, bias or skew, ab initio, the analysis in favour of some regions, without telling us anything about the other regions; others, such as reform legislation, legislative innovation and bureaucratic responsiveness are not reliable indicators of regional performance at all (Putnam, 1993:chapter 3) . In short, Putnam claims too much with the evidence he has. The strongest possible claim he can advance --and not an unimportant one-- is that "civic

traditions" are congruent with the performance of some regional governments. But what kind of regional government and how does it actually work? These questions raise a host of other issues not carefully considered.

Putnam tends to equate the Italian regional experiment with "self-government" (Putnam, 1993: 163). Without minimizing the importance of that experiment in decentralization, it must be recalled that the design of Italian regional government was imposed by higher authorities and cannot be reasonably construed as an expression of regional self-governance. Putnam says that "The border of the new governments largely corresponded to the territories of historical regions of the peninsula, including such celebrated principalities as Tuscany and Lombardy" (Putnam, 1993: 5). It is not clear from the text what he means by "largely". Strictly speaking, there are no "historical regions" in Italy; the expression has not been widely used in Italian public discourse over time. He may, however, be somewhat correct when referring to the territories of Tuscany and Lombardy as representing political entities with historic identities. He is seriously mistaken about the geographic regions of Apulia and Calabria. They cannot be viewed in the same way as Tuscany and Lombardy; there were no such regions in history. Before 1860, there were three historic Apulias and two, if not always three, historic Calabrias, each with its own distinct political economy, historical consciousness and cultural identity. The fact that Apulia and Calabria appear, in Putnam's analysis, to be the worst-governed regions may have to do with the way that national legislators disregarded historic boundaries and regional identities and imposed what, from the local level, appeared to be one more consolidated layer of government between localities and the national system of government. Given these historical conditions and the way regional government and boundaries were instituted, it is not clear, at least to me, why should we expect similar performance across Italy. Whereas in some areas the aspirations of people may have been met, in other areas they were not. At the same time, Putnam provides little or no information about how the regional assemblies actually work, how policies are actually implemented and how other matters are regulated through regional offices, including regional administrative courts (TAR), to reach firm conclusions about regional government performance in the different parts of Italy.

Putnam's emphasis on social capital adds renewed importance to the third strand of political inquiry concerned with democratic development. But deep in Putnam's analysis, and gone unnoticed, there is a new twist to three strands of inquiry mentioned at the outset. His work can be taken to argue that democracy can work even when the people do not choose the rules by which they govern themselves, even when governmental arrangements are imposed on them from the outside or by higher authorities. An additional implication follows: a concern with the origin of democratic government is unnecessary. All the concern that the authors of The

Calculus of Consent showed for the logical foundations of constitutional democracy, all the discussions about the Hobbesian conundrum of supplying institutions, appear, in the end, to be mere academic speculations and false methodological dilemmas. It is immaterial whether people can and, do supply their own institutions. Institutions of government may work effectively if people accept them and make them work --regardless of whether the institutional arrangements and the civic values or traditions of people match. Deference to others or acceptance of imposed solutions may be more important for explaining success in institutional experimentation than specific traditions of local self-governance.

In sum, it makes sense, intuitively, to say that civic traditions are congruent with the practice of regional government but the causal links between social capital and government performance remain weak. Though the analysis by Putnam is a considerable improvement over Banfield and others, it falls short of its goal and raises more questions than it answers.

On the Use of History

History matters. But which history? Social scientists who have often called up history have been reluctant to do the work that the study of history requires and have thus tended to accept the received wisdom of some historical schools, while ignoring others, to rely on secondary sources and to reinterpret or misrepresent what others have written. The net result has been either to misspecify issues, both historical and contemporary, or to straight-jacket or preordain history into particular and unwarrantable path dependencies. I shall illustrate this use of history in two areas generally regarded as important for the legacy they bequeathed to modern Italy: feudalism and the Catholic Church.

The Legacy of Medieval Italy. Calling up the past either to justify or to explain current policies and events is very much part of the tradition of Italian scholarship and public discourse. One of the best known attempts in this tradition is Carlo Cattaneo's set of essays entitled "The City as the Organizing Principle for Understanding the Course of Italian History", written in 1858, a few years before Unification. Cattaneo wrote the set of essays in response to two prevailing arguments of his day: one argued that the most productive way to make sense of the intricate vicissitudes of the more-than-two-thousand-years recorded history of Italy was to reduce it to an analysis of the struggle between the universality of the papacy and that of the empire; the other, called up the same vicissitudes to justify the argument that the best system of government for ending old rivalry and disunity in modern Italy was a centralized system of government and administration. In advancing a different interpretation of the legacy of the past, Cattaneo emphasized certain features about "the city" both as an historical community and an expression of self-governance relevant to his antimonarchical, antiunitary

preference for a federal Italy in a federal Europe. He drew a uniformly gloomy picture of unitary systems of government from the historical evidence of the South and, at the same time, emphasized the historical insufficiency of civic traditions for the constitution of a self-governing society.

Cattaneo identified and discussed --a portrayal generally regarded as accurate as far as it goes-- several different periods in the life of Italian cities, beginning with the period of the Greek colonies in Southern Italy before Roman times and ending with the city republics in the thirteenth century. Cities and municipal institutions had been prevalent throughout the peninsula. After the fall of the Roman empire, municipal institutions were credited for keeping alive remnants of civic life in South Italy even when civic life had become extinct in North Italy. He drew attention to three common characteristics of civic traditions throughout Italy: the local community in the historic memory and consciousness of people; municipal institutions; and the cities as self-governing entities. He also drew attention to two dissimilar sources of evolution: the creation of a medieval kingdom in the South; and the insufficiency of city republics in the North. The former radically altered the position of Southern cities, including the free cities of Amalfi and Naples, in the new political economy. As he put it,

Magistrates from Southern cities were included in the three branches of parliament but under the juridical fiction that cities were part of the domestic patrimony of the king. The kingdom recognized that cities could make laws but subordinated both the constitution and the laws of cities to the extraneous and adverse principle of domination. Soon cities, became powerless, servile and dull, while its inhabitants became estranged and indifferent to the spot which they inhabited.

