

Gian Paolo Manzella, *Europa e sviluppo armonioso. La strada della coesione europea: dal Trattato di Roma al Next Generation EU*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2022, pp. 199.

The beginning and the conclusions that Gian Paolo Manzella – who has been studying European policies for several years, in his double capacity of expert and scholar – offers to the readers are the framework of the path (that is only retrospectively linear) that the European countries have been using to deal with the nowadays solid European cohesion policy for more than 50 years. The book retraces the change that took place in this period of time, from the financial, administrative, regulatory and institutional point of view. Particular attention is focused on Italy, one of the founding countries of the European Economic Community, characterized by a dual economic development and by a great number of eminent scholars who have been dealing with cohesion policy and its problems. The author quotes among the others Fabrizio Barca, Antonio Giolitti, Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa, Renato Ruggiero, who are also portrayed in a good selection of photographs.

The oldest references date back to the Messina Conference (1955) and to the Treaty of Rome (1957). Art. 2 mentions the “*harmonious development* of the Community and of its balanced and continuous expansion” (p. 21). This statement was firstly adopted by the Conference on the Regional Autonomies promoted by the European Commission in December 1961, attended by leading personalities of the development policies, industry and universities from the various Member States (p. 24). The appointment of a commissary, the German Hans Von der Groeben, who “was in charge of domestic market issues as well as those regarding the regional policy” (p. 30) goes in the same direction. After a promising start, the talks for the implementation of the cohesion policy didn’t achieve the desired results. The years between 1960 and 1970 are a kind of deadlock where the only event capable of shedding some hopeful light was the recognition, in May 1971, of a real development of the “European Agricultural Guarantee Fund” (p. 40). As highlighted by the Author, the decisive turning point seems to be the Thomson Report of 1973. After that, “it was also thanks to the firm action of the community administration, supported in particular by the Italian and Irish governments, that during a new meeting held in Paris, in December 1974, the Heads of States and Governments, decided to launch the European Regional Development Fund, starting from January 1975” (p. 47).

Chapter 4 and 5 are dedicated to the 1980s where Manzella describes the conditions and the changes in inequalities within the Community caused initially by the first enlargement of the 1970s with the accession

of Denmark, Ireland and the UK and now exacerbated by the entry of Greece, Portugal and Spain. Antonio Giolitti, appointed commissary in charge of the regional policy of the Jenkins Commission (1977-1985) stands out in paying particular attention to the link between the enlargement policy and the cohesion and development policy. In June 1984, after a harsh negotiation between the Commission and the Member States, the new discipline regulating the regional policy is finally approved. "The change – as stated by Manzella – concerned in particular the relationships between the community administration and the regional and sub-regional levels, with an escalation and intensification of the relationships between the Commission, the regional stakeholders and the universe of associationism laying the foundations for overcoming the exclusivity that had characterized, until that moment, the relationships between the Commission and the Member States" (pp. 66-67).

In chapters 6 and 7 the Author talks about the so called "Great Reform" of the Cohesion policy. The Single Act of 1986 inserted Title V in the Treaty, which was especially dedicated to Economic and Social Cohesion, "with which – as the Author says – the intervention had at last a constitutional coverage (p. 75). The Padoa-Schioppa report of 1987 reiterates the need for a reform to tackle the "triple challenge" of the Community: enlargement, internal market and technological progress (p. 74). In the five years from 1994 to 1999 the Millan Commission carries out a very precise work of procedural simplification, setting up a real "Cohesion Fund" destined to the investments in networks and transports and raising awareness on issues to be further developed in the future such as environment and gender equality (p. 85).

The end of the old and the beginning of the new millennium marks a leap forward in the evolution of the regional policy. In 1997 the first forum on cohesion is held at Potsdam. Two years later, in the same city, the "European Spatial Development Scheme" is approved, which was to become the reference framework for all the various European development policies that would produce over the following years, the so called Territorial Agendas (p. 90). Incentive mechanisms to the cost effective performances in several sectors are conceived and introduced: water and waste, environmental infrastructures, transport infrastructures, energy grids, information society (pp. 93-94). In the early 2000, Manzella mentions an excerpt of the Third Report on the cohesion policy indicating a "geographical shift of the inequalities toward the East" (p. 100), as well as some significant financial reforms with the strengthening of the cooperation between the European Commission and the European Investment bank, with the aim of "channelling private resources in strategic sectors such as PME, urban regeneration and microcredit" (p. 105).

Chapter 10 and 11 close the time span. The Barca report of 2014 seems

at last to adjust and update, as the Author suggests, “the approach of the European Commission to the most advanced indications of the economic doctrine of those years” (p. 113). The period between 2014 and 2020 inaugurates a change of paradigm even from a constitutional perspective: we go from “*cross border cooperation*” to “*territorial cooperation*” (p. 118). My region, my Europe, our future is the title of the Seventh Report on cohesion, in 2017. This report fixes new challenges that the Union has to take in the light of the consequences of the pandemic on territorial inequalities that require a stronger economic governance from Member States with a particular attention to the double transition, the green and the digital one (p. 128).

The last two chapters, anticipating the conclusions, rewind the tape of the story seen from another perspective. In highlighting the key points, the Author pinpoints the transformations and the turning points. A particular attention is paid to the link between development dynamics and quality of the institutions – “ascribable to the approach of Douglass North and, today, of Daron Acemoglu” among the others, – a relevant theme within the European debate on cohesion in a future perspective (p. 167).

The exacerbation of the differences between the most and the least developed regions, caused at first by the enlargement of the Community beyond the Iron Curtain, and then by the crisis of 2008, the COVID 19 pandemic and lastly by the tragedy of the war in Ukraine, is an urgent wake-up call to the Union that has to reinforce its commitment regarding cohesion. In the conclusions, Manzella also considers the idea of a “multi-level organization hinged on a shared culture, based on unitary principles and common methodologies in key sectors such as planning, pooling of interventions, monitoring and evaluation of investments” (p. 172).

At the end of the political, economic and social path walked by the European Institutions in more than 50 years of integration history, the Author turns his attention to Italy. Italy’s story in the field of regional policies hasn’t been neither conventional nor righteous but in this crucial moment of History it is paramount to customize national policies on the needs of the most economically backward areas, which is what is happening on these days in Europe (and in the US as well) within a kind of redefinition of the industrial policy for this new time we are living. An in-depth reflection on the future of regional territories is also needed, with an appropriate follow-up, so that they can reinforce their *endogenous development potential* that Antonio Giolitti mentioned four decades ago.

Mattia Bruni