



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA



Italian Regional Sciences Association
17th Annual Scientific Conference
2-4 September 2020
**Regions between Challenges
and Unexpected Opportunities**
**SO.09 - Effectiveness Evaluation of Policies
for Society and Local Communities**

Efficacia della Rappresentanza e Capacità Deliberativa dei Consigli Metropolitani

Metropolitan Councils' Representation Efficacy and Deliberation Capability

Marina Caporale

Leonardo da Vinci On-Line University &
University of Bologna

Giancarlo Gasperoni

Univ. Bologna - Dept. of Political and Social Science

Outline

Reiteration, updating and further development of issues initially addressed in Caporale and Gasperoni (2016)*

- ▶ Territorial government framework introduced by the Delrio Law (no. 54/2014) on “Metropolitan Cities” (MCs)
- ▶ Rules governing elections of second-order MC organs (Metropolitan Councils)
- ▶ Preliminary evaluation of voting system’s mid/long-term effects (October 9, 2016 elections in 5 MCs)
- ▶ Forfeitures, substitutions, vacancies and their implications for representation
- ▶ Deliberation capability: Bologna MC case study
- ▶ Concluding remarks and suggestions

* Caporale M., Gasperoni G. (2016), Elezioni dei Consigli metropolitani. Caratteristiche, esiti e nodi critici emersi in occasione del voto del 9 ottobre 2016, *Istituzioni del Federalismo*, 37 (4): 1035-1067.



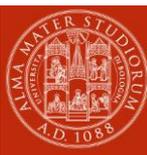
Institutional Framework for MCs

MCs established by Law no. 56/2014 (“Delrio”): innovative features of MCs and their relationship with other territorial institutions / local government reform in times of crisis

Mere coordination or another level of (political) local government?

Selected key functions (art. 1, clauses 44 e 46):

- ▶ Three-year strategic plan (identification of guiding principles for MCs, municipalities and municipal unions) and its revision
- ▶ General territorial planning (communications, service networks, infrastructure)
- ▶ Organization of coordinated management systems for public services
- ▶ Transportation mobility, road quality, urban planning compatibility and consistency
- ▶ Promotion and coordination of economic and social development (support for innovative business and research)
- ▶ Promotion and coordination of computerization and digitization systems



Metropolitan Council Election System

Council as one of three key organs (besides Mayor & Conference):
elected assembly having general direction and control functions

- ▶ Council elections held within 60 days after inauguration of capital city's council = 5-year mandate
- ▶ Convergence of active and passive electorates = all elected mayors and councillors in MC municipalities → **indirect**, second-level voting system
- ▶ Term interruption in municipal council = term interruption in Metropolitan Council (unless: immediate re-election in *any* MC municipality) → **forfeiture** (planned, “physiological” interruptions only for non-capital city councillors)
- ▶ In case of seat forfeiture, **substitution** with unelected candidate (from same list) with most weighted votes
- ▶ Competing lists, with a number of candidates no lower than half of Council seats (14, 18, 24) and no higher than that number
- ▶ Casting, by individual voters, of a vote for a *list* and a single preference for one of the latter's *candidates*
- ▶ **Differential weighting of votes** according to city/town size
- ▶ Proportional distribution of seats (d'Hondt method)



Legal Sustainability of Indirect Representation

- ▶ Prevailing interpretation: compatibility of indirect voting (and its mediated relationship between reference community and elected representatives) with Constitution (Constitutional Court sentence no. 50 / 2015)
- ▶ Forfeiture and substitution measures as adequate guarantees of representation and democracy, especially in light of *possibility* for to adopt direct voting

But...:

- ▶ Questionable analogies with other elections
- ▶ Questionable “guidance” function attributed to European Charter of Local Self-Government’s sanction of “freely elected” assemblies
- ▶ Inconsistency: MCs’ presumptive “apolitical” coordination role versus regional legislation, actual practice and conflict between MCs’ and individual municipalities’ interests