With the following long-term results:

And so it was that the Byzantine era lasted until modern times for a large part of Italy (Southern Italy), whose people had inflicted the greatest loss of lives to the ancient Romans as they tried to conquer them, now became the golden dream of every adventurer who hoped to win a piece of land. What a difference between the vast and sick Kingdom of Two Sicilies . . . and the humble set of lagoons from which the people of Venice resisted Charlemagne, Sulemein and the League of Chambray! (Cattaneo, 1858: SSG, II, 431).

In time, the insufficiency of city republics in the North -- the rise of self-perpetuating oligarchies in city governance, the absence of overlapping arrangements among city republics and the failure to conceptualize such arrangements-- equally exposed Northern communes to foreign domination and conquest.

Cattaneo used the legacy of medieval Italy to argue against the creation of a unitary, monarchical regime and for a federal solution to the question of Italian liberation and unification in the 1860s. Putnam uses the same legacy to trace the roots of the "civic community" in modern Italy. Putnam's attempt is commendable, all the more since Italy's past has often been viewed by most anglophone social scientists as a burden of some kind. Putnam shares with Cattaneo a particular view of "feudalism" and both tend to use a very wide brush to paint their pictures. But Putnam tends to exaggerate more than Cattaneo in two ways.

First, there is in Putnam's study a tendency to view the legacy of medieval Italy in Manichean terms. Two sharply different political regimes are presented: in the North, the people were citizens, in the South subjects; authority was dispersed in the North, monopolized by the King in the South; vertical social hierarchy in one, horizontal relations in the other; collaboration, mutual assistance, civic obligations and trust in one; hierarchy and order, and as a result, mistrust, incivisme (a French word!), individualism, in the other.

It is true that Southern cities succumbed to royal authority and domination, and, equally, to self-perpetuating oligarchies, with some of the consequences described by both Cattaneo and Putnam. But this characterization overstates the case: first, because it tends to fuse time and obscures the rich variety of self-governing efforts at the neighbourhood level and among guilds and mutual-aid societies in the different Southern cities; and second, because it does not necessarily and over time apply to the rural lands and communes, which as a rule had more people than the cities combined. One problem here is the antifeudal bias that has marked the literature since the eighteenth century. But if one is prepared to go beyond the vista interposed by this literature, and is concerned with the evolution of institutions for collective action, it is possible to find an extraordinary quantity and variety of documents on rural land and ventures to suggest that beneath the domination and hierarchy imposed by the medieval monarchy, successive viceroys and self-perpetuating oligarchies, there were, in the rural lands of Southern Italy, a parallel pattern of life involving collaboration, mutual assistance, "civic" obligation and trust characteristic of communities in the North. Paolo Grossi refers to this documentary data base in his *An Alternative to Private Property* (1981). He points to its "~~narrow cultural provincialism~~" and laments that successive generations of Southern scholars "never succeeded in constructing a historiographically valid edifice on that base" (Grossi, 1981: 147, 148). But he also notes --for those willing to do the necessary work that the search for the truth and a commitment to professional memory require-- that "...the Neapolitan literature showed itself to be, in the middle of the nineteenth century, the only current of thought that had carried on, systematically, continually, and from remote times, a teaching in evident contrast with official

postrevolutionary doctrine " (Grossi, 1981: 146). Contrary to what Putnam (1993: 126-127) suggests, confidence in written agreements, in negotiation and in the law has been in Italy as much a contribution of people in rural communes as it has been of people in city republics (e.g., Cassandro, 1943; Faraglia, 1883; Genuardi, 1921; Grossi, 1981; Sabetti, 1984: chap. 3-5; Schupfer, 1886). This is not to deny the existence of differences and disparities between different parts of medieval Italy but, rather, to emphasize that it is more historically correct to view differences and disparities in degrees and not in Manichean terms.

Second, the tendency to view Italian development as path-dependent to whatever medieval legacy one wishes to invoke is a gross distortion of both the Italian historical record and the comparative record of transitions to democracies (Di Palma, 1990). It is a distortion that Cattaneo, with all his eighteenth-century antifeudalist and allegedly Lombard provincialist biases, does not make. In an unintended way, Putnam himself presents evidence that challenges his own straight-jacketing of history.

In tracing civic roots, Putnam finds in chapter 55 of book One of Machiavelli's Discourses what he terms the "iron law of civic community". From that chapter, Putnam cites, in his own words, "a passage of remarkable relevance to (his) own task of understanding institutional success and failure" (Putnam, 1993: 132) to make the point that "republican government ... was destined to fail where social conditions were unsuitable" (Putnam, 1993: 132). Machiavelli had been discussing two types of men who were plentiful in the kingdom of Naples, the Papal States, the Romagna and Lombardy. Immediately afterwards, he penned the passage that Putnam finds of remarkable relevance:

It is owing to this that in these provinces there has never arisen any republic or any political life, for men born in such conditions are entirely inimical to any form of civic government. In provinces thus organized no attempt to set up a republic could possibly succeed (Machiavelli, 1970ed: 246).

There are two problems with the way Putnam cites this passage.

First, Putnam cites Machiavelli selectively and inaccurately to obscure the identity of the provinces to which Machiavelli was referring. Putnam has Machiavelli refer to provinces "like Naples" but fails to indicate that the provinces that Machiavelli saw as like Naples are the Papal States, the Romagna and Lombardy. In all these provinces, Machiavelli saw no hope of a republic or any political life, for men there lacked civic virtues and both social and economic life was organized in feudal fashion. But how can the

situation described by Putnam be correct when part of the Papal States, the Romagna and Lombardy are identified by Machiavelli as areas with uncivic traditions? This leads to another point. What Putnam terms as Machiavelli's "iron law of civic community" is not supported by Machiavelli's own empirical evidence. Subsequent events in the Papal States, Romagna, Lombardy and Naples suggest that the civic roots of any area may be more recent and more fluctuating than we are willing to admit. That is, if Machiavelli is correct in his empirical observation, then he is mistaken in his "iron law" --and Putnam is mistaken in giving Machiavelli's observation the standing he does. This is not the first time that I have found the faithful rendition of other people's work not to be a strong trait in Putnam's Making Democracy Work.

