

Introduction

by Giorgio Vittadini

The Southern Question recurs in the history of Modern and Contemporary Italy; it is one of the central issues which all governments and Parliaments from the Unification onwards had to deal with. Compared to Northern Italy, the South is characterised by a lower level of development from the economic, social and perhaps, partially cultural point of view. This is what emerges from all statistics, even though, as we will see in the Report, recent data show positive signs of recovery and confirm both the heterogeneity of the territories and the existence of unexpressed potentialities in the whole area.

However, today, the increasing relations - at different levels - between the various geographical, economic and political regions of the world, are leading the South to represent an increasingly important challenge for Europe, which now needs to re-establish a constructive and pacific relationship with the whole Mediterranean area, where the most important debates take place. In this context, Europe cannot renounce to leverage its “platform”, located amidst *Mare nostrum*: the South and the Italian Islands.

Therefore, it is time to focus on the South, since the favourable cyclical conditions may facilitate the development of reasoning from a different perspective.

The problems in the South are several, interconnected and different in nature.

The primary socio-economic emergency is the demographic one, mainly due to emigration and a decreasing birth rate: Istat predicts that, without a turnaround, in 50 years the South will become the area with the oldest population in Italy. The demographic decline is increasingly connected with a pauperisation of the human capital, considering learning quality, abandonment of studies, number of graduates and the educational level of emigrants. Moreover, poverty is higher than the Centre and North of Italy, even though, in the last three years, it has decreased both in its relative and absolute dimensions. A slow recovery, below the pre-crisis data, is also represented by employment: above all, the worrying 46.6% of youth unemployment in the South (15-24 years) in the third quarter of 2017.

These weaknesses of the South arise in a period of undoubted national and global economic recovery, which is leading to an improvement of economic indexes even in this area. For example, the GDP growth is higher than the Centre and North for the second year running; the turnover of large companies is increasing; the role of SMEs is getting stronger; the number of innovative firms and start-ups is growing; manufacturing exports are rising.

The current situation is characterised by some positive features but also by unsolved problems rooted in the history, thus identifying a primary plan for action is really challenging. Even worse, discussions and debates about this issue lead to tiredness, resignation and disillusion. Where should we start from?

There is a fact that emerges for its importance and that may engage everyone: the possibility for young people in the South to build their future and, thus, the development of their territories. This remark results in the underlying strategic option outlined in this report: investing in young people and in their human capital.

The present situation of young people who live in the Southern regions is, on the one hand, the main problem, but, on the other hand, it could be a possible solution for all problems.

The outflow of young people who are looking for educational and professional opportunities is a trend that also affect other Italian regions; however, it is worrying in the South. The massive emigration and the high unemployment and poverty rates of those who remain, threaten the main resource for any possible development path: the human capital. This is why, the abandonment or the exclusion of young people full of projects, energies, knowledge, talents or, in other words, of future, must be the centre of any reasoning and initiative that aim at recovering this wide area.

The Report *Subsidiarity and... young people in the South* presents an overview of Southern Italy from the demographic, social, economic and institutional point of view, keeping in mind the fundamental question: what do young people really need to be creators of their future and of the development of the territories they belong to?

This Report is part of a research series about subsidiarity, the principle that imposes to promote bottom-up initiatives and to act so that the commitment of the whole society for the implementation of the common good can be acknowledged.

First of all, we need to deal with the past initiatives in the South and recognise that top-down approaches have failed. A considerable amount of wealth has been wasted through recent initiatives and the Cassa del Mezzogiorno (funds for Southern Italy), without triggering the capacity to build and ensure equity and inclusion.

Some opinions that emerge from the debate in the South consider welfarism a nefarious agreement. This does not mean that the government cannot be one of the actors with new proper policies. Indeed, as we will see, the public initiative is called to play its decisive role in order to prevent the area marginalisation.

The problem is that, in the past, people often renounced to develop their own creativity and responsibility towards the future of their community in exchange for a little certainty. The first move to escape the grip of welfarism has to be made by the people who live in the South.

However, there is another reason that forces to think in terms of subsidiarity. We are in a period in which the idea of development is also based on the impact on environment, living quality and social equity towards future generations. Finally, we are in the sustainable development era. This further highlights the importance of a “subsidiary system, without which development will hardly be sustainable. As a matter of fact, in order for development to be lasting and on a human scale, an adequate engagement of people in finding the answers to their needs is required. These people and the social actors directly involved can better understand and take charge of equal, supportive growth, respectful of the ecosystem of their territories.

The fundamental strategic option to achieve development, as previously mentioned, is the investment in young people.