Actual Election of 5 Metropolitan Councils

- ▶ Weight indexes applied in 5 Council elections in October 2016 (table below) → greater role for both candidates and voters from larger cities → varying turn-out incentives

Size category	Turin	Milan	Bologna	Rome	Naples
A: < 3 (000s of residents)	4	5	19	4	6
B: 3-5	14	12	32	14	10
C: 5-10	27	21	57	26	20
D: 10-30	46	36	102	41	36
E: 30-100	81	66	192	82	67
F: 100-250					115
G: 250-500			945		
H: 500-1,000	853				823
I: > 1,000		714		918	
Ratio: MC capital / A	213	143	50	230	137

- ▶ 2 Councils (Milan & Bologna): political majority consistent with Mayor / 3 Councils: no obvious majority (2 with M5S Metro Mayor)
- ▶ Prevalence of “political” lists / substantial failure of apolitical “civic” lists



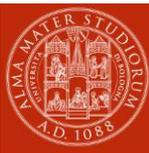
Evolution of Councils' Composition

Initial circumstances:

- ▶ 108 seats in 5 MCs: only 42 not vulnerable to “planned” forfeitures
- ▶ Ample opportunities for substantial changes in Council composition, unstable political equilibria, even structural vacancies

Actual outcomes (based on in-depth analyses in 3 MCs):

- ▶ Significantly **less-than-anticipated “planned” forfeitures**, primarily due to **widespread (successful) re-candidacies** for mayor and/or municipal councillors in local elections
- ▶ Maintenance of political control (in MCs where it initially existed)
- ▶ **Variety of causes of forfeiture**: besides “planned” term completion, voluntary resignation (to take on other institutional roles, as a form of protest, to focus on Covid pandemic...), forced early dissolutions of local governments, even death → in some instances, **more-than-anticipated forfeitures**



Councillor Voting Patterns and Rationales

Bologna case study:

- ▶ Ample majority for Democratic Party (13 councillors initially) + 5-member minority originating from 3 distinct lists
- ▶ Examination of 219 Council deliberations (from Oct. 2016 to July 2020)
- ▶ Examination of vote rationales as recorded in official minutes

Findings:

- ▶ Not even one abstention nor “nay” votes among Democratic Party councillors in *any* deliberation / Abstention or “nay” votes recorded *exclusively* among minority councillors
- ▶ 78% of decisions feature at least one abstention or «nay» vote
- ▶ *All* decisions of a more political nature (project implementation guidelines; adoption, approval or updating of three-year plans or metropolitan strategy; large-scale goods and services acquisition) feature at least one abstention or “nay” vote
- ▶ Despite voting patterns shaped by apparently “political” identities, explicit references (in minority rationales) to distorted representation of “territorial” interests (smaller towns, mountain areas) and need for “apolitical” representation
- ▶ Via substitution, slight “representation creep” towards councillors from smaller municipalities



Concluding Remarks

- ▶ Municipalities' demographical size as the *only* feature of territorial representation contemplated by Delrio Law
- ▶ Need to explore voting dynamics in 3 Metropolitan Councils with no political majority / structural differences between most local governments (majority-based elections) and MCs (proportional)
- ▶ Persistence of traditional party identities in list formation and council voting patterns, rather than “territory”-based rationales... but explicit reference to latter in minority councillor voting justifications → meaning of “coordination”?
- ▶ Unanticipated effects of weighted voting: lower candidate and turnout rates among voters of smaller towns / weak representation of municipal unions
- ▶ Even with substantial turnover (90 individuals for 66 seats... and counting), limited forfeitures and vacancies due to councillors' successful re-candidacies in municipal elections



Thank you!

Marina Caporale

Leonardo da Vinci On-Line University &
Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna
m.caporale@unidav.it / marina.caporale@unibo.it

Giancarlo Gasperoni

Dept. of Political and Social Science
Alma Mater Studiorum-University of Bologna
giancarlo.gasperoni@unibo.it