The Legacy of Roman Catholicism. In a review of Harold Berman's Law and Revolution, Joseph L. Soria, a one time professor of theology at the Lateran University in Rome, notes that "It is no secret that since the Protestant Reformation, the writing of Western European history in English has been largely dominated by historians hostile to the Catholic Church" (Soria, forthcoming: 3). So pervasive has this view of Catholicism become among social scientists that they continue, for instance, to elaborate on and advance Max Weber's thesis about The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, even though Weber's historical contention is now regarded by many contemporary historians as not empirically valid. So much so, in fact, that Weber's "explanation has not found a place in the standard historiography on the economic history of modern Europe" (Gordon, 1991:481). This, however, has not precluded the sociologist Carlo Tullio-Altan to build his entire argument about the cultural and moral backwardness of (both North and South) Italy on Weber's thesis about the Protestant ethic; and Robert Putnam from accepting and praising Tullio-Altan's explanation in constructing his own argument (Putnam, 1993:chapter 5, see also p. 231, note 63)) --and, in the process, misstating somewhat Tullio-Altan's already flawed argument (cf. Putnam, 1993:chap. 5, and Tullio-Altan, 1986: chap.3). So pervasive has the intellectual trend described by Soria become that it is often taken for granted, and accepted inadvertently even by scholars like Herman who have an appreciation of the critical role which the Roman Catholic Church has played in the development of Western civilization and who are critical of the spread of legal positivism. The result is worth quoting at some length,

One of the difficulties which Berman shares with many secular historians, is that to write adequately about Church history one must have a proper understanding of the nature of the Church. Above all, it is essential to understand that the Church's purpose cannot be expressed in political terms or in terms of temporal power or influence. The Church sees herself with a transcendental mission which is to save souls. When one grasps this as her single, overriding aim, one sees that to write

adequately about her, one must come to grips with the vast range of supernatural, metaphysical and theological issues which the secular historian (or social scientist) may find peripheral, but which are critical for any adequate understanding of Church history (Soria, forthcoming: 3).

For Italy, in particular, the view is that organized religion is an alternative to, or works against, the civic community. Three sets of historical events are called up for empirical support.

First, from medieval times to Unification, the Church in the North is portrayed as only one civil institution among many, itself a local affair with horizontal religious allegiances and alignments. For the same period, by contrast, the Church in the South is portrayed as a single entity, as a powerful and wealthy proprietor in the feudal order (Putnam, 1993: 130). There is something to this view but the historical record suggests that this dichotomous view of the church is untenable.

The church was and is a single entity in spiritual and doctrinal matters but, organizationally in the South, as in the North, it was not a single entity. Rather it was a complex and overlapping system of individual and local churches, confraternities, mutual-aid societies, beneficent societies (opere pie), including hospitals and schools, linked in different ways to all sorts of diocesan institutions and several kinds of monastic orders --each with its own property and with considerable local and entrepreneurial initiative. Horizontal and vertical ties crisscrossed the huge panoply of relations. Sicilian churchmen and Catholic lay organizations enjoyed considerable autonomy from Rome under the Apostolic Legateship. On the mainland South, it was only in 1867 that the system of local churches entirely run by lay people, with appointed priests to administer the sacraments and say Mass, and where the local bishop had no right of jurisdiction except in matters quoad spiritualia, was abolished. Strong indications exist in the available literature that these local churches --known as chiese ricettizie-- were more the norm than the exception throughout the mainland South for many centuries; many of them were run synagogue-like. This is not to say that these local churches were free of institutional weakness and failure; in many cases they became too functionally independent of one another and of the local secular and religious authorities. Although lay confraternities in present-day Naples have by now lost their earlier members and religious fervour, some of them have operated continuously as self-governing institutions since as far back as the 1300s. For centuries, they were very visible neighbourhood institutions, passing on an ethic of community involvement, social responsibility and mutual assistance among different classes and social equals (e.g., Delle Donne, 1990; de Rosa and Cestaro, 1973; Donvito and Pellegrini, 1973; Galasso and Russo, 1980). To say, as Lamer does, that " by the middle of the sixteenth century the

Church in the north and centre of the peninsula owned only 10-15 percent of the land, whereas in the south it still retained 65-75 percent" (quoted in Putnam, 1993: 230, note 49) does not tell us much. Even if we assume that the cited statistics are accurate, we still need to know what is meant by Church in that particular context. Larner's statement that Putnam cites and uses so approvingly does not per se add much to our knowledge.

Another argument that Catholicism and civic involvement are antagonistic is built around the papal non expedit ban to Catholics from participating in Italian national life for some time after Unification. Three aspects of the injunction, seldom noted, give a more nuanced, and less negative, interpretation to the ban. First, when faced with the question of whether Italian Catholics should take part in national politics in the face of the continued strong anti-Catholic propaganda and policies of leaders of the Italian national government and the leading Masonic lodges, who were often the same persons, the Vatican responded first in 1861 and, again for the 1874 national elections, with the statement: "attentis omnibus circumstantibus, non expedit" --that is, under the present circumstances it is not opportune or expedient for Catholics to take part in national elections. In time, the ban fell into desuetude and, overtaken by events, was formally withdrawn in 1919. Taking into account the tense Church-State relations of the post-1860 period, including the fall of papal Rome in 1870, the non expedit was not a strong Vatican response to serious threats to church property and practices. Second, given the exceedingly limited franchise for the first thirty years of the new kingdom, the non expedit ban in practical terms applied to a relatively small portion of the population: up until 1882 only 2% of the population was eligible to vote (about 620,000 male voters). Third, the ban did not apply to local elections and, in fact, did not negatively affect Catholic community efforts and civic involvement. On the contrary, beginning in 1874 there took place a considerable growth in the local infrastructures of Catholic social action that emerged with particular strength after the 1890s. Far from negating or opposing civic involvement, the non expedit ban actually encouraged Catholics to concentrate on grassroots efforts.