Thus, in this Report, we will also deal with the intergenerational pact, without which young people will keep paying for the privileges acquired by the previous generations, in an already difficult period. We will especially focus on the investment in human capital which – together with the social, economic, infrastructural, environmental and institutional ones – is not only one of the capitals for the implementation of sustainable paths. It represents the main reference point since it consists of knowledge, awareness, ability to take action, to make decisions and build of each human being; thus, it is the ultimate goal of development.

Among the other issues, we will also investigate how to help different universities unleash their potential and that of their territories, through a university system provided with more autonomy in the educational offer, research activity and fundraising. At the same time, we have to identify the tools with which to safeguard the right to education, and the protection of culture and science in different contexts.

In conclusion, we cannot underestimate that investing in knowledge, awareness, and initiative ability, especially of young people, represents also another benefit, not only functional to the economic growth: the immediate advantage of restoring a general climate of trust, declined over the years. As Brugnoli claims, “Trust precedes GDP and determines it, perhaps more than economic models and collected data generally suggest”.

1. A change in perspective: the South from suburbs to centre

We need a change in perspective about the Southern Question and a different approach to the development model in order to introduce and strengthen processes that, starting from the most

important part of society, that is, young people, facilitate the promotion of wellbeing for the whole population. It is time to rise the questions that the political classes of the First and Second Republic do not face: Which is the actual nature of the South? Which is its peculiarity compared to the other European regions? Now, in the globalisation period, we better understand that the South is not, according to widespread stereotypes, the suburbs of Rome, Northern Italy and Europe. Southern Italy is, according to an ancient intuition and to geography, a centre. In particular, it is the centre of one of the most interesting areas of the world: the Mediterranean basin.

The present situation, as Brugnoli highlights in his contribution, forces us to “make it clear again what history has left us as a legacy: there can be no development in the South without considering it a reference point in the Mediterranean area, and there can be no balanced development of the Mediterranean area without considering the South a protagonist in Italy and Europe, in a Europe of regions. The centrality of the South is good for Italy and the whole Europe, for the Mediterranean area and for the whole Africa”.

The arrival of emigrants who come from North African Countries, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa and who consider Italy and its South a gateway to Europe, together with the regaining of the centrality in international sea routes, thanks to the doubling of the Suez Canal and to Chinese investments in Mediterranean ports and infrastructures, prove that the South is a fundamental resource for Italy and Europe. The necessary premise for a lasting and well-established change is acknowledging the South uniqueness.

The centrality of Southern Italy in the Mediterranean area has important geographical, historical and cultural roots; however, nowadays it mainly represents the place for a strategic choice, addressed to the future of young people, thus of the whole society.

This change of perspective can take place and be a concrete hope for the South, the rest of Italy, Europe and the other Mediterranean countries if Italy acquires more awareness of the South uniqueness, if public authorities come to due conclusions in the appropriate occasions and if private profit and non-profit actors take on their responsibility in building common good.

2. A change in methodology

First of all, a premise: after 150 years characterised first by a colonialist approach and then by inefficient policies, the first step to be taken is analysing and understanding what the South is and supporting what has already been created and what may be conceived and developed.

From a cultural and political point of view, “Meridionalism”, promoted by some Italian writers and politicians, is well known. Also, in the post-war period, the journal “Cronache meridionali” (“Southern Chronicles”), was a landmark in the debate on the development of the South and the whole Italy. From the political viewpoint, many opportunities remain unexpressed, but a representation of the South only based on welfarism and patronage immobilism does not correspond to reality. Many people have the desire to grow and take the path of development and the attempts of social, cultural and economic construction, which have to be carefully analysed, are widespread.

Therefore, a feature common to all chapters of the Report is the attempt to identify and promote countertrend experiences. We need to highlight and support what comes from people’s initiatives in the South, despite bureaucratic and infrastructural problems that are more serious than in the other parts of Italy.

One of the most important contribution is the recommendation to analyse the South, identifying its peculiarities and discovering its fundamental role. Before dealing with the issue of fiscal federalism, Italy has to tackle cultural federalism, following autonomous development paths and renouncing to think in the same way in Palermo and Turin.

Brugnoli’s contribution proposes a different approach: the 3S-3M model. The 3S stand for the subsidiary sustainable development paradigm; the 3M concern the multisector (with the involvement

of different types of capitals and sectors), multiactor (which consists in the engagement of all private, public, profit and non-profit actors), multiscale (at local, regional, national and supranational level) dimensions.

“Systemic actors”, that is, players (not only the public ones) able to move in all the multidimensions previously mentioned towards a balanced development, are at the heart of the subsidiary sustainable development model. In a territory, there always are actors who play this role better than others, thus they are able to catalyse other players around them, achieving interests for themselves and the whole system. Identifying and leveraging the systemic actors in a target territory is the first task of those who have the responsibility to shape development policies.