A third line of contention that organized religion in Italy is an alternative to the civic community, and not a part of it, derives from the post-1945 period, and especially following the Vatican II Council and the changes in Italian society since the 1970s. Data drawn from aggregate Eurobarometer surveys in 1976, 1985, 1988 and 1989 and some qualitative accounts are used to suggest that "churchgoers seem more concerned about the city of God than the city of man" (Putnam, 1993: 107). Putnam concludes that "In today's Italy, as in the Italy of Machiavelli's civic humanists, the civic community is a secular community" (1993: 109). This assessment is unpersuasive for three reasons. First, it is well known that the Eurobarometer surveys for Italy, on which Putnam relies, are methodologically flawed and notoriously

unreliable. However, in the absence of more reliable surveys, it can be argued that they are the best we have and thus can be used. There is however little or no evidence of caution in the way Putnam has constructed his index of clericalism on the basis of Eurobarometer studies. The Putnam index conflates religiosity with clericalism and civic community with secularism, and erects a false dichotomy between civic community and religious faith. Second, even if the sources cited correctly portray what they observe, it does not mean that they can be taken as accurate representations of Catholic theology, teaching and practice. Putnam's play on words regarding the title of Saint Augustine's book, The City of God, reveals that he is misinformed or unappreciative of Catholic theology and teaching. The Roman Catholic church teaches the inseparability of one's love of neighbour from the love of God, and not a substitution of one for the other. Thus the Christian journey onward for the sake of salvation begins --in Saint Augustine's work as in the recent Vatican Council II document Lumen Gentium no. 31-- not so much with the flight from the world ~~as with~~ self-examination and self-discipline, and with a commitment to sanctify the world from within through one's ordinary circumstances of life and work. Third, the call to human dignity and solidarity, and the inseparability of one's love of neighbour from the love of God, have provided the moral and metaphysical basis for new self-governing infrastructures of collective efforts and community development, in Apulia as in Sicily and Lombardy. In fact, a large portion of the voluntary-action sector throughout Italy is connected with social movements inspired by the spirituality and practice of Catholicism. A 1993 study revealed that 44 % of those who take part in voluntary community efforts are regular church goers, while 56% attended sporadically or not at all (Panorama March 28, 1993: 67-68). Community efforts in different ~~parts of~~ Italy continue to have deep Christian roots. In Italy, as in the United States, private Catholic schools, and not public schools, provide more opportunities for greater engagement of parents in the educational process and foster among students a more humane conception of community.

Problem Solving by Legislation

Problem solving by legislation of government and judiciary has become so pervasive as to be generally taken as a robust indicator of institutional performance. The more laws promulgated, the more successful a government, assembly or minister is deemed to be. An important justification for this kind of assessment is captured, albeit in extreme form, by Albert O. Hirschman's vignette about a Latin American finance minister who in the 1950s was rather impulsive in issuing decrees. When asked why he did so, the minister is reported to have replied: "if this decree really hurts some groups, they will do my research for me after the decree is out, and if they convince me I will issue another decree!" (Hirschman, 1977: vii). Putnam introduces stronger criteria of

evaluation for reform legislation: the comprehensiveness, the coherence and the creativeness of the legislation (1993: 68). On this basis, he and his colleagues evaluate the entire legislative output of 15 regions on economic development, territorial and environmental planning and social services for the period 1978 to 1984. One is directed to the 1985 Italian language version for a detailed description of the evaluative procedures, (1993: 216, note 11). What emerges is that they examined all the 2,554 regional laws promulgated in the period and that they took the legislative output of each region as an important indicator of success (Putnam, Leonardi Nanetti, 1985: 203-278). The sheer volume of the legislation makes it difficult to trace how and if each piece became operational. At the same time, I have found no evidence from their work that they took into account the extent to which, if any, each piece of legislation was challenged or modified by the regional administrative courts. My own experience in trying to understand reform legislation in two limited policy areas --land reform, by one regional legislative assembly, Sicily; and antimafia laws passed by the national parliament in Rome-- together with the major judicial decisions connected with them between 1948 and 1872, make me admire their commitment, methodological sophistication and ability to understand legal Italian with relative ease. It is difficult to do what Putnam and colleagues attempted --unless the omniscience of legislators is joined by the omniscience of the analysts. At the same time, as I read their analysis I see little or no scope reserved for people themselves as principal agents to have had a hand in solving some of the problems analyzed.

The growth of problem solving by legislation can be generally attributed to two distinct but overlapping movements: one intellectual, the other political-economic. The intellectual movement can be traced to the Enlightenment and to the development of what became known, to use the title of Gaetano Filangieri's eighteenth-century work, as The Science of Legislation. "Philosophy to the aid of government" was its cri de coeur. This science or philosophy presupposed a "man of system" and the tendency, criticized by Adam Smith, to imagine that such a man of system "can arrange the different members of a great society with as much ease as the hand arranges the different pieces upon a chess board" (cited in Muller, 1993: 172).

There is a critical difference between British and Continental Enlightenment. Whereas in Britain the Enlightenment was a movement of thought seeking to understand changes taking place in the epistemic, political and economic orders of society, in France it was an attempt to reconceptualize and reinvent society as a man of system would. Hence in France the Enlightenment took the form of a polemic against everything that stood between the individual and the monarch or the Creator. The term feudalism was coined to characterize the past in the most pejorative of terms. Tocqueville gives an effective portrayal of how men of letters took the lead in

politics and with what consequences when attempts were made to put into practice "the literary view of politics" (Tocqueville, 1856: pt. 3, chapter 1). The Italian case shares features of both the English and the French experience.

Neapolitan, Lombard and Tuscan intellectuals as "men of letters" --ecclesiastics, noblemen and, more often than is generally recognized, members of Masonic lodges-- were very much aware of and shared in the general intellectual trends stirring Europe in the eighteenth century. They too wanted to replace the complex of traditions, customs and laws that governed the social, political and religious orders of the day by simple, elementary rules derived from the exercise of human reason. Many of them did conceptualize and outline in bold strokes how philosophy could come to the aid of government in the form of a science of legislation. It was Beccaria who wrote against capital punishment and declared that the intention of legislation ought to be "the greatest happiness divided among the greatest number." But, unlike Beccaria, most of them were intellectuals who already had or were or soon to acquire official status and responsibilities in government, with a habit of putting ideas and programs to the test of practical experience. As a result, there developed an increasingly widespread tendency to reject an atomistic, Cartesian, "model of man" and to insist on viewing political economy as part of the science of law and theology. When all due allowance is made for the constraining presence or liberating absence of foreign rule, the critical difference in the impact of the intellectual, political and economic forces of the Enlightenment among the Italian states, including the Papal States, can be summarized as follows: the more abstract the ideas, the more tabula rasa the reform proposed, the least chance of being legislated and implemented. By contrast, the more practical the ideas, the more "marginal" the reform proposed, the stronger the chance of being actually realized and successfully put into practice. The former generalization characterizes what took place in both parts of the Kingdom of Two Sicilies; the latter applies to what happened in the territories (e.g., Emilia Romagna) of the Papal States, Tuscany and Lombardy.

Retrospectively, two consequences are worth noting. The message and impact of the French revolution and Napoleonic period were greater precisely in areas such as the Kingdom of Two Sicilies, where earlier reforms had been either too impractical or too radical to meet with success. The moderate reforms in land, such as the community-based enclosure movement in Tuscany, in taxation, such as the tax reform in Lombardy which drew praise from Adam Smith (1937: 886), and in local administration in the Papal States that took place in the second half of the eighteenth century were evolutionary in nature and provided new possibilities for democratic development. The historic roots of contemporary disparities in Italy can best be traced to the formative events of this period of problem-solving by legislation --during the second half of the eighteenth and the first decade of the nineteenth

centuries-- and not, in my judgment, to medieval times.

The vicissitudes connected with the French revolution opened the way for resolving the "feudalism" problem in the Kingdom of Two Sicilies. I traced elsewhere how this was tackled in Sicily by 1816 (Sabetti, 1984). By the 1860s feudalism had been formally abolished on the mainland South. The legislation that ended feudalism in both Sicily and Naples created, in effect, great estates under single proprietorship, the so-called latifundism. Thus the phenomenon of large estates and big landowners in Southern Italy is of relatively recent origin. Far from being a remnant of feudal times, it is a modern phenomenon-- the intended and unintended consequences of the abolition of feudalism as problem-solving by legislation in the nineteenth century. At the same time, these circumstances and events weighted the constitutional outcome of the Risorgimento in the direction of centralization.

The unification of Italy accelerated the trend of problem solving by legislation. Indeed, Unification itself was first obtained this way. The Apulian nobleman and public-finance specialist Antonio De Viti De Marco drew attention to another feature of post-1860s liberal Italy: "the monopolistic process of legislation is a spontaneous product of parliamentary regimes" (De Viti De Marco, 1903: 249). In post-1860 Italy two parallel, if contradictory, tendencies in problem solving by legislation proceeded at the same time: nationalization and privatization. The effects have often been the same. The disastrous effects especially in Southern Italy of nationalizing the rich horizontal and vertical mosaic of local and interlocal religious and nonreligious ventures at self-help and beneficence, and of privatizing what previously had been a vast range of alternatives to private property are well documented by successive generations of Italian scholars. They remain largely unappreciated and unstudied by anglophone comparativists. Paolo Grossi (1981) has recently drawn attention to an attempt by the Italian national parliament to rectify some of these problems by the 1880s. But the question would continue to persist after that period as would the monopolistic practice of problem solving by legislation.

Implications for What is Interpreted: Truncated Analyses

The tendency to treat institutional arrangements as neutral devices, to resort to ahistorical, cultural, path-dependent determinism and to accept problem-solving by legislation as the only or primary way for resolving issues and problems is much more widespread than suggested here. Each tendency or blind spot has led to truncated analyses, to use a term from Institutional Incentives and Sustainable Development (Ostrom, Schroeder, Wynne, 1993). Truncated analysis can become more confusing when blind spots are nested in and stacked over one another. Interpretations become increasingly distant from the reality they are supposed to explain. Elsewhere, I illustrated this problem of interpretation in several

cases, ranging from land reform to outlaw activities in Italy and to issues of federalism in Canada (Sabetti, 1982, 1984, 1990). I want to illustrate the problem here with another issue: that of voluntary collective action and inaction in Southern Italian development. Many authors have explored this issue since the second half of the nineteenth century, and much statistical evidence from government reports exists for the same period. Since Putnam uses qualitative and quantitative evidence from several such sources, I shall rely on his argument to illustrate my point.

Putnam relies heavily on analyses from the second half of the nineteenth century which have often been cited in post-1945 works: Pasquale (1863) cited in Bevilacqua (1985); Turiello (1882) in Graziano (1973); and Franchetti (1875) in Tullio-Altan (1986). For the post-1900 period, Putnam relies especially on Gramsci (1926), Graziano (1973), Neufeld (1961), Tarrow (1967), and Walston (1988). Statistical evidence regarding the presence of voluntary collective efforts in the South is presented to make a comparison between North and South; almost all the statistical evidence comes from government and nongovernment reports; though inadequately identified, such evidence can be taken at face value.

Two contradictory images of Southerners emerge from this literature in Putnam's work. First, individuals were and are living in a state of isolation from one another which, in turn, forestalls horizontal solidarity, fosters amoral familism and invites a reliance on higher authorities and vertical relationships through some form of clientelistic politics. Then follows another image: there have been voluntary collective efforts in the South over time but now the problem is identified as another: the South has fewer manifestations of community and concerted efforts than the North.