An appropriate strategy to promote the importance of young people and their human capital and to regain the centrality of Southern Italy requires innovative initiatives in all different policy fields. In this Report, we analyse some of these primary policies in the context of university and school systems, the labour and business markets, structures and initiatives promoted by the Public Administration and the organisation and government of urban areas.

In this book, we want to introduce some examples in order to highlight the importance of promoting the South with brave and new choices to attract private capitals, to foster entrepreneurship, to facilitate the development of a virtuous social network, which has young people as reference point both in the short and long term.

An example of innovation in development policies could be the actual refusal to the massive use of public subsidies for companies and territories. This form of incentives does not encourage investments and other initiatives; whereas, it distorts both the market and the good administration, attributing a dangerous power of mediation to those who manage incentives. Moreover, this type of public expense has, in many cases, fuelled criminal organisations.

A more balanced and significant incentive seems to be a (temporarily) selective tax reduction, to be applied to entrepreneurial initiatives which meet the requirements of technological innovation and creation of value added in terms of employment and investments. Then, it could be worthwhile to examine costs and benefits of less severe contractual forms to be associated with fiscal incentives, also considering the territory in which the companies are located.

As to the contextual conditions, besides controlling local administrators who are responsible for a serious shortfall in the budget, it is important to identify and make efficient some infrastructures, necessary for the development of industrial and service companies in the South. An interesting example of non-aid policy in this context is the proposal of allowing Southern companies, which carry out structural and infrastructural works of public interest, to deduct some costs when dealing with the Public Administration.

3. Examples of feasible scenarios for the South and young people

As previously mentioned, the most reasonable perspective for Southern Italy is gaining importance in Europe and being aware of its role towards the other Mediterranean Countries.

In other words, the South can become a centre of migrants' strategic integration and an area of economic and cultural exchanges with, on the one hand, North Africa, Middle East and Balkans and, on the other hand, the rest of Italy and the other European countries.

How can we do this? Some brief examples, proposed in detail in this Report, may actualise this interesting hypothesis.

In many occasions, some Mediterranean and Balkan countries have expressed their willingness to no longer lag behind, through the cultural and professional growth of their young people. The demographic characteristics of North-African regions, opposed to the Italian and European ones, make it possible that Southern Italy, with its universities, becomes an important knowledge hub for the whole

area, through privileged relations with the other countries of the area and through the ability to attract and hold young and motivated foreigners, who, today, in many cases, choose other regions to attain more advanced qualifications. For example, we can think about scholarships that finance the accommodation and staying in Southern universities for the best North-African students with adequate programmes in English and French. It could be a way of relaunching Southern universities and strengthening the relation between Southern Italy and these countries. Another important option for a new positioning of the South may be the establishment of partnerships with the best universities of other Mediterranean countries to train professionals, managers and young entrepreneurs. Investing in education is the first condition to build lasting cultural, political and economic relations.

A different kind of example concerns international trade and infrastructures. Nowadays, the Mediterranean countries are primary commercial partners of Italy, but an unprecedented event leads to increasingly invest in the relations with those regions and introduces new opportunities to increase the relevance of the South. It is the Suez Canal expansion which makes the shipping of goods through the Mediterranean Sea more efficient, instead of circumnavigating Africa to reach the North-European markets. In this context, important background elements are the ongoing projects of roads, railways, ports proposed by different institutional investors, such as China with its programme “One Belt, One Road”. They are important opportunities for South Italy to take advantage of the ongoing change.

In this regard, it might be worthwhile to ensure priority to the relaunch of ports, airports and railways, properly selected, also in relation to possible public investments and European funds. The reliability of the plan in terms of time and costs is fundamental: delaying has already led foreign dock and logistic workers to abandon the idea of investing in Italy and to choose other territorial hubs.

Also the tourist vocation of several Southern regions may contribute to justify new investments in infrastructures. It is clear that the current competitive advantage of other Countries, crowded with tourists coming from all over the world, cannot lie, at least in relation to the South, in art, nature, culture, architecture and gastronomy, dimensions in which Southern Italy seems to be difficult to overcome. Moreover, considering the current environmental awareness, the relaunch of tourism in unique areas may be promoted through sustainable plans of forward-looking initiatives.

In conclusion, we should recall that, thanks to the South, Italy is now in a central position in the political debate between the European Union and African and Middle Eastern Countries. When the European Community was established, the Mediterranean Sea played a strategic role: the pacific cooperation between the Mediterranean countries represented the premise for the creation of a wide area where the developed countries of the Northern coast may be a driving force for the developing countries of the Southern coast. In 1995, the Barcelona Declaration established the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, thus introducing a new cooperation strategy based on a multilateral approach. Unfortunately, over the years, the European Union has changed its centre, forgetting its Mediterranean vocation and weakening the possibility of a peaceful dialogue among cultures and people who live on the Mediterranean coasts. It is time to get back to the original priorities!