How is it possible that an area described earlier as a general social disaggregation would have cooperative efforts at all? Even the presence of a few concerted efforts ought to lead to some caution about making, and citing other scholars', sweeping generalizations about the scioltezza of individuals and the like. Why did Putnam choose to rely on these authors and fail to explore the topic: if the scioltezza is as universal as painted by the analysts he cited, how do we explain the presence of horizontal collective action, including cooperative and mutual aid societies, that have existed and continue to exist in the South? Their very existence would appear to be miraculous, given the characterizations of Southern Italians from Turiello to Tarrow. Why did Putnam fail to explore this anomaly in his own analysis? Why would he state or assume that citizens in the South and its countryside lack the horizontal bonds of collective reciprocity (Putnam, 1993: 112) and the continuous mutual aid and exchange of services between neighbours (aiutarella and the like) that exist in the North? (Putnam, 1993: 142) We are left to conjecture.

One possibility is that Putnam chose to rely on analyses of authors whom he considered reliable and authoritative. Franchetti and Turiello, on the right, and Gramsci, on the left, although motivated by different interests, painted a similar negative picture of the South. Their assessment --including the failure to note the presence of collective and community efforts at the local level in Sicily as elsewhere-- was based on the assumption that Southern peasants and artisans should entrust all their aspirations and needs to an enlightened and benevolent modern Prince-- be it a monarch, a national parliament or a Marxist-Leninist Party. This modern Prince possesses all the attributes of Hobbes's Sovereign --the unity of law as well as the unity of legislators. Driven by the same presumption --that the Prince, this time the Communist Party, was the best agent for positive change after 1945-- Tarrow and Graziano reach similar conclusions, ignoring archival and other data that would challenge their assumptions and conclusions. There are some profound ironies here. Putnam is advancing an argument on the strength of analyses that contradict the very presupposition of his own argument about social capital and public life, democratic development and horizontal bonds of collective action. The other sources cited by Putnam are not persuasive for other reasons. I have found Walston's account on Calabria to be based more on an impressionistic reading of the secondary literature than on field and archival research; and Neufeld (1961) making several errors of fact about the growth of mutual aid societies in the South.

A second possibility may be that a combination of blind spots led Putnam not to see local grassroots initiatives in the South as central to the focus of his work. Two cases offer some support to this speculation. The first clue comes from the 1863 report on Calabria written by Pasquale that he translates and quotes from Bevilacqua (1986). Putnam quotes the following passage:

no associations, no mutual aid; everything is isolation. Society is held up by the natural civil and religious bonds alone, but of economic bonds there is nothing, no solidarity between families or between individuals or between them and the government (Putnam, 1993: 143).

But immediately after this passage, Bevilacqua added --and Putnam ignores-- another sentence from the 1863 Pasquale report: "The propensity to mutual aid can be found everywhere, especially in villages" (cited in Bevilacqua, 1986: 296). And Bevilacqua continued with his own commentary which ends as follows:

The solidarity that Pasquale believed to have detected among men and families is not at all fictitious; on the contrary, it is a real movement, a wanting to be, as we shall see, that in the absence of instruments of institutional integration and of objective mechanisms of coordination and help in civil society, tends to find

human subjective solutions (Bevilacqua, 1986: 296).

By the end of the century, the empty realm of civil society was being occupied by different peasant and artisanal enterprises. It was the propensity to mutual aid and solidarity that helps explain the growth of the Catholic cooperative movement in Calabria by the First World War.

Another clue is the failure to mention the work of Franchetti's travelling companion to Sicily in 1876, Sidney Sonnino. Sonnino's book deals with agricultural conditions and focuses more directly on local life. He found both a capacity for voluntary collective action and the rise of such efforts among peasants. Both Sonnino and Franchetti are now classic works. In my research, I found Sonnino to be more reliable than Franchetti, who has more of a tendency to make sweeping generalizations unrestrained by empirical evidence. Increasingly, some Italian historians are reaching the same conclusions about Franchetti I reached earlier (e.g., Lupo, 1993). Analysts who want to portray a particularly negative view of Sicily -- Gambetta in his recent work (1993) does this just as Putnam -- usually cite Franchetti and very seldom, if at all, acknowledge Sonnino's accompanying volume. It is almost as if writers of American democratic development ignored what Tocqueville had to say in volume I of Democracy in America and focused exclusively on volume 2.

It is not, therefore, unreasonable to conjecture that Putnam ignores analyses and situations which would compel him to moderate his thesis or to advance another. An initial example of the tendency to exaggerate comes from the very first pages of Making Democracy Work, as Putnam sketches the contrast between the regional capitals of Emilia-Romagna and Apulia (1993: 5). Putnam unnecessarily exaggerates the contrast between Bologna and Bari to the point of making errors of fact and damaging his own credibility. His voyage of inquiry begins with a seemingly apparent lack of concern for important "facts on the ground."

Overcoming Blind Spots and Truncated Analyses

My confidence in identifying blind spots and truncated analyses derives both from the particular mode of analysis I have used and from evidence of "polycentricity" working productively whenever people, and not just "the government" alone, are involved in solving public sector problems. I see building an alternative past as an essential step in overcoming both blind spots and truncated analyses. Let me illustrate this point first with a reference to my own work.

In Political Authority in a Sicilian Village, I sought answers to the question of whether the structure of basic institutions had been the primary instrument for advancing human welfare or had been the essential source of human adversity among Sicilian

villagers. In so doing, I succeeded in presenting an alternative past on which I tried to base my understanding of contemporary and future developments. One conclusion was that Sicilian peasants and artisans have been prisoners of the institutional arrangements that govern their communal and agricultural activities and not of their culture or ethos. People did have a capacity for self-organizing and self-governing but as long as they could not transform their own conditions and make their own history, that capacity would be left unused, or channelled into informal public sectors of all sorts. My work provides an answer to the question raised by magistrate Giovanni Falcone before he was murdered in Palermo:

In certain moments of sadness, I allow myself to think about the destiny of men of honour (mafiosi): why is it that men like others, some even endowed with real intellectual ability, are compelled to devise for themselves a criminal career in order to survive with dignity? (Falcone, 1991, cited in Sabetti, 1992:132).

My work did, I believe, succeed in overcoming some blinds spots and truncated analyses in the literature but the way it was received was not encouraging. That I presented an interpretation that challenged, or ran counter, to standard ones in the field is not the only factor that made my work unacceptable, unconvincing or unappealing, or a combination of all three, to a wider audience of comparativists. There were at least three other factors. First, I spent more than two years in archives doing historical research yet, because of an earlier decision not to identify sources and locality and the promise I made to villagers to this effect, I could not use standard historical references for easy verification of sources --all the more critical for an account that challenged prevailing ones. Especially to historians, my citations lacked credibility. Second, the book title I finally agreed upon was too narrow, hardly an invitation to read the work. Third, I was so concerned about getting the facts correct and constructing a faithful account of them that I was or appeared not to be analytical enough in presenting the narrative and not comparative enough in confronting alternative accounts. But my work did offer the possibility of overcoming blinds spots and truncated analyses in the received wisdom. The possibility of establishing an alternative past --of retrieving a large portion of the past-- is increasingly being realized by other researchers.

At the most general level, a rich mix of young Italian historians, cutting across ideological and interdisciplinary barriers, are reexamining central themes in the historical development of the South and, as John Davis reports (1994), are "casting off the southern problem." It is too early to tell the definite contours of this exciting intellectual development but it bodes well for more calibrated links between micro and macro history of the evolution of institutions for collective action

throughout Italy. In the meantime, two historical accounts in English about Apulian political-economic development --covering together a period stretching roughly between 1447 and 1922, written at different times, and independent of one another-- have become available to provide a richer historical context to modern institutional changes.

John A. Marino's Pastoral Economics in the Kingdom of Naples (1988) brings to life a history of the South rarely portrayed in English. It deals with the "Dogana di Foggia" or "Royal Sheep Customhouse of Puglia" (1447-1806) located at Foggia in Capitanata, the most fertile region of Apulia. The Dogana is the Neapolitan equivalent to the better known Castilian Mesta. It was through the Apulian Mesta, covering some 4,300 square kilometres of winter pasture in one of the largest plains in the Italian peninsula, that the Kingdom of Naples became a major supplier of raw wool to Europe. But wool production itself was critical to the internal revenue of the Kingdom. Not surprisingly, from the fifteenth century to the beginning of the nineteenth century, the sheep customhouse of Foggia, like the Mesta in Spain, served as one of the most important financial institutions of the state --but one would never know it from reading almost all the English-language texts on the "Southern Problem." In fairness, one would never know of it by even reading Benedetto Croce's classic Italian text, The History of the Kingdom of Naples (1925). The power of words, just as the power of the sword and money, can make people appear without history.

Many worlds converged at Foggia and their extraordinary permutations are ably traced by Marino in his three-hundred-fifty-year analysis of continuity and change: two cultures and two peoples, the Abruzzesi mountain men and the Apulian plainsmen; two livelihood systems, agriculture and pastoralism; two modes of ownership, private enterprises and royal demesne; two production systems, the international market for wheat and wool and the local subsistence economy of peasants and shepherds; two classes of holders, rich and poor, large landholders and graziers and small agriculturalists and shepherds,- three levels of bureaucracies, officers at Foggia, the chief financial council in Naples, and the royal court, now resident in Naples, now in Aragon, or Castilia or Austria. As Marino observes, "The cyclical routine of this pastoral world was not that of a people without history ... (o)n the contrary, many of the great themes of early modern European history . . . are embodied in its history (Marino, 1988: 2). The other study, Violence and Great-Estates in the South of Italy, Apulia 1990-1922 by Frank M. Snowden (1986), covers, by contrast, a relatively short period of Apulian history. Its subject matter, the rise of the farm workers' movement, dovetails with Marino. Taken together, these volumes complement one another. Rather than provide a summary of each work, I shall restrict my discussion to a brief presentation of what emerges from their works about self-organizing and self-governing capabilities under varying conditions and

circumstances over a long period of time.

The Customhouse of Foggia received its definitive charter later than that of the Mesta (in 1273). But pastoralism and its accompanying mesta, council or reunion of graziers, to regulate matters of common concern in Southern Italy as in the former Papal States (where they were part of the Customhouse of the Pastures) can be traced back to ancient times. Grazier associations in the Capitanata region of Apulia in particular antedate the feudal state. As Marino puts it:

The sheepowners' organization ... was an indigenous invention to establish and enforce a set of norms to allow for continued economic cooperation among the pastoral population. From the Southern European transhumanant cousins --Mesta and dogana-- the centralized medieval state incorporated those already existent sheepowners's institutions as partners in the royal plan to pacify and profit from the marginal zone (Marino, 1988: 114).

Class conflict among rich and poor sheepowners did exist but what emerges from the historical record of the generalita' dei locati is a rich associational life that allowed the graziers to put aside or resolve their differences and to confront their common enemies together: be it doganal officers or merchants. At the same time,

The associational life of the grazier capitalists was encouraged to express itself in a kind of primitive parliament whose four deputies general worked together with the state bureaucrats in their economic and judicial functions. Thus, the sheep customhouse of Foggia developed a model for participatory democracy from below-- even within the hierarchical world of an Old Regime monarchy (Marino, 1988: 10).

It is evident that horizontal bonds of solidarity and relationships together with a fairly high degree of self-government did exist in one of the most important sectors of the political economy of the Kingdom of Naples for several centuries. Bonds of fellowship also extended to others: "...ongoing works of mercy were part of the generalita's pious duties and associational responsibilities" (Marino, 1988: 111).