4. Report Structure

The Report opens with a “prelude” that introduces the readers to Southern Italy heterogeneity. Looking for Southern territories more suitable for young people, Brugnoli and Montrasio show advantages and disadvantages of provinces and metropolitan cities, both in the South and at national level, through a series of social and economic indicators. Several provinces are in contrast with the general troubled framework and lead to wonder which factors facilitate the start or the strengthening of development paths favourable to young people.

In the following chapter, Montrasio outlines the portrait of young South-Italian citizens, showing that the traditional problems of poverty and unemployment have worsened; moreover, the advantage in terms of birth rate, typical of the Southern and insular regions, is decreasing. As to depopulation, Iaquina presents the two sides of migratory trends. An increasing number of young people who leave its territory, one out of three graduated and headed to Central and Northern Europe, combines with

migration inflows. Nowadays, besides a consolidated presence of “traditional” immigrants, generally younger than Italian citizens, South regions are the landing places and in many cases the transit areas of arrivals by sea, highlighting a not-yet-seized opportunity for the integration of young people with different levels of qualifications.

The second part of the Report is composed of two chapters which deal with the most important and strategic turning point in development: human capital training. Some recommendations follow the analysis of university and school systems. Ingrassia suggests that the main difficulties faced in Southern schools (fewer positive results in Invalsi tests) and universities (a decreasing number of graduates) are at the centre of a vicious cycle between the education and economic sectors, with a reduced demand of competences expressed by local companies, which produce a lack of growth.

However, it is possible to identify some different experiences, in school, university and training systems. Besides a reintroduction of funding in Southern universities, Ingrassia highlights the need of establishing partnerships with local actors and of making targeted agreements at international level.

The perspective presented by Spallini and Viola is different; it concerns the relations between Italian and Southern universities and foreign universities. Except for some Sicilian universities, the Southern ones are not particularly inclined to collaborate with other Mediterranean universities or to attract foreign students, thus they lead the authors to consider the need of encouraging the development of networks between Mediterranean universities, with student exchanges and internship offers, following the example of some existing programmes.

The fourth part of the Report proposes other in-depth studies about some sectors which are fundamental for the growth of young people and the development of society. The examined fields concern companies, Public Administration and cities. Comparing North and South, Cellini analyses the effects of the recent downturn on companies, pointing out a major crisis in the South due to lack of growth, the high number of micro enterprises and a lower capacity of creating networks among companies, which lead to negative relations with banks. Then, Cellini outlines some policy recommendations, considering the territories which have been able to invest in high-quality agricultural products and tourist services.

Taormina considers the ageing of Italian Public Administration a central but scarcely recognised problem, especially in the South, that leads to serious consequences for innovation and regulation and support of new events. Also in the context of government and territorial administration there are examples of innovative programmes with positive results. Among the possible solutions, the author underlines the investment in people’s skills and an approach based on subsidiarity.

Scrofani chooses an interesting viewpoint to examine the social processes that affect the South, the redefinition of settlement/urbanisation models over the decades, compared also to what happened in Northern and Central Italy. The large cities on the coasts have extended and reorganised the internal functions in a context of weak local governance, with problematic effects on environment, building, culture and economy (in relation to the traditionally closer rural areas).

Among the positive initiatives highlighted by the author, there are the vitality of third sector organisations facing social and economic problems in the suburbs of large cities and the new skills developed by some administrations to cope with innovation in administrative models and with the funding forms introduced by the European Union.

In the final chapter, starting from what has been highlighted in the previous chapters, Brugnoli proposes the 3S-3M development model (multisector multiactor multiscale, subsidiary sustainable development), considered the most appropriate modality to mobilise all the energies of the socio-economic fabric in Southern Italy, which takes account of an adequate intergenerational pact based on the underlying strategic option for young people. The model proposes and details the above-mentioned innovation in vision and methodology that can no longer be postponed. This innovation, systemically implemented, would facilitate the adequate engagement of all actors, the investments in many sectors and the work at different institutional and territorial levels, in order to enable at the same time the definition of an effective action by the European Union and the national government and the promotion and combination of several projects, proposed by civil society, also through development programmes with a high territorial impact and through integrated and flexible planning tools.

In this model, the role of public and private (profit and non-profit) systemic actors, able to act in the target territory with a strategic vision, by mobilising financial resources and by managing them innovatively, and the negotiation with the European Union to acknowledge the importance of the South as European platform amidst the Mediterranean Sea, are crucial.