Thus in some important respects, patterns of community life said to be characteristic of one part of Italy can be found in the other part too. There is at least one important difference. Whereas commoners in the city republics did not have the right to bear arms for fear of causing disorder or rebellion (hence the tower societies for nobles), the graziers on the Apulian plain had or

retained such a right, one of the oldest and dearest rights of citizenship. What in the South was the right of the lowest of social classes, in the North it was the prerogative of the highest of social classes and their retainers. The right of common people in the South to bear arms was, especially after Unification, the source of much misunderstanding as national leaders sought to suppress or strictly regulate it.

The abolition of feudalism through problem solving by legislation between 1805 and 1865 did away with the Dogana di Foggia and with all infrastructures, including social capital, connected with wool production. The Capitanata region became the heart of latifundism in Apulia. The vast plain, now covering less than 4,000 square kilometres, became a zone of highly concentrated landownership. Two classes of people could be found there by the end of the nineteenth century: large landowners, and a proletarian work force. The entire plain was now owned by no more than 500 landlords; up to 85% of those who cultivated the land were landless daily labourers. Conditions of life for landless workers for most of the Capitanata towns during the post-1865 period were not easy. A logic of mutually destructive relationships came to dominate work and community life on the Apulian plain, and it is in this sense that Gramsci's characterization of the South as a great social disaggregation applies to Capitanata.

The data gathered by Frank M. Snowden show how by the turn of the century the landless workers, locked into a veritable tragedy of the commons situation, had successfully learned to do three things: 1) extricate themselves from the logic of mutually destructive relationships; 2) organize themselves into a powerful peasant movement placing serious limits on the rights of large landowners; and 3) maintain a high degree of internal democracy in their local and provincial associations, by insisting, among other things, that their leaders should come only from their ranks and that no political movement should possess a doctrine beyond the comprehension of its members. In this way, Giuseppe Di Vittorio emerged as the most famous and respected national peasant union leader before and after Fascism.

Conditions of workers' life and the ongoing struggle for the preservation of common lands provided local inhabitants with horizontal bonds of solidarity and a consciousness of community identity (Snowden, 1986: 74). But Snowden also points to specific catalysts for change, such as the spread of knowledge about emigration, and urban workers' leagues, that allowed landless workers to learn the art of extricating themselves from a game of life rigged against them and, to improve, through collective action, conditions of life for themselves and their families (Snowden, 1986: 62-75). It took at least a generation of landless workers to learn these skills. But by 1911 they created a very strong and powerful labour movement. The Capitanata town of Cerignola was the centre and model of union activism throughout

Apulia. In part for this, it became known as "the Bologna of Apulia" (Snowden, 1986: 100).

The workers' movement in Apulia did, indeed, share with that of Emilia-Romagna several common features, including a strong sense of workers' solidarity. But the Apulian movement differed in one important respect: as it spread throughout and beyond the towns of Capitanata to other regions of Apulia, it maintained internal democracy, with a high degree of leaders' accountability. By contrast, by 1920 the workers' leagues in the Po valley had become so centralized and hierarchic in nature as to be quite unresponsive to local members (Snowden, 1986: 190-191). As one Left newspaper critically described the situation:

Organization was heavily centralized in the persons or the very small circle of the leaders. To bring chaos into the unions it was enough to strike down a few individuals. Worse still, this provoked no serious response from the masses. . . . The reason was that the organization, in its recent colossal bureaucratic growth, became nothing more than an enormous central administration which had lost all contact with the masses, and who no longer considered it the arm and standard of their faith (Ordine Nuovo, 1921, cited in Snowden, 1986: 191).

Critical differences followed as Fascism sought to come to power. In Apulia the workers movement contested the advance of Fascism town by town and showed considerable resilience in the face of Fascist (squadrist) assaults on local headquarters of workers leagues. This is what made Apulia stand apart from the Italian norm (Snowden, 1986: 190). By contrast, in the Po valley, including Emilia-Romagna, to bring chaos to the workers' leagues it was enough to strike only a few individuals, as happened in 1921-1922.

The retrieval of this past offers a radically different historical context for a proper understanding of modern institutional success and failure in the South. It also suggests two additional lines of inquiry for workers' organizations in Northern Italy as elsewhere: that the social capital generated by the cooperative movement may not always be conducive to the maintenance of civic traditions, and that such a movement may be less immune than we have been led to believe to the vertical and oligarchical tendencies of organizational life .

Conclusions

Ingrained habits of thought and huge investment in standard explanations are difficult to discard. And this applies even when

we approach the subject matter of our study with proper theoretical and methodological tools. Having proper tools is better than not having them, but possession does not automatically assure good use. If after the course of "two decades of poking around the regions of Italy and soaking up the local ambience" (Putnam, 1993: 12), an experienced and distinguished comparativist was unable to stretch his vista beyond superficial, conventional, interpretations, the task of overcoming blind spots and truncated analyses is much more difficult than we, in comparative politics, are willing to admit. The combined eclecticism of idealism, utilitarianism and positivism is a hindrance to understanding how the people we study apply knowledge to public affairs. There is something to the argument advanced by Alasdair MacIntyre and other "interpretivists" about the impossibility of doing comparative analysis without striving to know the aspirations and designs of people in different language-communities as they, individually and collectively, go about the business of everyday life. But even when we may so strive, we have no assurance that we will not stumble in our efforts and that we will be understood by colleagues who form our attentive publics. This is a risk that we must be willing to take.

I have suggested here that the retrieval of the past is important for grounding our theoretical and empirical concerns. There is in all this also the residual category of imponderables or fortuna. I shudder to think what would have happened to me professionally if I had not had the good fortune of receiving, in the spring of 1968, a telephone call from Lin Ostrom urging me to come to Indiana University. I do not know how all these factors can --voila!-- be successfully computed to generate better political theory and policy analysis. But, as I think back, I consider my coming to study in the then Department of Government and my association with the Workshop in Political Theory and Policy Analysis one of the great good fortunes of my life. Ad multos annos!

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